

12 April 2005

Ms. Amanda Burden, *Chair*  
**New York City Planning Department**  
22 Reade Street  
New York, New York, 10007

Dear Amanda:

The Historic Landscape Initiative has been following Lincoln Center's redevelopment plans with great interest over the past decade, particularly the proposed changes to the North Plaza, originally designed by Presidential Medal of Arts recipient and the Internationally-renown landscape architect, Dan Kiley (1912-2004). As you may be aware, several articles in two National Park Service publications, *Preserving Modern Landscape Architecture* (Vols. I & II) have focused on Kiley's public and private commissions and how his original designs have been successfully integrated into new or revised programs. Based on these findings, it seems that there is a tremendous opportunity at Lincoln Center to balance the current program in the context of a restoration/ rehabilitation of the North Plaza's signature elements - the travertine planter boxes, the four-square plantings, the gridded geometry and the rectangular pool - that once made the plaza such an important work.

As testified by recent articles in *The New York Times*, there are clearly two camps that have emerged – the Lincoln Center caretakers and consultants that want significant change, and the landscape architecture and historic preservation communities that are promoting a design approach that safeguards signature elements from the Kiley scheme. Ideally, these programmatic, design, and historic preservation goals should be considered within the context of the landscape's significance – especially since the campus would be eligible to the National Register of Historic Places – and may even be a future National Historic Landmark candidate.

Such recognition for modern works of landscape architecture is a recent phenomenon. It was only in 2003, that Kiley became the only living landscape architect to ever have a landscape design of his bestowed with National Historic Landmark status. This past year, the same recognition was bestowed on the campus of the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs. That campus, designed during the same period as Lincoln Center has evidenced a recent

restoration of Kiley's Air Gardens – which, like the Lincoln Center campus, had not been afforded sensitive stewardship – in this case the gardens were buried, and

have recently been excavated and restored. These considerations are all the more remarkable when recognizing that there are less than thirty National Historic Landmarks in America with Significance in Landscape Architecture (compared with over 1,000 buildings) -- it is an astonishing achievement that two are works by Kiley.

New York City is blessed with only a handful of iconic landscapes from the modernist era. Dan Kiley's significant contributions at Lincoln Center should be preserved for future generations alongside Paley Park, Greenacre Park and the MoMA sculpture court.

If the Historic Landscape Initiative may be of assistance on this matter please do not hesitate to contact us at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

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cc. Rebecca Robertson, Lincoln Center Redevelopment Project  
Hope Cohen, Community Board #7