

January 20, 2005

**Statement prepared for Manhattan Community Board 7 public hearing regarding
Phase I, Lincoln Center Redevelopment Proposal**

DOCOMOMO US New York/Tri-State is a local chapter of DOCOMOMO International, an organization working to identify, document and protect buildings and sites of the Modern movement.

The buildings and landscapes of Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts (hereafter, Lincoln Center) were declared eligible for the National and State Register in April 2000. Because it is the policy of the current Commissioner of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation not to list properties unless an owner approves, Lincoln Center remains eligible but unlisted. Although the Center is 40 years old and arguably a nationally recognized icon of Modern architecture, it has not been afforded a hearing by the New York City Landmarks Commission. *Protecting the defining elements* of Lincoln Center falls to the Community Board and other city agencies within this review process, and most importantly, to Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Inc.

DOCOMOMO US New York/Tri-State supports the much-needed revitalization of Lincoln Center's North Campus and 65th Street corridor. The design proposal by Diller Scofidio+Renfo, with its focus on transparency and an "information landscape," will enliven 65th Street and greatly improve access to the surrounding venues.

We would however like to comment on two specific areas of the design proposal:

1) We understand the programmatic necessity of a Juilliard expansion and the need for improved street-level visibility and communication. However, given the mission of DOCOMOMO, we must state for the record: The new design for the Juilliard School and Alice Tully Hall of almost complete transparency at street level and on the Broadway façade accompanied by the trapezoidal wedge addition at the 65th Street and Broadway corner is a radical alteration of the original design of Pietro Belluschi and Eduardo Catalano, architects nationally and internationally recognized during their careers and thereafter. Furthermore, there is little delineation between the existing building fabric and that of the addition, disregarding a standard practice for acknowledging preceding architectural forms. It is an exciting proposal, but not one that preserves the architectural intentions embodied in the Belluschi/Catalano building, nor should it be sold as such. If this plan is executed, the Juilliard School/Alice Tully Hall building will cease to exist both as an all-too-rare example of well-designed Brutalist-style architecture in the US and as the work of Belluschi and Catalano.

2) The Beaumont North Court, more commonly North Plaza, is the work of Dan Kiley, arguably the most prominent and celebrated American landscape architect of the Modern era. We find the argument that the Kiley landscape must be destroyed to add a restaurant and other new programming less than compelling.

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The architects have made a conscientious effort to retain selected elements: a pool, the Henry Moore sculpture, trees and benches. However, they have changed the dimensions and proportions of the pool and the position of Henry Moore's sculpture within it. They have completely eliminated the travertine planters and the L-shaped bosque of trees, both critical to Kiley's tranquil "urban forest" concept. The planters form an outdoor room that elegantly sets off the open plaza and its reflecting pool from the surrounding buildings and their programs, creating a well conceived Modern public space. The architects have diminished an actual pool to puddle depth. Their introduction of a Bryant Park-like environment with its gravel beds and bistro chairs may work well for other sites, but it is foreign to mid-century Modern architecture and Kiley's original design.

The Beaumont North Court was the product of one of the most distinguished collaborative relationships between an architect and landscape architect of the Modern period. Eero Saarinen, architect of the Vivian Beaumont Theater, worked with Dan Kiley on such landmarks as Gateway Arch in St. Louis, Dulles Airport and the Irwin Miller Residence in Columbus, Indiana. The proposed new design erases both the detail and essence of a mid-century Kiley landscape; a landscape intentionally designed through this collaboration to be an integral part of the Center's architecture. *So should* the Diller Scofidio+Renfo scheme for a new building and better access be designed to be part of this classic mid-century architectural ensemble. As it stands today the Plaza is significantly altered from the original and in gross disrepair. A restored *Kiley* plaza, framed by the travertine and glass facades of the concert halls, would provide an exciting and fitting view from the restaurant.

We urge the Board to withhold its approval of this proposal until a design is submitted that will restore the Kiley-designed North Plaza close to its original form, maintaining this icon of Modern design for future generations.

Sincerely,
Lincoln Center Working Group
New York/Tri-State Chapter
DOCOMOMO US