

Dear Community Board 7:

My name is Michael Gotkin and I am a landscape architect in New York City. I also work in historic preservation, and particularly on issues of historic landscape preservation, as is the case with tonight's proposed redevelopment of Lincoln Center. I am quite familiar with the Lincoln Center campus, and I actually initiated the historic designation report for Lincoln Center for the National Register of Historic Places a few years ago (you may or may not be aware that the entire Lincoln Center campus is listed as eligible on both the National and State Register of Historic Places). I am fully convinced that Lincoln Center can accomplish its redevelopment goals while at the same time preserve the most important elements of its historic modern campus.

I do not want to repeat other testimony about the importance of Dan Kiley's career in landscape architecture; it will suffice to say that Dan Kiley is universally considered to be the most important landscape architect of the modern movement in America. Kiley's famous designs for the Dulles Airport landscape in DC, the Washington Arch in St. Louis and the Air Force Academy in Colorado have all recently been lovingly preserved and restored, yet they accommodate revised uses. It is also interesting and important to note that the above projects were all collaborations with significant modern architects like Eero Saarinen and Wallace Harrison. Kiley's landscape designs are integral to the architecture, just as the architect's designs are dependent upon the landscape vision. This is perhaps nowhere more apparent than the splendid collaboration between architects Eero Saarinen and Gordon Bunshaft, and artist Henry Moore, with landscape architect Dan Kiley for the North Plaza of Lincoln Center. Kiley's gracious geometric plantings tie the landscape in with the surrounding buildings, creating a place of solace and reflection within the busy world of Lincoln Center. The North Plaza is in essence an outdoor "room," wherein one can sit and contemplate the magnificent Henry Moore sculpture set in a pool of reflected sky. Despite deterioration due to poor maintenance and inappropriate replacement of the original plantings, the essential elements of this landscape remain in place today (historic photos give a better idea of the spirit of this minimalist modern landscape).

I believe that the proposed redevelopment plans would be enriched, rather than hindered, by incorporating Kiley's original design. Particularly, the proposed lawn-roofed restaurant would be a grand foil to complement the encircling canopy of trees around the pool. Reconstructed travertine planter boxes would continue to tie the plaza landscape with the architecture, while providing democratic, generous places for visitors to sit, lean or recline while enjoying a concert, eating a snack, or simply gazing at the pool. I can hardly imagine a more appropriate architectural marriage than Diller Scofidio + Renfro's sleek, elegant restaurant with Kiley's understated, minimalist landscape design.

In closing I wanted to say a word about the choice of Diller Scofidio + Renfro for the redevelopment project. Preservationists are often wrongly accused of trying to stand in the way of progress. On the contrary, I believe that my fellow preservation professionals will join me in commending Lincoln Center for having the guts to choose one of the most progressive, exciting and exacting firms working today to improve and enhance visitors' experiences at Lincoln Center. As you can see from their presentation, Diller Scofidio + Renfro create

innovative and elegant solutions for the multi-faceted programmatic requirements of Lincoln Center.

However, as the Community Board is the representative of the public input to the proposed redevelopment proposal, I urge you to consider, aside from all aesthetic considerations, what the public is giving up here. You are asked, essentially, to relinquish a set of public easements at the Lincoln Center campus. Furthermore, you, the public, will be giving up a significant amount of public space, regardless of the quality of these spaces, in the redevelopment plan. The removal of the Milstein Plaza and the covering of the large, open triangle of land fronting Julliard are indeed significant reductions of public open space at Lincoln Square. In return we will be getting beautifully designed expanded lobbies, a new restaurant, and an exciting street of information graphics; but, it is important to remember that these will be essentially private places without any public easements or controls. This is a generous gift of space and easements to Lincoln Center, and we should not take this gift lightly. We should, instead, insist that in return for this gift of space and relinquishing of public control, that Lincoln Center continue the open, democratic use of the North Plaza and insist that the historic integrity of this space be retained and integrated with the proposed new designs. I therefore ask the Community Board to please join me in supporting the proposed redevelopment only with a guarantee that the historic open spaces of Lincoln Center, including the North Plaza, Damrosch Park and the central Josie Robertson Plaza will be given the due consideration and preservation that these historic public open spaces deserve.

Sincerely,
Michael Gotkin

LW! note: Michael Gotkin, a landscape architect, is active in historic preservation issues including protecting architecture of the Modern Movement. He serves on the board of DOCOMOMO NY/Tri-State and is a member of the Modern Architecture Working Group.