

September 10, 2004

Honorable Robert B. Tierney
Chair
New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
1 Centre Street, Ninth Floor
New York, NY 10007

Dear Bob,

I write to urge the Landmarks Commission to schedule a public hearing for 2 Columbus Circle.

I know that you, as a long term public servant, are aware that government is accountable to the public weal. Thus, a public hearing on 2 Columbus Circle is necessary to afford space and opportunity to hear from all sides whether it is not or is worthy of designation. Such an important issue to the public interest should not only be aired in the media and courts but, rather, within a civil dialogue in the halls of government – the Landmarks Preservation Commission. Good government is that government in which all people have a part.

Henry Clay wrote that government is a trust, the officers of government are trustees, and both trust and the trustees are created for the benefit of the people.

I am aware that the Commission, specifically its Designation Committee, feels that it has already reviewed this matter and decided not to recommend Edward Durell Stone's building for a hearing. As a former Chair of the Commission, I have great respect for the integrity and seriousness of purpose of the staff and commissioners, as well as for the agency's need to prioritize its work in a city with so many sites that potentially merit landmark designation. But I also believe strongly in the Commission's duty to be responsive to its constituents who seek to participate in the landmarks process. Historically, the preservation community has been the Commission's ally. In my over 30 years of work in the preservation field (partially as a former Chair of the Commission as well as a Commissioner of City Planning) I have rarely seen such a division between the public and the Commission. I pray this shall change with your leadership.

A hallmark of the Commission has always been its awareness and sensitivity to the reality that informed views regarding the applicability of statutory criteria to a particular building do change and evolve over time. While recognizing that there is no current unanimity of informed views on the merits of 2 Columbus Circle for designation, it is clear that there is virtually unanimous support among recognized, credible and independent sources in the preservation community for a hearing. I know that you are aware of such – the National Trust, the Preservation League of New York State, etc. – and I need not list them, except to remark that the list also includes over a thousand individuals and organizations.

To reiterate, the purpose of the hearing is precisely to enable the seriously contrasting views to be aired and discussed with civility, and issues to be resolved in the crucible of public opinion.

Respectfully Yours,

Beverly Moss Spatt, Ph.D., AICP

cc: Mayor Michael Bloomberg

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