

August 28, 2008

Landmarks Preservation Commission
Municipal Building
1 Centre Street, 9th Floor
New York, New York 10007

Dear Commissioners:

I write to express my support for the proposal to grant landmark designation to the building located at 600 West 59th Street, Manhattan (“the IRT Powerhouse”). Obtaining landmark status for the IRT Powerhouse is necessary to preserve one of the few remaining Beaux Arts power plants in New York City.

I have had the opportunity to speak with the members of The Powerhouse Group, the organization spearheading the proposal for landmark designation, on several occasions and have been impressed by their dedication to saving this incredible building. That dedication is well placed. Even by New York City standards, this historically-significant and architecturally exceptional building is worthy of protection. An integral piece of New York City’s architectural and transportation history, the IRT Powerhouse stands as a reminder of a time in New York when even the most mundane building was designed to inspire. As you can see from the landmark proposal, the building is, in a word, magnificent. By any measure it exceeds the definition of a New York City Landmark.

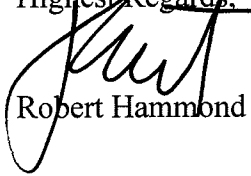
As a Co-Founder of Friends of the High Line, I was particularly interested to learn how integral Manhattan’s west side rail network was to the operation of The Powerhouse, bringing coal and supplies to the Powerhouse to enable it in turn to power the subways. The freight trains that ran on the High Line passed directly in front of the Powerhouse on Eleventh Avenue en route to the slaughterhouses and factories downtown.

Designating this building a landmark will achieve more than just the preservation of stone and terra cotta. If and when the landmark application succeeds, the Powerhouse Group hopes to work with the city to transform the IRT Powerhouse into public space. The Powerhouse Group imagines a neighborhood institution drawing residents and visitors alike. This is a goal that I can fully support.

My work on the High Line has given me an intimate understanding of what it takes to turn a land use idea into a reality. Foremost of what I have learned is that an idea as ambitious as The Powerhouse Group’s requires the support of public officials, whether members of the Landmarks Preservation Commission, the Department of City Planning, the City Council, or the Mayor’s office. Absent your support and the support of so many other committed public servants, the High Line would have been little more than an interesting idea.

I urge you to designate this building a New York City landmark so that it might survive for another 100 years to once again serve the public. If you see, as I do, the enormous potential of this idea, I think your decision will be an easy one. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Highest Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Hammond", written over a horizontal line. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Robert Hammond