

LANDMARK WEST!

THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

January 5, 2009

Hon. Robert B. Tierney
Chair
New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
1 Centre Street, 9th Floor
New York, New York 10007

Re: Interborough Rapid Transit Powerhouse (now Consolidated Edison Powerhouse)
Eleventh Avenue between 58th and 59th Streets, Manhattan

Dear Chair Tierney:

Please schedule a public hearing at the Commission's earliest opportunity for the IRT/ConEd Powerhouse on Manhattan's West Side.

This monumental structure, designed by McKim Mead & White and opened as the original powerhouse for the IRT subway in 1904, is a landmark by any standard. It stands as a testament to the uplifting, civic-minded architecture of the City Beautiful movement on a par with such beloved (and designated) New York City Beaux-Arts buildings as the New York Public Library, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Farley Post Office.

The Landmarks Preservation Commission first considered the Powerhouse for designation in 1979 (hearings were held in 1979 and the early 1990s but the building remains on the Commission's list of heard-but-never-designated list), when it described the building's significance as "the most monumental building associated with the subway system in New York City."


This mammoth structure was the largest powerhouse in the world upon its completion in 1904, and it represented the highest level of technical sophistication in the production of electrical power at that time...In its role as company symbol, the building heralded a new era of electrified urban transportation, illustrating the power of technology to improve urban life.

In 1989, the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation determined the Powerhouse "eligible" for the State and National Registers of Historic Preservation.

Over the past 100-plus years, the building has survived several transitions in use and technology with physical changes that are minor in relation to its vast scale. This endurance is a tribute to the structure's adaptability and sustained value to our city.

We look forward to testifying in support of designation of the IRT/ConEd Powerhouse in the near future. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,


Arlene Simon
President