



HISTORIC DISTRICTS COUNCIL

THE ADVOCATE FOR NEW YORK CITY'S HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS

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September 10, 2008

Hon Robert Tierney, Chair  
Landmarks Preservation Commission  
The Municipal Building  
One Centre Street, 9th Floor  
New York, NY 10007

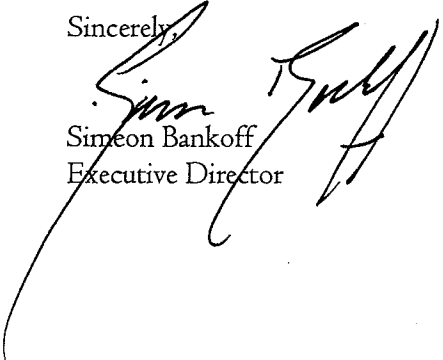
Dear Commissioner Tierney.

The Historic Districts Council respectfully requests that the Landmarks Preservation Commission act to designate the former Interborough Rapid Transit Powerhouse located at 59th Street and Eleventh Avenue as an individual New York City landmark. This monumental structure was completed in 1904 by Stanford White and is a remarkable example of Beaux-Arts design applied to a utilitarian building. In addition to its architectural significance, the building holds an important place in industrial history. When it was opened 104 years ago, it was the largest powerhouse in the world, which provided the energy needed to run the subway which in turn created the modern city of New York.

Although the building ceased producing electricity for the subway in 1959, it has remained in service since then, most recently providing steam for residents in the area. It has been publicly considered for landmark status twice in the past 30 years, once in 1979 and again in 1990. Both times Con Edison, the then-owner, objected and the designation efforts floundered, although not on the merits of the designation.

HDC asks that the Landmarks Commission once again consider this remarkable, significant building as a potential landmark. Since 1990, circumstances have changed and the City once again owns the structure. Furthermore, in the past few years., we have unfortunately seen three outstanding industrial powerhouses either demolished or defaced for new development. The IRT Powerhouse is now one of the last remaining survivors of the critical industrial network which built our city. Please act now before we lose this important, attractive building to the creeping sea of glass towers which are spring up like shiny cat tails around our waterfront.

Sincerely,



Simeon Bankoff  
Executive Director