

AIA New York Chapter

The Founding Chapter of
The American Institute of Architects

24 October 2006



Hon. Robert Tierney, Chair
Landmarks Preservation Commission
One Centre Street
New York, NY 10007

Dear Chair Tierney:

On behalf of the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects with over 4,000 members in New York City, I would like to express strong support for the proposed 980 Madison Avenue project. New York is a vibrant, changing city where historic districts and architectural legacy are not cast in stone, but help form a metropolis whose traditions and innovations inform its vitality. The restoration of the block-long, unitary Parke-Bernet building will bring back a scale marked by fenestration and proportion that have been marred over time. The solid, singular base is an unusual contributing building to the Upper East Side Historic District. It can sustain a vertical addition in a way that a more disjointed block could not. Lever House is but one example of how tower and base work together to both punctuate and elongate the Manhattan streetscape. Just across the street from 980 Madison, the Carlyle does much the same.

The Upper East Side Historic District embodies the "collective emanation" made up of "appearance, spirit and character" called out in the Commission's earliest designation reports as a basis for protection of collections of buildings. This neighborhood is a compendium of some of Manhattan's most architecturally distinguished residential and institutional structures. The addition of this tower to the historic district maintains the high level of architectural quality within a scale that is compatible to other nearby structures, without the loss of or irreparable harm to a notable part of the Madison Avenue streetscape.

The proposed tower is of the highest design quality and is an important model for sustainability. In addition to gesturing to the pattern of avenue-facing towers, the 980 Madison project would bring back a public roof garden, an essential preservation element, though the design should perhaps be further refined to relate better to the original landscape concept. This green roof will be more than a visual oasis when seen from above. It will bring back an outdoor public place of contemplation in a neighborhood where such formal green space, apart from Central Park, is lacking. In so doing, the building's environmental features are accentuated and its exceptional qualities, for example being zero-carbon based, help predict a city of the future where the past and present complement each other.

We respectfully suggest that the proposed tower is not only appropriate to the pre-existing base, but also to the neighborhood and the City as a whole.

Yours truly,


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