



**AIA New York Chapter**  
The Founding Chapter of the American Institute of Architects

Chair Robert Tierney  
Landmarks Preservation Commission  
1 Centre Street  
New York, New York 10007

April 8, 2008

Dear Chair Tierney,

On behalf of our 4,200 architect and public members, we are writing to express our support of the tower designed by Ateliers Jean Nouvel for the Museum of Modern Art on 53<sup>rd</sup> Street.

By providing maintenance for the two landmark buildings in exchange for development rights, the developer and MoMA will enter a beneficial partnership. The museum will gain a generous amount of new gallery space and generate revenue through the new residential units, while the landmark buildings will be assured funding for the maintenance needed to continue their activities and remain part of the neighborhood. In addition, we feel that New York City will gain much architecturally from having an example of recent Pritzker Prize winner Jean Nouvel's work so prominently displayed in the skyline.

The law allows transfer of development rights because every square foot of space in New York, including space above ground, is immensely valuable. The fact that the two buildings that are transferring rights are on the avenue is significant. If not landmarks, there would be pressure on them to be rebuilt much higher than their current form. The airspace not utilized by these buildings makes that part of the block relatively low-rise, and therefore the remainder of the block can theoretically sustain more mass.

Despite this fact, the tower is mid-block, and concerns have been expressed about the proposed height of the building. We feel that the design and materials are "light" enough that the height is not oppressive, and does "relate harmoniously" to the landmark buildings on the end of the block. We would endorse that the architects continue to communicate with the community to reach a mutually agreeable solution without losing the elegance of the spire's proposed shape and scale.

We urge the Commission to go forward with the reports that need to be written for these special permits, so that the project can move to the next stage of the public approval process.

Sincerely,

James McCullar, FAIA  
2008 Chapter President

Fredric Bell, FAIA  
Executive Director