



AIA New York Expresses Concerns Regarding Proposed Demolition of 270 Park Avenue

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The American Institute of Architects, New York Chapter (AIANY) is expressing concerns regarding the proposed demolition of 270 Park Avenue, formerly known as the Union Carbide Building. Designed in 1961 by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, the building is a notable example of the International Style.

The American Institute of Architects

AIA New York
536 LaGuardia Place
New York, NY 10012

T (212) 683 0023

F (212) 696 5022

www.aiany.org

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AIANY appreciates the level of discussion and awareness that has been brought to International Style buildings and Modern architecture's heritage as a result of recent news regarding 270 Park Avenue. The International Style has become widely representative of the modern office building.

AIANY's chief concern is the precedent this may set for sustainable design in New York. Currently, buildings are responsible for 70% of carbon emissions in New York City. The Union Carbide building was recently retrofitted in 2012, achieving LEED Platinum status, the highest possible rating. Without a better understanding of how it will be dismantled and what is going to replace it, demolishing such a recently renovated green building, particularly one as prominent as 270 Park Avenue, implies that sustainable design is a low priority.

Furthermore, if demolished, 270 Park Avenue would be the tallest building ever purposely razed. Demolition and construction are particularly energy intensive activities. As mentioned in AIANY's recently-released Zero Waste Design Guidelines, construction and demolition waste account for 25-45% of the solid waste stream by weight nationwide. Construction and demolition waste is also often contaminated – with paint, adhesives, and fasteners. Demolition of 270 Park Avenue would represent a shift away from the values of sustainability and responsibility in building design, which are championed by architects in New York and beyond.

AIANY asks that JPMorgan Chase and our elected officials find a way to address these pressing concerns. We hope there will be studies to investigate adaptive reuse approaches, which may retain or work with the existing structure, in order to minimize the environmental impact of demolition. As architects, we strongly believe in new and innovative design, but also recognize the value of historically influential architecture and champion sustainability. The Chapter hopes to be a resource to JP Morgan Chase and our elected officials, as we strive for the common goal of keeping New York vibrant and economically competitive.