

**THE NEW YORK
LANDMARKS
CONSERVANCY**

August 23, 2010

**STATEMENT OF THE NEW YORK LANDMARKS CONSERVANCY BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ZONING AND FRANCHISES OF THE CITY COUNCIL REGARDING 15
PENN PLAZA, MANHATTAN**

Good day Chair Weprin and members of the City Council. I am Andrea Goldwyn speaking on behalf of the New York Landmarks Conservancy. The Conservancy is a private, non-profit, organization established in 1973. We advocate for landmarks and historic districts. We often testify on the impact of new construction on landmarked buildings, and there is no landmark better known than the Empire State Building. For nearly 80 years it has stood as one of the highest peaks on the Manhattan skyline. This singular visibility requires a thorough discussion of whether nearby development will enhance or obscure it.

As a founding member of the Friends of Moynihan Station, the Conservancy has been involved in a governmental review of the area around Moynihan Station noting both historic resources and potential development sites, so we know this area well, and know that several buildings in addition to 15 Penn Plaza are being contemplated.

We are not opposing a new building at this site. We recognize the logic of high-density development in business centers and near transportation hubs. But the Empire State Building, just two blocks away, is a very special landmark. It is hard to understand how the City Planning Commission could say that 15 Penn Plaza would not create an adverse impact on it. The CPC has already lowered a proposed building on 53rd Street, 20 blocks away, questioning "whether it merits being in the zone of the Empire State Building's iconic spire."

City Planning has approved the stacking of bonuses and waivers of height limitations and setback requirements, and thereby allowing a much taller, bulkier building than what the as-of-right zoning would allow. We would ask you to take a careful look at the discretionary waivers for height and setback, and the bonuses requested today, and consider whether they are appropriate under the circumstances. We think they are not because of the adverse impact they would have on the Empire State Building. A building that adheres to as-of-right zoning would be a far better neighbor.

Thank you for the opportunity to present the Conservancy's views.