

November 17, 2014

**STATEMENT OF THE NEW YORK LANDMARKS CONSERVANCY AT A PUBLIC HEARING OF
COMMUNITY BOARDS 5 AND 6 AND THE TRI-BOARD TASK FORCE ON EAST MIDTOWN
REGARDING THE PROPOSED VANDERBILT CORRIDOR REZONING AND THE SPECIAL PERMIT
FOR ONE VANDERBILT**

Good evening. I am Andrea Goldwyn, speaking on behalf of the New York Landmarks Conservancy. The Landmarks Conservancy is a private, independent, not-for-profit organization, founded in 1973. Our mission is to preserve and protect historic resources throughout New York.

Our Public Policy Committee has met with Department of City Planning Chair Carl Weisbrod and his staff, representatives of SL Green and of Midtown Trackage. We appreciate their outreach. Our statement addresses three issues: protection of historic resources; the relationship of One Vanderbilt to Grand Central Terminal; and the expansion of the existing transit bonus mechanism and how it affects landmarks.

We would like to see the Landmarks Commission act in concert with City Planning to calendar unprotected historic resources on Vanderbilt Avenue. In previous statements, we had requested designation for 51 East 42nd Street, at the site of One Vanderbilt, but recognize that it will likely be demolished. There are still three buildings along the corridor eligible for listing on the State and National Register of Historic Places, the LPC has stated that is considering two for designation.

These are all fine masonry buildings designed by significant architects such as Warren & Wetmore, James Gamble Rogers, and George B. Post. Some were part of historic Terminal City, which rightly recognized Grand Central Terminal as a focal point. Any new plan for this area should consider how they can be reused and supported. Otherwise, we risk losing the special sense of place they create and their graceful relationship with Grand Central, in favor of a wall of anonymous glass towers that could be found anywhere in the world, with no connection to New York, nor to one of the nation's most important landmarks.

Regarding One Vanderbilt, in testimony to the Landmarks Commission, we were not able to find a harmonious relationship with Grand Central Terminal, and regretted the loss of 51 East 42nd Street, a Terminal City building, which Warren and Wetmore designed for the context of the Terminal. Any tower of perhaps 1,500 feet will overwhelm and shadow the landmark. At the ground floor, the architects presented a design that attempts a relationship, using sympathetic materials and exposing a view of the Terminal, but we feel that the visual connection between the two buildings could be even stronger, with a simplified base that does not compete with Grand Central. Following our initial meeting, the architects showed us modifications. We appreciate this response, but did not feel that the changes rectified our key concerns.

On the third issue, there is no one who rides the subway or bus who could deny that transit improvements for this district are necessary, but as a preservation group, we must analyze the proposed Public Realm Improvement Bonus for the effects it could have on landmarks of today and consider how they will thrive in the future. We have been assured that the two public goals of preservation and transit will not be set against each other, but we are not fully convinced. Transit bonuses have existed for many years, used

mostly for small FAR increments, and they have been used in tandem with landmark transfers. We hope that the unprecedented increase of up to 15.0 for transit, along with the City's backing implicit in today's presentation does not portend a less viable environment for landmark transfers.

We appreciate that this proposal includes provisions to ease landmark transfers, but in a practical sense, the most likely development site along Vanderbilt is being taken off the table with this application, so those provisions might be moot. In order to incentivize both landmark transfers and transit bonuses, they should be structured to work together, as they have in the past, perhaps with an expanded 81-635 that requires both for redevelopment along the Vanderbilt Corridor. In lieu of that, the proposed modifications to 81-635 could be extended to the entire Grand Central Subdistrict in conjunction with the designation of landmark-quality buildings, to preserve not only the individual buildings, but the rhythm of a diverse and dynamic architecture that, along with transit, makes this a desirable neighborhood.

Thank you for the opportunity to express The Landmarks Conservancy's views.