

**THE NEW YORK
LANDMARKS
CONSERVANCY**

January 9, 2017

**STATEMENT OF THE NEW YORK LANDMARKS CONSERVANCY BEFORE THE N.Y.C. LANDMARKS
PRESERVATION COMMISSION REGARDING A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS FOR THE 827-831
BROADWAY BUILDINGS, 827-831 BROADWAY, NEW YORK, AN INDIVIDUAL LANDMARK**

Good day, Chair Srinivasan and Commissioners. I am Andrea Goldwyn, speaking on behalf of the New York Landmarks Conservancy. The Conservancy has been briefed on the application to restore this individual landmark and construct a rooftop addition. We appreciate the work that will improve the facades of these attractive 19th century buildings, but we do not find the proposed addition to be appropriate. We also have grave concerns about the rationale that underlies the proposal – that these buildings are a “cultural” landmark, and that an addition does not need to relate to them. There is nothing in the Landmarks Law that creates this separate class of landmarks.

The LPC designation report states that the Broadway Buildings were designated to “represent the pivotal era in which post-World War II New York City became the center of the art world.” But the designation does not just commemorate a location; it recognizes these 1867 commercial “palaces” which “drew architectural inspiration from Italian palazzi” and marked a moment when architect Griffith Thomas, whose later work would be largely associated with cast-iron buildings, started using cast-iron elements.

The proposed addition is 50-feet tall, about two-thirds the height of the Broadway Buildings. The façade is composed of a series of reflective glass geometric facets that the architects have argued are inspired by works of Willem de Kooning, the most well-known resident. But this addition completely loses sight of the landmark buildings, diminishing them and treating them as only a prop. And we’re not convinced that anyone seeing this highly visible structure would recognize the de Kooning influence.

We are also concerned that if approved, this proposal would set a precedent, in which landmarks designated for their cultural or historic significance could routinely be treated as pedestals for additions that have no connection to protected landmark structures. Such a precedent would be completely contrary to the letter and the spirit of the Landmarks Law. An addition can certainly be inspired by the history and events that have taken place at a site, but it must still have a relationship to that landmark. We do not see that in this proposal.

We trust that with the Commission’s guidance, the architects will be able to develop an addition that is compatible to this site and honors its history. Thank you for the opportunity to present the Conservancy’s views.