

June 19, 2018

**STATEMENT OF THE NEW YORK LANDMARKS CONSERVANCY BEFORE THE N.Y.C. LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION REGARDING THE PROPOSED DESIGNATION OF 550 MADISON AVENUE, MANHATTAN, AS AN INDIVIDUAL LANDMARK**

Good day Commissioners. I am Andrea Goldwyn, speaking on behalf of the New York Landmarks Conservancy. The Conservancy is pleased to support designation of 550 Madison Avenue, the former AT&T corporate headquarters building.

550 Madison is generally accepted as one of the first and most significant designs of the post-modern movement and is the only major example found in New York. It represents a pivotal moment in the City's architectural history at the close of the 1970s.

Best-known as the "Chippendale" building, in reference to its decorative roof line, it was designed by Philip Johnson and John Burgee with Harry Simmons in 1978. The 660-foot tower was a dramatic departure from modernism in that it drew on traditional classical expression: the base with its monumental, seven-story arch inspired by Warren & Wetmore's New York Central Building (1929, designated a New York City landmark, 1987); the graceful, fluted rose-gray granite shaft, which is punctuated by narrow windows; and distinctive, thirty-foot tall broken pediment at the capital.

Detractors called it "as a curiosity, an aberration, an outrage," but the AT&T Building was at the cutting edge of architectural theory and design. Johnson noted, "I believe we are standing at the edge of a mighty watershed between the past half-century of modern architecture and a new uncertain, unclear, but clearly fascinating future." Johnson's design opened the door for the last 40 years of innovative architecture. While there have been modifications to the building's base, the integrity of that design is intact and the building remains the textbook example of post-modernism.

The building's height was achieved via bonuses in exchange for public amenities. Those amenities have been altered several times, but have not been entirely successful, and we believe there is an opportunity for new ownership to improve the public space.

550 Madison Avenue is well deserving of landmark designation and will benefit from the Commission's guidance on any proposed alterations to the exterior and the public space. We thank the Commission for bringing this item forward and thank the ownership for their support.

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