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November 28, 2014

Commissioner Meenakshi Srinivasan, Chair
New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
Municipal Building
1 Centre Street, 9th Floor, North
New York, NY 10007

Re: LPC Decalendaring

I am writing to urge the Commission not to move forward with issuing "no action" letters for buildings and sites that have been calendared for five years or longer without the benefit of a public hearing. I understand that the Commission has the power to pursue this proposal without an obligation to provide for public hearings, but it is only appropriate that the consequences of removing 94 individual structures and two historic districts in a single administrative action be thoroughly deliberated through open dialogue with an engaged public committed to these cherished and respected places.

A public hearing would give proper recognition to the hours of thorough examination and documentation provided by community activists, preservationists, and commission staff. A public process could yield new information, provide another opportunity to understand why these sites remain inactive, re-engage stakeholders, and produce new strategies for moving forward. Furthermore, input can inform whether the scope of the items slated to be de-calendared should be adjusted.

Speaking specifically for District 6, it is imperative that the Commission maintain the IRT Powerhouse located on 11th Avenue between West 58th & 59th Street as a calendared item. The building was first reviewed for designation in 1980 and

received considerable praise for its Beaux-Arts style and classical and renaissance details. In the commission's own words the site has been called "...a monument to the engineers and architects who planned and built New York City's first successful underground transit system" and "attests to the careful attention given by early 20th-century designers to even the most utilitarian structures" (LPC 1979).

As one of the few remaining powerhouses from the turn-of-the century, this site represents an important piece of transit history and a symbol of inspired infrastructure as New York City emerged as a world capital. Given that the demolition of its smoke stacks caused irreparable damage to the building's design, I believe we cannot allow for any protections to be removed from this site and conversations with Con Edison must continue under the watching shield provided for by the site's calendared status.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this matter. If you have any further questions please don't hesitate to contact Marisa Maack of my staff, or me, at (212) 788-6975. I look forward to your response.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Helen Rosenthal". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Helen Rosenthal
New York City Council Member, District 6