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June 28, 2022

The Honorable Sarah Carroll, Chair
The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
One Center Street, 9th Floor North
New York, NY 10007

Re: 60 Wall Street

Dear Commissioner Carroll,

Docomomo US is pleased to have this opportunity to provide testimony on the proposed changes to 60 Wall Street formerly the J.P. Morgan and Company Headquarters building designed by Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates and completed in 1989. During the last few years, Docomomo US has been focusing more of its resources on Postmodernism and design of the recent past, as significant examples are increasingly threatened due to a lack of appreciation, understanding, and research. Likewise, our organization is now in a position where we believe this Postmodernist skyscraper is worthy of historic designation, and we are pleased that the Landmarks Preservation Commission has an opportunity to comment on the proposed changes through a harmonious relationship report with its neighbor at 55 Wall Street.

Docomomo US does not find that the proposed alterations to the façade are in keeping with the harmonious relationship to 55 Wall Street. We do not find the thin vertical piers proposed at the base will maintain this relationship nor do we find the blended façade articulation from the base up to the fifth floor to have a meaningful relationship to the stacked façade of 55 Wall. The horizontal division of the two stages of design are perhaps just as important as the colonnades. The current design articulates this in a masterful way where the proposal does not. The existing double chamfered columns that line the base of 60 Wall Street also do an excellent job maintaining the street wall and its relationship on one of New York City's most important and historic streets.

We also find it alarming that the proposal seeks to alter only the lower level of the façade and not the upper tower area, which mimics the double chamfered Postmodernist columns at the base through a visual trick of setbacks and alternating ribbon windows. By altering the base and not the tower, the new design would not be in keeping with a harmonious relationship with 55 Wall Street and, even worse, it would not have a harmonious relationship with itself!



The suggestion that the proposal improves on the design of a Pritzker Prize winning architect is honestly beyond words.

We find these proposed changes to be unnecessary, and we believe they would negatively impact the entire length of Wall Street at its base—disrupting the visual bridge so carefully considered by the Roche office and past Landmarks Preservation Commission Chairman Gene Norman in their detailed conversations—and a design that is architecturally harmonious. We urge the Commission to deny the proposal.

Docomomo US also would like to encourage the Commission to consider the exterior and interior designations submitted by our organization for 60 Wall Street. The 30-year requirement of the New York City Landmarks law gives us all a unique opportunity to consider more designs of the recent past. While some may have considered Postmodernism to be unattractive just a few years ago, we all should take pride in the fact that Midtown boasts the UN Plaza’s Ambassador Grill and Lounge by Kevin Roche and the AT&T Building by Philip Johnson as recently designated Landmarks (in 2016 and 2018 and, respectively). Seeing Postmodernism—or in fact seeing any architectural style—sometimes takes a fresh set of eyes and a bit of time as tastes change, and as we are able to consider any building’s cultural and historical significance more constructively and more fully. Docomomo US does not believe there will be a flood of such Postmodern-design designations in the future; however, 60 Wall Street is one of these important examples that still must be recognized.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'TG', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Todd Grover
Vice President Advocacy
Docomomo US

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Liz Waytkus', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Liz Waytkus
Executive Director
Docomomo US