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February 22, 2018

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

Re: 270 Park Avenue (historically the Union Carbide Building)

Dear Commissioner Srinivasan,

Docomomo US and Docomomo US NY/Tri-State were shocked and disappointed by the recent news that the city wants to approve plans by JP Morgan Chase to demolish the former Union Carbide building at 270 Park Avenue. Designed by the pioneering woman architect Natalie de Blois and Gordon Bunshaft, both of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) and built from 1958-60, the building is one of the most elegant and significant office towers on Park Avenue and in Midtown Manhattan. When Ada Louise Huxtable described the building in the *New York Times* as a “post-war miracle” in 1957, she noted Union Carbide was a building of character and quality designed not to provide “the greatest amount of economically constructed rentable space for the fastest possible return,” (as one could argue of the current plan) but as a “work of art.”

As you are undoubtedly aware, Union Carbide was identified as eligible for New York City Landmarks designation in the Greater East Midtown Rezoning Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). On page 6:54 of the FEIS, 270 Park Avenue is described as:

One of the City's greatest modern buildings, this 53-story [skyscraper] exudes strength and elegance in its protruding stainless steel mullions and simple but bold façade patterning created by the black matte metal spandrels... The ultimate pin-stripe building, this flat-top skyscraper seemed a natural evolution in the new corporate architecture that started with Lever House and the Seagram Building a few blocks north on the avenue just a few years earlier. Surprisingly, it really marked the end of that short-lived but graceful, clean-cut era as it was followed by many vastly inferior imitators, including some directly across the avenue. The proportions of this building are not perfect, but they are robust and this building pretty much set the new standard for desirable large floor plate office structures that dominated commercial construction in Manhattan for most of the 1960s and 1970s.

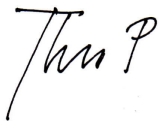
In response to the FEIS, the Landmarks Preservation Commission began the process of designation of 270 Park Avenue in 2013 along with seven other buildings. While we understand meetings have been held with the owners of 270 Park Avenue, no public discussion of this eligible and architecturally significant building has taken place. Yet, its demolition has been announced. Its significance has been pointed out to the Landmarks Commission by Docomomo US NY/Tri-State and other preservation groups including on building on lists of potential landmarks, for the better part of 10 years.

As the agency charged with implementing the Landmarks law, we urge you--as the Chair of the Landmarks Preservation Commission--to immediately calendar 270 Park Avenue for local designation. We appreciate the need to partner and work with other city agencies to advance the goals of the City on behalf of its citizens. However, the goals of one large corporation should not nullify or ignore the public interest, the law or the authority of one agency over another.

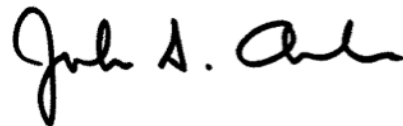
Docomomo US and Docomomo US NY/Tri-State strongly believe it is the Landmarks Preservation Commission's mandate to protect the cultural and architectural resources of New York City for the benefit of New Yorkers and visitors alike. Along with Lever House and the Seagram Building, 270 Park Avenue is among the most iconic corporate office buildings in New York. We feel strongly that it played an important role in the evolution of modern, world-class cities, and it continues to enrich the urban realm. While 270 Park Avenue is one of the most architecturally significant buildings in Midtown East, it is also one of many that have yet to be designated in the area. Like all eligible resources, 270 Park Avenue demands your attention to uphold the Landmarks law and the public's trust.

Thank you for your prompt action on this request. For further information contact us or our Executive Director, Liz Waytkus.

Sincerely,



Dr. Theodore H.M. Prudon FAIA FAPT
President
Docomomo US



John Arbuckle
President
Docomomo US NY/Tri-State