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Vicki Weiner
Executive Director

June 5, 2000

Hon. Bernadette Castro
Commissioner, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
Agency Building #1
Empire State Plaza
Albany, NY 12238

Dear Commissioner Castro:

I am writing on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Historic Districts Council to urge you to place 2 Columbus Circle on the State and National Registers of Historic Places as an individual landmark.

While the building is located in the proposed Central Park South State and National Register district that HDC has spoken to Kathy Howe about, we feel it is more vulnerable to development pressures than the other buildings in the area. It is currently owned by the City of New York, which is now considering proposals for re-development of the site, making the special recognition offered by a State and National Register listing an urgent matter.

2 Columbus Circle has engendered controversy ever since it was designed in 1965 by Edward Durrell Stone to house the Huntington Hartford Gallery of Modern Art. Both the building and the art collection it was designed to display ran counter to the commonly held notions of taste at the time. The structure has been called the first post-modern building, a reaction to the austere glass curtain wall aesthetic that had dominated "serious" architecture in the postwar period.

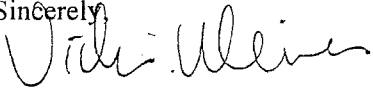
With its concave marble façade – a response to its location on the famed traffic circle – and lollipop-like street level concourse, the building continues to inspire spirited debate about urban design. Architectural historians and preservationists who are concerned about 20th Century buildings point out that while its quirky appearance may not appeal to all, it is difficult to refute the significance of 2 Columbus Circle. It is a major work by one of America's leading architects, designed for a prominent client and in every way contextual to its highly significant site, as the enclosed historic image shows. The post-modern style which it presaged was the dominant style of architecture for the last third of the 20th Century.

I am enclosing some recent photographs of the interior of the building to give an indication of its fine paneling, floors and detailing, which remain intact, although in need of

restoration. These are simple snapshots taken by a member of our staff, so I hope you will forgive their informal quality.

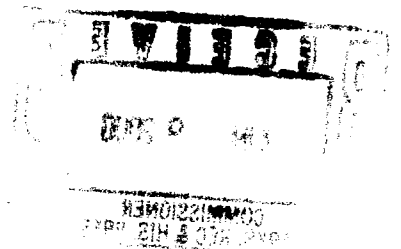
Please let me know if the Historic Districts Council can be of assistance to you in considering the nomination of 2 Columbus Circle to the State and National Registers.

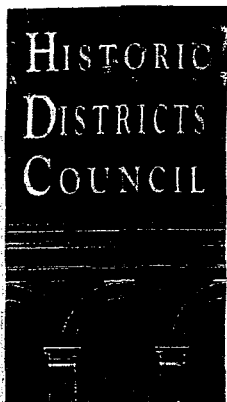
Sincerely,



Vicki Weiner
Executive Director

cc: Frank Sanchis, Municipal Art Society
Peg Breen, New York Landmarks Conservancy
Laura Hansen and Ned Kaufman, Place Matters
Michael Gotkin





Wint
R/SIV

December 21, 2000

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Hon. Bernadette Castro
Commissioner, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
Agency Building #1, Empire State Plaza
Albany, NY 12238

Dear Commissioner Castro:

I am writing to you for two purposes. The first is to introduce myself as the new Executive Director of the Historic Districts Council. I came to HDC last month from the New York City Parks Department, where I worked closely with Scott Heyl, who, as you know, is now President of the Preservation League of New York State. I look forward to continue working with Scott and your office to foster a close relationship between upstate and downstate preservationists.

Hal Bromm
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Vice President

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The second reason for my letter is to urge the listing of 2 Columbus Circle, the Huntington Hartford Building, on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. In June, the Historic Districts Council wrote to you requesting that the building, an important piece of modern architecture regardless of critical disagreements, be placed on the Registers. Enclosed is a copy of the letter that was sent at that time.

The building remains at risk. We understand that Mayor Giuliani is eager to encourage development of the Columbus Circle area as his legacy to the city. While we are sympathetic with that goal, and feel that Columbus Circle could certainly do with some attention, HDC feels very strongly that enhancement of the site should not come at the price of a unique and significant structure that can be readily incorporated into a larger scheme.

Listing on the State and National Registers would confer a legitimacy and measure of protection upon what remains an admittedly controversial building. We feel that the controversy itself is part of the building's significance. Loved or hated, this building engages all who contemplate it and raises serious and abiding questions about the nature and vocabulary of design in contemporary architecture. This building is truly a landmark; we seek now only to legitimize this designation and preserve this building so it can continue to stimulate future generations.

Please let me know if HDC can be of further assistance to you in this matter. I look forward to working with you and your staff on this and other projects.

Sincerely,

Simeon Bankoff
Executive Director