

August 6, 2005

2 Columbus Circle

To the Editor:

Re "The Black Hole of Columbus Circle," by Sherida E. Paulsen (Op-Ed, July 30):

Ms. Paulsen, chairwoman of New York's Landmarks Preservation Commission from 2001 to 2003, is entitled to her opinion that Edward Durell Stone's design for 2 Columbus Circle does not merit landmark designation.

But given widely divergent opinions in the public at large about the importance of this building, I find it difficult to believe that the 19 commission members since 1996 could have reached absolute consensus that the building is unworthy of even a public hearing to weigh its merits.

The commission has explained that the building was considered in 1996 by an internal "designation committee," which to comply with open-meeting laws would not have involved more than five (less than a quorum) of the commissioners.

If such overwhelming consensus is indeed the case, where is the public record of this decision? The failure to hold a hearing is a distressing sign of how out of touch the current commission is with the public it serves.

Such an important issue should be aired not behind closed doors, but through the formal, open and democratic landmarks review process.

Beverly Moss Spatt
Brooklyn, Aug. 1, 2005

The writer was chairwoman of the Landmarks Preservation Commission from 1974 to 1978.