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NATIONAL TRUST NAMES NEW YORK'S TWO COLUMBUS CIRCLE ONE OF AMERICA'S 11 MOST ENDANGERED HISTORIC PLACES

Washington, D.C. (May 24, 2004) – Created by architect Edward Durell Stone, who also designed Washington's famed Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Columbus Circle is a nationally recognized – albeit controversial – icon of the Modern Movement. Sporting a marble skin, porthole windows and a street-level arcade that critics have likened to a row of lollipops, the unorthodox building is radically different from the glass-and-steel boxes typical of its era.

Now it is slated to be sold and renovated as a permanent home for the Museum of Arts and Design. That's the good news; the bad news is that the design proposed for the new use would strip 2 Columbus Circle of its architectural integrity, and since it is not protected by New York's preservation ordinance, these changes could be made without any kind of preservation review. This means that unless the new owner can be persuaded of the building's significance, sweeping architectural changes could rob 2 Columbus Circle of its distinctive character and rob America of an engagingly quirky icon of the recent past.

To highlight the threat to this vital piece of American heritage and our recent past, the **National Trust for Historic Preservation** today named 2 Columbus Circle to its 2004 list of *America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places*.

"Preserving the architectural integrity of 2 Columbus Circle is of the utmost importance. It is part of the fabric of modern American culture - a rich tapestry comprising elements from many periods and in many styles, each of which contributes to our understanding of our nation's growth and development," said Richard Moe, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. "New York City has shown commendable vision in seeking a reuse for this remarkable building, but merely transferring ownership is not enough."

In an upcoming "Save Our History" program, The History Channel will focus on two sites that were on the National Trust for Historic Preservation's list of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places and are now being restored. The program will air on Friday, September 3 at 8 pm. Beginning on May 24, 2004, The History Channel will also run a series of public service announcements that highlight the 2004 list. These spots will air beginning May 24.

History: Located at the southwest corner of Central Park, 2 Columbus Circle has been controversial ever since its completion in 1964. Originally designed to showcase the modern-art collection of supermarket heir Huntington Hartford, the building housed New York City offices during the 1980s and 1990s but is now vacant, pending transfer to the private Museum of Arts and Design. The building was listed on the Preservation League of New York State's "Seven to Save" this year in recognition of its architectural and historical significance to the citizens of New York.

Threat: The new design for the building by Brad Cloepfil, although not finalized, includes extensive alterations that would destroy major elements of Edward Durell Stone's design. The destruction of 2 Columbus Circle's original façade would mean the loss of a unique chapter of America's story.

Solution: The National Trust urges the owners of 2 Columbus Circle, currently the City of New York, but soon to be the Museum of Arts and Design, to develop a restoration plan for the building that respects its integrity as a modernist masterpiece and celebrates its unique form and design. Listing in the State and National Registers of Historic Places and public hearings by the New York Landmarks Preservation Commission for landmark designation of 2 Columbus Circle will give the building added protection and ensure that all possible measures are taken to protect this important resource.

America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places has identified more than 160 threatened one-of-a-kind historic treasures since 1988. While a listing does not ensure the protection of a site or guarantee funding, the designation has been a powerful tool for raising awareness and rallying resources to save endangered sites from every region of the country. Whether these sites are urban districts or rural landscapes, Native American landmarks or 20th-century sports arenas, entire communities or single buildings, the list spotlights historic places across America that are threatened by neglect, insufficient funds, inappropriate development or insensitive public policy.

Recent 11 Most Successes: For more than 15 years, the National Trust and the City of South Pasadena led the fight against the proposed \$1.4 billion Route 710 freeway extension, which would have demolished almost 1,000 homes in a six-mile area, cutting through the heart of four National Register historic districts in **Pasadena, South Pasadena and the El Sereno neighborhood in Southern California**. More than ten years after these corridor cities appeared on the 11 Most Endangered list, from 1989 to 1993, the Federal Highway Administration suspended its approval of the freeway in December, 2003. Just last month, the California Transportation Commission also responded by nullifying its approval of the project. St. Augustine, Florida's **Bridge of Lions** was also saved last fall after a 25-year battle when the Florida Department of Transportation decided to rehabilitate the historic 1927 bridge instead of tearing it down. The Mediterranean-style bridge appeared on the National Trust's 1997 11 Most Endangered list. Just two months after the **Zuni Salt Lake and Sanctuary Zone** appeared on the 2003 list, the Board of Salt River Project, an Arizona utility, voted to abandon its plans for strip mining coal from within this traditional cultural property.

Sites on the 2004 list of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places are:

2 Columbus Circle, New York, N.Y. -- Designed by famed architect Edward Durell Stone, this Manhattan building has been controversial since it was completed in 1964. If a new owner carries out its planned renovations, the building will lose the distinctive features that have made it an icon of Modernist design.

Ridgewood Ranch, Home of Seabiscuit, Willits, Calif. -- The final home and resting place of one of America's most famous horses, this ranch is now owned by a church association that lacks the resources to stabilize and maintain the 20-plus historic buildings that still stand.

Bethlehem Steel Plant, Bethlehem, Pa. -- This complex played a major role in the development of America's steel industry, was the site of many technological advances and provided steel for some of the nation's best-known structures, but now it lies dormant and threatened with demolition.

Elkmont Historic District, Great Smoky Mountains NP, Tenn. -- This collection of modest wooden structures suffers from abandonment, inadequate maintenance and vandalism. Some park advocates favor demolishing the buildings -- which are listed in the National Register -- in order to return the land to its "natural" state.

Gullah/Geechee Coast, S.C. and Ga. -- This stretch of coastline is the homeland of descendants of slaves who have managed to retain a distinctive culture, traditions and language. Long protected by its relative isolation, the area is now being overrun by sprawling new resorts, subdivisions and strip malls.

Tobacco Barns of Southern Maryland -- A state-sponsored buyout has encouraged many farmers to abandon tobacco farming, the longtime mainstay of the region's agricultural economy, and many historic barns have been abandoned or are being demolished.

Madison-Lenox Hotel, Detroit, Mich. -- The city's landmarks commission has refused to grant a demolition permit for this 3-building complex that could be rehabbed as the centerpiece of a burgeoning inner-city area, but the owner still wants to demolish it for a parking lot.

Historic Cook County Hospital, Chicago, Ill. -- The setting or inspiration for numerous films and TV shows, this historic hospital could be converted to housing and help bring vitality to its neighborhood, but it is slated for demolition at a cost to taxpayers of \$30 million.

George Kraigher House, Brownsville, Tex -- This 1937 house by famed architect Richard Neutra has stood vacant for several years and is gradually being destroyed by weather, neglect and vandalism.

Nine Mile Canyon, Carbon and Duchesne counties, Utah -- Sometimes called "the world's longest art gallery" because it encompasses an estimated 10,000 petroglyphs and pictographs, this site is threatened by extensive oil and gas exploration plans recently approved by the federal Bureau of Land Management.

The State of Vermont -- The State of Vermont appeared on our 1993 list because it faced an onslaught of big-box retail development. Today the threat is worse than ever, with Wal-Mart planning to saturate the state with 7 new super-stores that are likely to spur additional development, sprawl, disinvestment in downtowns, the loss of locally-owned businesses, and the erosion of the state's unique sense of place.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation is a private, nonprofit membership organization dedicated to protecting the irreplaceable. Recipient of the National Humanities Medal, the Trust provides leadership, education and advocacy to save America's diverse historic places and revitalize communities. Its Washington, DC headquarters staff, six regional offices and 25 historic sites work with the Trust's 200,000 members and thousands of local community groups in all 50 states. For more information, visit www.nationaltrust.org.

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