



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brad Hoylman-Sigal

## My Letter to the Landmarks Preservation Commission Urging Designation of the Waldorf Astoria's Interior Spaces as Landmarks

BRAD HOYLMAN-SIGAL September 9, 2016

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September 7, 2016

Meenakshi Srinivasan, Chair

Landmarks Preservation Commission

One Centre Street, 9th Floor

New York, New York 10007

Dear Chair Srinivasan:

I am writing to urge the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) to calendar and designate the Waldorf Astoria's public interior spaces as New York City landmarks. In light of the purchase of the Waldorf Astoria property by the Chinese holding company Anbang Insurance Group and its decision to convert the hotel into residential units, many New Yorkers are justifiably concerned that renovations may cause irreversible harm to this quintessential piece of New York City history.

The Waldorf is one of the most important repositories of art deco architecture in the nation, both inside and out. The exterior of the building was recognized by the LPC in 1993, but the interiors are worthy of preservation, as well. As Peg Breen of The New York Landmarks Conservancy recently wrote, the Waldorf's interiors "possess not only aesthetic significance as the very finest surviving examples of Classical Modernist design, but also immense cultural importance." These public spaces have hosted countless New Yorkers and visitors alike, including United States Presidents, world leaders and prominent figures in business, the arts and civic life.

I hope the Anbang Insurance Group will act responsibly in preserving the Waldorf's magnificent interiors; however, without the firm protections of an interior landmark designation, the City leaves the fate of this extraordinary space to chance. Absent an interior landmark designation, the new owners are legally permitted to gut the iconic rooms in the hotel, including the Park Avenue Lobby, the Lexington Avenue Lobby, the Peacock Alley, the

Grand Ballroom, the Astor and Jade Ballrooms, the Basildon Room and the Starlight Room. I'm sure New Yorkers would be aghast to learn that under current law even the famous World's Fair clock in the Waldorf's lobby could be dismantled and sold for scrap by the new owners if they so choose!

Over eight decades after opening its Park Avenue location, the Waldorf's interiors continue to inform and enchant all who enter through its revolving doors. The public spaces inside the Waldorf Astoria hold significant cultural, architectural and historical importance. It is time New York City recognized their value for future generations and I urge the LPC to expeditiously consider the landmark designation of the hotel's interiors before it is too late.

Thank you for your attention to this request and for LPC's commitment to preserving our city's history.

Sincerely,

Brad Hoylman

New York State Senate

27th District