



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Liz Krueger

Testimony Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission Regarding Manhattan House on April 10, 2007

LIZ KRUEGER July 15, 2010

Good afternoon. My name is Liz Krueger and I represent the 26th State Senate District, which includes the Upper East Side, East Midtown and Midtown neighborhoods of Manhattan.

I appreciate the opportunity to express my full support for the designation of Manhattan House as a New York City landmark. Located within my Senate District at 200 East 66th Street, Manhattan House reflects both the culture and history of the surrounding community, as well as a wider movement that aimed to bring better living conditions to all New Yorkers.

The property under consideration today holds great architectural, historical, and cultural significance that must be preserved. As the first white brick apartment building in New York, Manhattan House was one of the most influential post-war buildings in the city and marked a significant development in architectural history. Erected in 1950 as part of an urban renewal project by the New York Life Insurance Company, the 581 unit structure was designed by Skidmore, Owning & Merrill and Mayer & Whittlesey. In a neighborhood previously characterized by tenements and the Third Avenue El, the architects designed a precedent-setting, light-filled building that fundamentally redefined the community.

Manhattan House's innovative H-plan—which replaced the standard inner courtyard structure—provides significant access for all residents to light and air.

In addition to setting new precedents in modern architecture through its materials and innovative shape, Manhattan House is uniquely integrated into the urban environment in which it is located. The building's Bauhaus-style balconies, glass lobby with floor to ceiling windows, common area on the rooftop, and an extensive block-long garden on the ground-level create a distinctive sense of openness and blur the strict distinctions between inside and outside so common to urban living. In a community that has one of the smallest amount of park space in the city, these amenities are exceedingly important to both the residents of Manhattan House and the surrounding neighborhood.

Architects and urban planners have long recognized Manhattan House as a vital and groundbreaking part of our City's architectural heritage. In 1952, the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects awarded the building its award for outstanding apartment house. Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts recently described the structure as an "extraordinary ornament to the Upper East Side, and an important document in the history of white buildings, a design which has been endlessly copied but never equaled."

I urge the Commission to approve the application before you today. I am pleased to be joined in my support for the landmark designation of Manhattan House by a wide range of elected officials and community organizations including Assembly Member Jonathan Bing, Council Member Daniel Garodnick, the Manhattan House Tenants Association, Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts, and the Historic Districts Council.

Thank you for granting me this opportunity to speak at today's hearing.