



CITY OF NEW YORK  
**MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR**

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**Lowell D. Kern**  
Chair

**Jesse Bodine**  
District Manager

February 24, 2021

Sarah Carroll, Chair  
Landmarks Preservation Commission  
Municipal Building, 9th floor  
One Centre Street  
New York, NY 10007

Re: The McGraw-Hill Building Lobby. 330 West 42nd Street,

Dear Chair Carroll,

In the Landmarks Preservation Commission's February 9th, 2021, public hearing for modifications to the McGraw-Hill Building, several public speakers and even commissioners expressed support for landmark designation of the lobby. It is our understanding that several Requests for Evaluation (RFE) proposing designation of the lobby as an interior landmark have recently been received by the Commission. We write in support of LPC investigating those RFEs expeditiously and based on the findings urge the lobby of the McGraw-Hill building to be calendared for a public hearing as soon as possible.

This is urgent as demolition documents filed with the Department of Buildings and approved by the Commission on September 24, 2020, indicate removal of the heart of the lobby—almost all of the main corridor between the vestibule and crossing elevator corridor.<sup>1</sup>

Many of us on Manhattan Community Board 4 know it intimately, as the Board's administrative offices were for years located in the building, and committee meetings were regularly held there. The lobby possesses not only the highest architectural importance but enormous public appeal. It is so clearly an extension of Raymond Hood's design for the building's exterior that it should certainly have been designated along with it in 1979.

We are very impressed by the skill and sensitivity of the building owner's design and historic-preservation consultants. Our advisory letter to you on February 3rd, 2021, supported the exterior

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<sup>1</sup> The Executive Committee approved this letter at its regularly scheduled meeting on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2021. The letter is subject to ratification at the March 3<sup>rd</sup> Full Board Meeting.

modifications which were the subject of the recent public hearing. The project team is certainly capable of appropriate modifications to the lobby as warranted by the building's adaptive re-use. However, according to their testimony in the hearing, a "restorative approach" is not proposed, but rather a "conversation" between old and new.

Importantly, in the public hearing, the applicant's consultants described the redesign of the lobby as in progress and not yet finalized. This places the lobby at a critical juncture.

As apparently now conceived, its renovation would remove enough historic fabric to disqualify what little remains from landmark designation. Of course, the applicant is under no obligation to execute all of the demolition currently permitted. We ask the Commission to reach out as soon as possible to discuss with the applicant the possibility of interior designation before work proceeds or sparing enough of the lobby to allow designation as it proceeds, insuring its protection into the future. Agreeing to the high-profile lobby's designation could be a public relations windfall for the building's conversion, attracting positive publicity and good will from New Yorkers.

We note that in the discussion session of the public hearing, Commissioner Goldblum stated that "the lobby is remarkably intact and I think that it certainly is of the level that would merit designation; it can be landmarked either before [the applicant's] work, during it, or after." Commissioner Chapin stated, "I agree that interior designation would be appropriate." Commissioner Holford-Smith said, "I certainly would encourage the owner to preserve as much of the interior as possible so that we can landmark this lobby which is an incredible, incredible, one-of-a-kind space."<sup>2</sup>

As one of the public speakers noted, it has been three years since the Commission designated an interior landmark—the long overdue Main Reading Room of the New York Public Library at that. The McGraw-Hill Lobby cries out for protection as soon as possible. Not doing so might result in a monumental loss for one of New York City's architectural treasures.

Sincerely,



Lowell D. Kern  
Chair  
Manhattan Community Board 4



Jean-Daniel Noland  
Chair  
Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Land Use Committee

cc: Hon. Corey Johnson, Speaker, City Council  
Hon. Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President  
330 West 42<sup>nd</sup> Street Owners and Representatives

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/lpc/hearings/hearings.page>