



REAL ESTATE BOARD OF NEW YORK

## **TESTIMONY OF THE REAL ESTATE BOARD OF NEW YORK, INC. ON THE PROPOSED PARK AVENUE HISTORIC DISTRICT**

February 11, 2013

The Real Estate Board of New York, Inc. (REBNY) is a broadly based trade association of over 15,000 owners, developers, brokers and real estate professionals active throughout New York City. Park Avenue is one of New York City's most cherished corridors, and REBNY supports the preservation of beautiful and distinguished buildings for future generations of New Yorkers. However, based on a review of the proposed district, REBNY does not believe the district merits Historic District designation as proposed.

The distinguishing characteristics of this district, as provided by the brief presentation, are 12- to 20-story residential buildings built before 1930. There are many buildings that are outside of these parameters, which undermine the Historic District standard of a "distinct section of the city". In our judgment, the following 21 buildings are outside of these parameters and should be excluded from consideration in the district: 920, 949, 957, 980, 985, 990, 1012, 1015, 1020, 1025, 1036, 1055, 1065, 1067, 1080, 1082, 1108, 1110, 1197, 1240 Park Avenue and 1339 Madison Avenue. These buildings which constitute almost a third of the properties in the district seriously dilute the quality and integrity of this proposed district.

A search of the AIA Guide, which includes many noteworthy buildings, including those not yet designated, only features two (940 and 944 Park Avenue) of the large apartment buildings in the proposed district. A good illustration is the entire northern portion (roughly between East 94<sup>th</sup> and 96<sup>th</sup> Streets) where there are more buildings lacking distinction than there are buildings of distinction. This entire northern section should have been excluded from the proposal.

More recently, the *New York Times* points out in their tepid review of the architectural distinctiveness of the area, that there are several deeply unattractive buildings included in this proposal. While a few of the properties may merit consideration as an individual landmark, there are too few buildings of comparable quality and too many buildings which lack distinction to justify our support for designation. There may be more in the history of these buildings and their development that would justify designation. However, in the absence of a comprehensive and detailed designation report we cannot find a basis for support.

The basis for designation must remain on merit. Designating properties that do not contribute to the proposed district is unnecessary and will only devalue the worth of a Historic District. REBNY believes this proposed district contains too many inconsistencies and is in need of a more thoughtful evaluation. We urge the Commission to reconsider whether the district as proposed has merit and whether there is a much smaller collection of buildings that would deserve consideration. We are attaching a map for your reference and convenience. Thank you.

# Park Avenue Historic District

