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The City of New York Manhattan Community Board 8

February 21, 2012

Hon. Robert B. Tierney, Chair
NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission
Municipal Building
One Centre Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Re: 1000 Fifth Avenue (82nd Street) – Metropolitan Museum of Art – INDIVIDUAL LANDMARK/CENTRAL PARK SCENIC LANDMARK

Dear Chair Tierney:

At the Full Board meeting on Wednesday, February 15, 2012, the board adopted the following resolution regarding **1000 Fifth Avenue (82nd Street) – Metropolitan Museum of Art – INDIVIDUAL LANDMARK/CENTRAL PARK SCENIC LANDMARK** - *Emily Rafferty, President, Thomas Campbell, Director, for the Metropolitan Museum and Dennis McGlade, Olin Partnership [Landscape Architect]*. Application is to redesign the plaza, including replacing fountains, paving, plantings, lighting and adding seating and kiosks. **[JOINT ITEM WITH PARKS COMMITTEE]**

WHEREAS 1000 Fifth Avenue, is a Beaux-Arts and Roman style museum.

WHEREAS the central pavilion on Fifth Avenue was designed by Richard Morris Hunt and Richard Holland Hunt and was constructed between 1895-1902 in the Beaux-Arts style; its construction displaced the original Calvert Vaux and Jacob Wrey Mould building constructed 1874-1880, part of which is still visible in the interior of the museum.

WHEREAS side wings were added along 5th Avenue between 1904-1926 and were designed by McKim, Mead and White.

WHEREAS there have been additions, alterations and modifications to the museum over the years culminating in the Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo Associates Master Plan of 1967.

WHEREAS the applicant proposes a redesign of the four block long (80th Street to 84th Street) plaza in front of the incomparable front elevation of the Museum [the existing central pavilion with its grand staircase and the existing side wings].

WHEREAS the applicant proposes to redesign the plaza into a more efficient, pleasing and environmentally friendly space.

THIS APPLICATION IS DIVIDED INTO FIVE PARTS: 1. The proposed plantings 2. The proposed fountains 3. The proposed kiosks 4. The proposed furniture to be placed in the plaza 5. The proposed lighting.

PART 1. The proposed plantings

WHEREAS the applicant proposes two bosques (small groves of trees carefully clipped) of London plane trees on each side of the proposed new fountains that will flank either side of the grand staircase to the main entrance of the museum; there will be 4 separate bosques altogether, two near the 81st Street entrance and two near the 83rd Street entrance.

WHEREAS the applicant proposes two shaded allees (parallel line of trees) composed of little-leaf linden trees, clipped as topiaries, one each in front of the side wings.

WHEREAS the applicant proposes to place ornamental planters behind the two bosques and the fountain on each side of the grand entrance stair so that there will be matching sets of planters containing shrubs and herbaceous flowers on either side of the grand stair at the front elevation at the ground level.

WHEREAS sustainability goals will be incorporated into all of the new plantings, including larger tree pits than the existing tree pits.

WHEREAS the plaza was last redesigned in 1968.

WHEREAS the applicant feels the existing design of the plaza is unattractive, dated and not people-friendly.

WHEREAS there will now be more than twice the number of trees than under the existing condition.

WHEREAS the applicant proposes a new planting scheme for the south drive as well as at the north loading dock area.

WHEREAS all of the new plantings provide for additional shade to the plaza during the summer, enhance the pedestrian experience in front of the museum and provide a grace and formal symmetry to the front elevation of the museum [the Richard Morris Hunt central pavilion and the McKim, Mead and White side wings].

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Part 1 of this application is approved as presented.

This recommendation was approved by a vote of 29 in favor, 9 opposed, and 0 abstentions.

PART 2: The proposed fountains

WHEREAS the applicant proposes to replace the existing two long fountains with a pair of smaller square fountains, made of granite, that will flank either side of the grand entrance stair; the fountains are approximately the same dimensions as the two adjacent bosques that will flank each fountain. [The grand entrance stair will be in the center, then the fountains on each side and then the two pairs of bosques.]

WHEREAS the fountains will bracket and reinforce the museum's identity, be a pedestrian entity, will entertain pedestrians and provide for additional seating along the rim of each fountain.

WHEREAS the name of the principal donor for the redesign of the plaza will be on a small plaque that will be set into the rim of the one of the fountains.

WHEREAS the height from the base of each fountain to the top of the water spray will be approximately 10-12'.

WHEREAS the placement of the fountains will allow for clearer paths to the 81st Street and 83rd Street entrances to the museum.

WHEREAS each fountain will provide a variety of water patterns by means of computer programming.

WHEREAS two sides of each fountain will serve as benches.

WHEREAS the design of the proposed fountains meets the high aesthetic standard of the existing front elevation of the museum [the central pavilion and the flanking wings].

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Part 2 of this application is approved as presented.

This recommendation was approved by a vote of 22 in favor, 14 opposed, and 2 abstentions.

PART 3: The proposed kiosks

WHEREAS the plaza will be paved in two patterns of granite, in shades of grey; the applicant proposes two kiosks, within the plaza, one near to the 81st Street entrance for visitor services and one near to the 83rd Street entrance for light refreshments.

WHEREAS each kiosk will measure 11 ½' x 11 ½' x 8' tall and will be constructed of a brown finished metal.

WHEREAS kiosks of this nature lend a "public plaza" air to what should be a dignified space in front of a spectacular museum.

WHEREAS there is a profusion of vendors already selling food in the plaza.

WHEREAS the applicant should be discouraged from having any future intention to sell alcohol at the kiosk intended for light refreshments.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Part 3 of this application is approved as presented.

This recommendation was approved by a vote of 19 in favor, 18 opposed, and 0 abstentions.

PART 4: The proposed furniture to be placed in the plaza

WHEREAS in addition to the fountain seating, the applicant proposes 400 chairs and 100 tables as well as permanent benches and red retractable parasols, to provide seating and shade.

WHEREAS the tables and chairs are a standard design that the Parks Department uses in other locations in Central Park and in other public parks and opens spaces throughout New York City.

WHEREAS the benches and parasols will be placed on the north and south sides of the plaza.

WHEREAS the new moveable tables and chairs will be scattered beneath the four bosques and the benches with parasols will be behind each of the two allees that are part of the plaza redesign and will be located to the south of the 81st Street entrance to the museum and to the north of the 83rd Street entrance to the museum.

WHEREAS the new tables and chairs may further increase pedestrian usage of the plaza and may not alleviate the use of the steps of the grand entrance staircase by museum goers and pedestrians as a place to sit.

WHEREAS the red color of the parasols seems out of context against the incomparable front elevation; the parasols seem unnecessary since so much additional shade will be provided by the new plantings [the 4 bosques and the 2 allees].

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Part 4 of this application is disapproved as presented.

This recommendation was approved by a vote of 19 in favor, 17 opposed, and 0 abstentions.

PART 5: The proposed lighting scheme

WHEREAS the applicant proposes a new LED lighting plan to light both the incomparable front elevation and the fountains in the plaza and the bosques and allees in the plaza.

WHEREAS the new energy-efficient lights will be mounted on the museum facade; there will also be angled uplights on the sidewalk.

WHEREAS the proposed new lighting plan will enhance the architectural magnificence of the front elevation.

WHEREAS the lighting plan is both truly elegant and totally functional and will provide the night-time passer-by or visitor will a lovely view of both the front elevation and the redesigned plaza.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Part 5 of this application is approved as presented.

This recommendation was approved by a vote of 36 in favor, 0 opposed, and 0 abstentions.

Sincerely,

Nicholas Viest
Chair

Jane Parshall and David Liston
Co-Chairs, Landmarks Committee

cc: Hon. Michael Bloomberg, Mayor of the City of New York
Hon. Scott M. Stringer, Manhattan Borough President
Hon. Liz Krueger, NYS Senate Member
Hon. Dan Quart, NYS Assembly Member
Hon. Micah Kellner, NYS Assembly Member
Hon. Daniel Garodnick, NYC Council Member
Hon. Jessica Lappin, NYC Council Member