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**The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan**

July 21, 2023

Honorable Sarah Carroll, Chair
NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission
Municipal Building
One Center Street, 9th Floor
New York, New York 10007

RE: 985 Fifth Avenue (Between 79th Street and 80th Street) Metropolitan Museum Historic District - *Ward Dennis, Higgins Quasebarth; William Sofield, Studio Sofield, SLCE; Elliot Spitzer, Spitzer Enterprises* - A no-style apartment building designed by Wechsler & Schimenti and constructed in 1970. Application is to demolish the existing building and to construct a new building.

Dear Chair Carroll,

At the Full Board meeting of Community Board 8 Manhattan held on July 19, 2023, the board unanimously approved the following resolution by a vote of 27 in favor, 6 opposed, 6 abstentions, and 2 not voting for cause.

WHEREAS 985 Fifth Avenue is a no-style apartment building designed by Wechsler & Schimenti and constructed in 1970;

WHEREAS 985 Fifth Avenue is now a balconied 25-story apartment building of glass and glazed brick; 985 Fifth Avenue replaced three town houses which had stood on the site; #985, known as one of the Brokaw mansions, #986 and # 987;

WHEREAS 985 Fifth Avenue is considered a non-contributing building within the historic district;

WHEREAS 985 Fifth Avenue is set back from the street wall by a driveway which is not a typical feature of a Fifth Avenue building;

WHEREAS the applicant proposes to construct a new 210' high as-of-right apartment building to replace the existing building using the classic Fifth Avenue prewar vernacular for design details;

WHEREAS the new building will be clad in limestone at the front elevation; the secondary elevations will be clad in brick with limestone detailing;

WHEREAS historic precedents for the new design include both materials and a classical organization for the base, middle/shaft and top/crown of the proposed building; the shafts of antecedent buildings are usually unadorned and the crowns return to a more elaborate decoration and are 3-dimensional;

WHEREAS fenestration on the Fifth Avenue elevation will be larger with smaller windows on the south, east and west-facing elevations; the simple steel casement windows are set fairly deeply into the wall and present as casements — the casements at the middle of the front elevation flank a fixed window;

WHEREAS the proposed building steps back in stages with the limestone crown/mechanical enclosures stepping back even more; the first set back will occur above the 13th floor, another slight set back will occur at the 18th and 19th floors with crown or top of the building set back even further;

WHEREAS there is a decorative railing at the 5th floor of the front elevation, at the 12th floor of the front elevation, at the 14th floor of the front elevation, at the 16th floor of the front elevation, the 18th floor of the front elevation and at the roof of the front elevation;

WHEREAS at the second floor at the front elevation below each window are a set of curved inward shapes as decoration; these present as a limestone post and rail — with metal spandrels;

WHEREAS the railing levels at the 5th floor, at the 12th floor, at the 14th floor and at the 18th floor have different shapes of cast glass infill set into a limestone panel with limestone railings — the same convex limestone shape that is on the second floor is repeated on each decorative railing with a cast glass decorative panel between;

WHEREAS typically rear elevations along Fifth Avenue are visible from Madison Avenue; the side elevation at the north will be mostly brick with limestone at the crown; the south elevation will be brick with slightly more limestone and at the rear, the not completely unconsidered elevation will be mostly brick with limestone at the crown;

WHEREAS at the south-facing elevation, as it meets the front elevation at the corner, the quoining will be limestone to create a solid corner; although 985 Fifth Avenue is not a corner building, the south elevation is decorated and given a fair amount of consideration in its detailing;

WHEREAS there will be a 4-story rusticated base with a prominent 2-story entrance; the detailing at the rusticated base matches exactly the detailing at its neighbor at 988 Fifth Avenue;

WHEREAS the applicant, in the proposed new building, will re-establish the street wall, include set backs at the upper floors and will shift the bulkhead to the south; the new rear yard will be slightly larger;

WHEREAS the applicant plans a green space/garden at both sides of the front entrance with limestone bollards;

WHEREAS at the north elevation, the facade will be pulled back at the corner so that the beautiful rope moulding at 988 Fifth Avenue remains visible;

WHEREAS instead of the traditional lanterns to provide light at the entrance, there will be a more abstract vertical lighting feature that will present as being perpendicular to the more recessed front door; the entrance awning will float from front to rear;

WHEREAS there will be a dog bar at the left of the entrance door set into base and below the left vertical light column; there will be a sculptured bird set on top of the basin for the dog bar;

WHEREAS the metal or grille work on the entry door will have the numbers 985 subtly set within the grill; the grill with the abstract numbers set into the grill presents as modern and is a way of reminding passers-by of the house that was there previously;

WHEREAS at the service window at the front elevation to the right of the front entrance there is a sculpture of a squirrel with an acorn;

WHEREAS the service door to the south of the front entrance on Fifth Avenue is bronze and in bas relief tells the history of the site highlighting the history especially of the Brokaw houses and their demolition that was a contributing factor to the eventual creation of the Landmarks Preservation Commission; the service door is a homage to what went before;

WHEREAS at the upper part of the building corner cuts diminish the massing; the spandrels for the upper portion are austere; the neoclassical detailing at the upper top or roof includes limestone eggs and limestone railings;

WHEREAS 988 Fifth Avenue, 985's neighbor to the north, will lose some of its lot line windows;

WHEREAS a revocable consent will be required from the Department of Transportation for the part of the green space at the ground at the front elevation that protrudes into the public way;

WHEREAS Studio Sofield is well known for the whimsical touches incorporated into its buildings — in this case the dog fountain and the squirrel — and for its artistic touches such as the grillwork on the front door incorporating the numbers 985 and the repeated patterns as the decorative railings at the front elevation ascend upward and become more elaborate;

WHEREAS the windows at the front elevation present as empty vacant eyes even though deeply set into a flat facade and the building feels too big for the site;

WHEREAS on balance, while the comments about the windows have merit, Studio Sofield brings a unique view with a historical perspective to the proposed design for 985 Fifth Avenue; Studio Sofield is not replicating a 1920s prewar building but rather combining the best elements of a prewar building with a modernist sensibility and is to be applauded;

WHEREAS the attention to detail in the applicant's presentation was superb;

WHEREAS this resolution could never do justice to the applicant's presentation;

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

Please advise us of any action taken on this matter.

Sincerely,

Russell Squire

Russell Squire
Chair

David Helpern and Jane Parshall

David Helpern and Jane Parshall
Co-Chairs, Landmarks Committee

cc: Honorable Eric Adams, Mayor of the City of New York
Honorable Mark Levine, Manhattan Borough President
Honorable Jerry Nadler, 12th Congressional District Representative
Honorable Liz Krueger, NYS Senator, 28th Senatorial District
Honorable José M. Serrano, NYS Senator, 29th Senatorial District

Honorable Edward Gibbs, NYS Assembly Member 68th Assembly District
Honorable Alex Bores, NYS Assembly Member, 73rd Assembly District
Honorable Rebecca Seawright, NYS Assembly Member 76th Assembly District
Honorable Keith Powers, NYC Council Member, 4th Council District
Honorable Julie Menin, NYC Council Member, 5th Council District