



THE ADVOCATE FOR NEW YORK CITY'S HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS

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July 17, 2023

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

Re: 576 Fifth Avenue, Manhattan

Dear Chair Carroll,

The Historic Districts Council is writing to express support for Michael Perlman's current campaign to landmark 576 Fifth Avenue in Manhattan's Diamond District.

Reporting on the Diamond District in April of this year, [*The New York Times* wrote](#) that "a mega-developer has demolished more than a dozen buildings in the district to make way for two huge structures, a supertall tower and a luxury hotel." Because the physical fabric of the Diamond District is under increasingly intense development pressure, and because there are *currently no landmarked buildings* in the District, HDC believes that this is the right time for the LPC to designate 576 Fifth Avenue.

This building is pivotal and pioneering in the history of the Diamond District. Originally known as the Howard Building, named for its first tenant, Howard & Co. Jewelers, 576 Fifth Avenue opened at the corner of 47th Street and 5th Avenue in 1907. At the time, and into the mid-1920s, New York's Diamond District was concentrated downtown, on Maiden Lane. The Howard Building stands out not only as one of the first loft buildings on the stretch of 47th Street between 5th and 6th Avenue that would become the modern Diamond District, but also it is one of the first buildings on 47th Street to house a jewelry firm. It is fair to say that 47th Street's identity as the Diamond District began at 576 Fifth Avenue.

The building itself is a gem of Beaux-Arts architecture designed by Robert Maynicke (1849-1913), who was hailed as "a pioneer in the building of modern loft buildings." A German-American immigrant, Maynicke attended night school at Cooper Union, and was trained in the office of George B. Post, where he was responsible for additions to Post's New York Times building on Park Row (a New York City Landmark). After Maynicke established his own firm, Maynicke & Franke, in 1905, he designed the Germania Bank Building and the Yorkville Bank Building, both New York City Landmarks.

The hustle that defines the Diamond District is not telegraphed by 576 Fifth Avenue's Beaux-Arts beauty, but a detailed designation report could capture a meaningful narrative of the cultural landscape of 47th Street. The Diamond District's specific rhythms and mores, where handshake deals are common, separate it from the

more conventional business districts of Midtown Manhattan. A landmark designation for 576 Fifth Avenue would not only safeguard the building where the Diamond District began, but also allow the LPC to tell 47th Street's uniquely-New-York story, which, as of yet, is not included in any designation report.

Given that LPC has committed to telling the story of all New Yorkers under its Equity Framework, we urge the Commission to take this opportunity to designate 576 Fifth Avenue and honor the unique history of this District.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Frampton Tolbert', written in a cursive style.

Frampton Tolbert
Executive Director