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Chair Meenakshi Srinivasan
Landmarks Preservation Commission
1 Centre Street, 9th floor
New York NY 10007

Dear Chair Srinivasan,

On behalf of the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, and its more than 5,200 registered architects and associated design and construction professional members, we are writing to express our strong support for the individual designation of the Interborough Rapid Transit Powerhouse. As we originally stated in our 2009 letter in support of the IRT Powerhouse's designation, the IRT Powerhouse, designed by the renowned architect Stanford White of McKim, Mead & White, is worthy of designation not only for its architectural merit but also for its role as a significant example of the development of New York City's infrastructure.

At the time of its completion in 1904, the IRT Powerhouse was the largest powerhouse in the world and provided power to the first subway line in New York. One of the few infrastructure buildings designed by White, the IRT Powerhouse is an unusual example of the architect's work and is among the most imposing of his projects. With its elegant arcaded composition and Classical- and Renaissance-inspired details, the building exemplifies White's Beaux-Arts style. Many of these architectural elements survive today. Unfortunately, demolition has destroyed all of the original smokestacks that were integral to the expression of the building, which designation could have avoided. In 2009, the last smokestack from 1904 was removed.

The IRT Powerhouse is both a great work of architecture and an important part of the history of rapid transit in New York. As noted in a previous Landmarks application, "by commissioning such a grand design for a very functional purpose, the IRT Company was visually expressing its belief in the greatness, usefulness, and civic importance of this new mode of transportation." The IRT transformed what could have been an ordinary industrial building into the flagship power station of its day, and in doing so, asserted the civic role of architecture, creating a monument to New York City's subway system.

We strongly urge the Commission to designate the IRT Powerhouse.

Sincerely,

Tomas Rossant, AIA
2015 President