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February 4, 2015

Carl Weisbrod, Chair
City Planning Commission
22 Reade Street
New York, NY 10007

Dear Chair Weisbrod,

On behalf of the American Institute of Architects New York Chapter and our more than 5,000 architect and affiliate members here in New York, we are pleased to offer testimony in regard to the One Vanderbilt proposal. As we have previously said in regard to the East Midtown Rezoning discussion, projects such as One Vanderbilt will allow for the development of a world-class business district and major job generator for the future of New York City, a future that is characterized by the design of the next generation of great buildings.

In cities around the globe, there are numerous excellent examples of transit-oriented development that improve the accessibility, quality, and competitiveness of business centers. It is sound planning for the City's future to have first-class commercial space and added density linked to enhanced transportation connectivity. This project replaces outdated and obsolete buildings with a new, sustainable structure that contributes to the public realm, while at the same time enhancing the grand character of the heart of New York City's primary business district.

We commend Kohn Pederson Fox Associates and SL Green for their efforts in going beyond a simplistic solution and their willingness to engage in open discussion about the future of East Midtown. The proposed changes to Vanderbilt Ave extend the below-grade transit pathways, augmenting the intermodal transportation function of the building complex, fundamental to moving large numbers of commuters and visitors through the primary transit center in the country. This is especially important after East Side Access comes on line, relieving some of the pressure on Penn Station, but significantly increasing the numbers of people coming from Long Island to this part of Midtown. Through the extension of on-grade public space by creating a pedestrian zone on Vanderbilt Ave, the neighborhood gains an outdoor living room that can also function as an extension of Grand Central.

The new building creates a "three-part" harmony between the three scales of design intervention that create world-class cities: the streetscape, the interior public space, and the skyline-defining scale. We commend the City Planning Commission for this discussion. We urge approval as a first step on the path to a coordinated effort to reimagine the above and below grade experience for those living, working, and visiting in East Midtown, and we offer continued guidance as this conversation continues.

Sincerely,

Tomas Rossant, AIA
2015 President

Rick Bell, FAIA
Executive Director