

Frank Mahan
LPC Testimony Opening Statement
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Good morning Madam Speaker, Chair Powers, and members of the Committee. Thank you for holding this hearing and considering my nomination to serve on the Landmarks Preservation Commission. I am also grateful to the Administration for this nomination.

I am an architect who – if appointed -- will bring to the Commission extensive expertise in preservation and adaptive reuse. I believe that historic preservation – and more broadly how we care for our past – is one of the most critical activities for charting our collective future. That is why I have spent much of my nearly two-decade career working to protect and preserve New York City's architectural and cultural heritage.

I am a Design Principal at Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, one of the largest and most influential architecture, interior design, engineering, and urban planning firms in the world. In this role, I lead our Adaptive Reuse Practice, coordinating our work on historic buildings around the world – to preserve them for the future, retrofit them for energy efficiency, and convert them to vibrant new uses.

But it is working on civically scaled projects in my hometown that is the most rewarding. I have led the restoration and adaptive reuse of a number of designated New York City landmarks. At the James A. Farley Post Office, across from Penn Station, my team converted one million square feet of warehouse space to public concourses and retail connecting the surrounding neighborhood with the new Moynihan Train Hall, all surmounted by four floors of high-tech office space above. The result is a historically-rooted front door for Manhattan's newly developed far west side. At the Waldorf Astoria on Park Avenue, we are meticulously restoring the many public spaces, lobbies, lounges, and event rooms, while reinvigorating the rest of the building with new hotel rooms and residences. The 1.6 million square foot undertaking will revive one of New York's most iconic landmarks and once again invite New Yorkers to "meet me at the clock" in its celebrated lobby.

I have also helped to pioneer work with historic buildings of more recent vintage – midcentury modern, while revisiting many of my firm's own buildings, now landmarked themselves. In the Financial District, my team adapted One Chase Manhattan Plaza after JPMorgan moved to midtown. The neighborhood had changed around the building, transforming into a 24-hour residential community. So, we opened up its fortress-like base and plaza to entertainment, food, and shopping supporting the families that live nearby. In midtown, we adapted the glass jewel box at Fifth Avenue and 43rd Street originally housing Manufacturers Hanover Trust from a rundown bank branch to vibrant retail, kicking off the rejuvenation of lower Fifth Avenue. And most recently, I lead a loving restoration of the pinnacle of midcentury corporate modernism – Lever House on Park Avenue at 53rd Street. We approached this project with the careful eye of material scientists, polishing the building to the high gleam of its midcentury heyday.

Whether classical in form, or midcentury modern, my team and I begin these projects with deep research to understand the history of a building before shaping its next life. We must understand the original architect's intent, the way a building has changed over time – since all buildings change over time, and how it has served its community. These influences – ranging from a building's changing meaning to historic construction technologies – must be understood and woven together to create a new future. Noted architecture critic Justin Davidson recently wrote in *New York Magazine* of my work at the Waldorf Astoria and Lever House, "...his approach to historic preservation is both sweepingly philosophical and obsessively detailed."

Our collective history and culture, relationship with the environment, and changing patterns of living all come together in preservation. I cannot think of another field that deserves such careful stewardship of diverse and experienced professionals. Through preservation, we have the opportunity to adapt our city to new patterns of living, address climate change by caring for the buildings we already have, and preserve cultural continuity within our communities.

I was introduced to the possibility of building as a profession at a young age. My grandfather was a contractor, and my father was a public-school teacher – he actually taught architecture; and I took his class all four years of high school. After starting my professional journey in his classes, I made my way east for graduate school at Princeton, where I met and eventually married a native New Yorker who grew up on the Upper West Side. We settled in Manhattan, where we also send our daughter to school. I have been working ever since to protect and preserve New York City's architectural and cultural heritage while giving historic buildings new life. I would be honored to serve our great city and my fellow New Yorkers in this new capacity on the Commission.

Thank you for your time. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.