Valerie S. Mason
Chair

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The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan

July 21, 2025

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

RE: 945 Madison Avenue: Former Whitney Museum (Upper East Side Historic District) – *PBDW Architects* – A Modern style building designed by Marcel Breuer and constructed in 1966. Application is for the creation of new egress lighting, planters and signage at the secondary entry on Madison Avenue, and for a new eating area in the Sculpture Garden.

Dear Chair Carroll,

This application is separated into two parts: Part A – The alterations to the secondary entrance on Madison Avenue, and Part B – The Sculpture Garden restoration.

PART A – The Secondary Entrance

At the Full Board meeting of Community Board 8 Manhattan held on July 16, 2025, the Board considered a proposed resolution concerning Part A of the following application. The Board did not carry out the resolution.

A proposed resolution to disapprove **PART A** of the application as presented failed to pass with a vote of 20 in favor, 16 opposed, 5 abstentions, and 0 not voting for cause.

> **WHEREAS** 945 Madison Avenue, the former Whitney Museum, now owned by Sotheby's, is a recently-designated Individual and partial Interior Landmark within the Upper East Side Historic District; and
>
> **WHEREAS** the applicant proposes alterations to the secondary entrance which must be code compliant for egress requirements; and
>
> **WHEREAS** the applicant proposes additional lighting at the steps, in planters on the walkway and mounted on the party wall to the south and on the museum building itself establishing a maintained light level of two footcandles; and
>
> **WHEREAS** the applicant proposes to add signage both at the party wall (self illuminated) and above the doors at the secondary entrance; and
>
> **WHEREAS** the planters add an element to the building design not heretofore present nor contemplated by the original architect; and
>
> **WHEREAS** the introduction of illuminated signage – or any signage, for that matter - on the party wall violates the wall's function as a "hard stop" to the museum building although at an early stage, Breuer contemplated non-illuminated boards mounted on the wall; and
>
> **WHEREAS** Breuer abandoned the idea during the design process; and
>
> **WHEREAS** new technologies exist to provide lighting at the floor of the secondary entranceway without esthetic damage to the original intent; and
>
> **WHEREAS** the applicant did not provide any detail as to the fixture specifications;

Accordingly, Community Board 8 Manhattan takes no position on Part A of this application.

PART B – The Sculpture Garden

At the Full Board meeting of Community Board 8 Manhattan held on July 16, 2025, the Board unanimously approved **PART B** of the following resolution by a vote of 41 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions, and 0 not voting for cause.

> **WHEREAS** 945 Madison Avenue, the former Whitney Museum, now owned by Sotheby's, is a recently-designated Individual and partial Interior Landmark within the Upper East Side Historic District; and
>
> **WHEREAS** the applicant proposes alterations to the sunken garden for use as outdoor dining and an overall building lighting scheme; and
>
> **WHEREAS** the applicant proposes the removal of a secondary planter on the wall along Madison Avenue added after 2012; and
>
> **WHEREAS** the applicant proposes a loosely geometric arrangement of movable tables and chairs for dining along with bronze sculpture pedestals; and
>
> **WHEREAS** the applicant proposes only one "fixed" element, a bar at the south end of the garden attached to the granite wall at multiple points; and
>
> **WHEREAS** the trees in planters will be trimmed so as to maintain their relationship to the surrounding wall – some peeking above, some remaining below street level; and
>
> **WHEREAS** the applicant proposes to restore the bluestone paving throughout, the secondary egress stair to the north and the low planter at the Madison Avenue wall; and
>
> **WHEREAS** the proposed lighting scheme for the building as a whole represents a faithful, if colorful, recreation of the architect's original intent; and
>
> **THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that PART B of this application is **APPROVED as presented.**

Please advise us of any action taken on this matter.

Sincerely,

Valerie S. Mason *Anthony Cohn and David Helpern*

Valerie S. Mason
Chair

Anthony Cohn and David Helpern
Co-Chairs, Landmarks Committee

cc: Honorable Kathy Hochul, Governor of New York
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
Honorable Diana Ayala, NYC Council Member, 8th Council District