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**MAS Testimony before the Landmarks Preservation Commission regarding the New York Public Library Midtown Campus Renovation**

February 19, 2019

The Preservation Committee of the Municipal Art Society of New York (MAS) supportive of the improvements to access and infrastructure in the New York Public Library's Midtown Campus Renovation. Overall, the Committee finds the plan to be respectful of the existing historic fabric, making modest interventions to achieve better functionality.

However, we have several recommendations for improving the proposal.

First, the Committee agrees that the existing loading dock area and service corridor are not functioning optimally and are generally unpleasant. At the same time, we question the proportions of the glazing on the new loading dock doors, and ask that this detail be reconsidered to more appropriately respond to the historic fenestration.

We also believe the proposal's creation of new open space has the potential to be an excellent amenity for the public, yet its current design raises concerns that its isolation may create security risks. Improving sight lines between other public spaces and the street would make an important difference. Furthermore, the quality of lighting will be key to the creation of an inviting space in the evening. We urge the applicant to use warm spectrum light.

On a related note, the Committee felt that the Serviceberry trees were an unnecessary addition. As there is no access to direct sun on the 40<sup>th</sup> Street façade, perhaps they could be eliminated. If they have been introduced to obscure the new lighting installation, the library should consider a different, less obtrusive lighting solution instead.

Finally, the modern implementation of the original palate of materials which look nice in plan, may not be harmonious in actuality. The design team should restudy the details, establishing a stronger line between the patterns that continue from the historic fabric and the gestures that are new. For example, the planter bench in the plaza is too formal and modern in relationship to the more conservative alterations. It is unclear why moveable furniture, which is standard throughout the balance of the library grounds and Bryant Park, is not used here.

In sum, we ask the Landmarks Preservation Commission to work with the applicant to ensure that the NYPL Midtown Campus can transform to meet new needs while safeguarding its historic character.