

Landmarks Preservation Commission
December 6, 2016, Designation List 491
LP-2582

**CITICORP CENTER (now 601 LEXINGTON AVENUE)
including SAINT PETER'S CHURCH**

601 Lexington Avenue (aka 601-635 Lexington Avenue, 139-153 East 53rd Street, 140-160 East 54th Street, 884-892 Third Avenue), Manhattan

Built, 1973-78; architects, Hugh A. Stubbins & Associates and Emery Roth & Sons

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1308, Lot 7501 (1001, 1002, 1005)

On September 13, 2016, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of Citicorp Center (now 601 Lexington Avenue), including Saint Peter's Church, and the proposed designation of the related landmark site. The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with provisions of law. Four people spoke in support of designation, including representatives of Saint Peter's Church, Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer, the New York Landmarks Conservancy, and the Municipal Art Society of New York. The principal owner, Boston Properties, and the Real Estate Board of New York submitted written testimony in support of designation.

Summary

The former Citicorp Center is a major example of late 20th century modern architecture. Designed by Hugh A. Stubbins & Associates, in association with Emery Roth & Sons, this early mixed-use complex contains three interlocking buildings: a 59-story office tower, a 6-story retail-and-office structure, and Saint Peter's Church.

Commissioned by First National City Bank (now Citibank), the 915-foot-tall office tower is one of New York City's most recognizable skyscrapers. Important for its slanted top, four "super" columns that rise over 100 feet and generous public spaces, it plays a major role on the Manhattan skyline. Each of the 24-foot-square columns is centered beneath one facade, using bold cantilevers to open up the corners of the site, where the church and plaza are located. Clad with aluminum and glass, the four silvery facades are exceptionally smooth, disguising eight tiers of V-shaped steel bracing designed by the noted structural engineer William LeMessurier. At the summit, the roof is cut off at a 45-degree angle. This conspicuous feature was initially conceived for terraced apartments but was later reoriented to face south and briefly considered as a platform for solar panels. Though the benefit of using solar panels proved unrealistic in the 1970s, other energy saving strategies were adopted. The bank claimed this pioneering effort at sustainable design used 42 percent less energy than comparable structures. Stubbins, in consultation with architect Edward Larrabee Barnes, also designed Saint Peter's Church. This prismatic structure is faced with



granite, rather than aluminum, to distinguish it from the neighboring office tower. Writers have compared the church's distinctive sculptural form to a "tent" and "hands held up in prayer."

The project also made innovative use of zoning incentives that provided floor area bonuses for public space, including a spacious sunken plaza, as well as various interiors that are not part of the designation. Commonly referred to as privately-owned public space (POPS), the layout, design and maintenance of these amenities were reviewed and approved by the City Planning Commission. The plaza, which is partly tucked beneath the office tower, was planned to enhance connections to the 53rd Street subway station, a heavily-used transit hub that provides access to both north-south and east-west subway lines. These POPS remain under jurisdiction of the City Planning Commission, and, with its approval, have undergone alterations.

Completed in 1978, when very few large buildings were being erected in New York City, Citicorp Center received considerable attention from the press. In *The New York Times*, critic Ada Louise Huxtable called it a "suave blockbuster" and Paul Goldberger viewed it as "remarkably intelligent synthesis of a number of architectural themes." Reporter David Dunlap later described Saint Peter's Church as "New York's most architecturally successful postwar sanctuary." Boston Properties acquired a majority interest in Citicorp Center in 2001; the complex was renamed 601 Lexington Avenue in 2010.

BUILDING DESCRIPTION

The Citicorp Center (now 601 Lexington Avenue) contains a 59-story office tower, a 6-story retail and office structure (aka market building) and Saint Peter's Church. The tower, which stands on four "super" columns, is clad with aluminum panels and reflective glass.

Sunken plaza

Historic: Two-level plaza with diagonal stairs and water feature, steps to and from subway mezzanine (south), retail space below Lexington Avenue sidewalk (west), entrance to church with double doors (north) on lower level, church name in raised capital letters, food kiosk with door (east), utility doors

Alterations: Retail awnings (west), re-configuration of retail space and entrances (east), granite pavement, granite panels slope down behind column, emergency exit and elevator (northeast corner)

East 53rd Street

Historic: Granite ledge with glass back, steps, six-story structure with roof terraces that step up towards east, recessed entrance to atrium at east end.

Alterations: Bollards, free-standing sign, ramp with railings for ADA compliance, lighting fixtures on side of the market building above east stairs, storefront, retail sign and awning, sign box around column at atrium entrance, glazed entrance infill, security cameras

Lexington Avenue

Historic: Granite ledge with glass back, granite walls of Saint Peter's Church, angled recessed entrance with double doors, large window with ledge, crucifix carved in stone to left of church entrance, granite marquee with metal lettering, bronze crucifix and planting bed near 54th Street.

Alterations: Glass entrance pavilion to 601 Lexington Avenue encloses south facade of church, bollards

East 54th Street

Historic: Granite walls of Saint Peter's Church, six-story structure with roof terraces steps up to the east, four recessed loading docks, recessed entrance to atrium

Alterations: Signage box around column at atrium entrance, glazed entrance infill, Saint Peter's Church glazed entrance pavilion

Third Avenue

Historic: Six-story aluminum and glass facade

Alterations: Emergency exit (south), restaurant entrance and door, corner entrance infill with revolving doors that flank two center doors and signage, signage box around column at entrance

Underside of office tower

Historic: Aluminum panels, grilles

Top of office tower

Historic: Slopes to south, east facade has two horizontal openings, north facade is recessed, slope is clad with square aluminum panels, slope levels at base and top

Alterations: Vertical antennae and other equipment along north edge

HISTORY

Evolution of East Midtown¹

In 1831, the recently-established New York & Harlem Railroad signed an agreement with New York State permitting the operation of steam locomotives on Fourth (now Park) Avenue, from 23rd Street to the Harlem River. Five years later, in 1836, several important street openings occurred in East Midtown. These included 42nd Street, Lexington Avenue and Madison Avenue. Initially, trains ran at grade, sharing Fourth Avenue with pedestrians and vehicles. In 1856, locomotives were banned below 42nd Street – the site of a maintenance barn and fuel lot. Though rail passengers continued south by horse car, this decision set the stage for East Midtown to become an important transit hub.

Cornelius Vanderbilt acquired control of the New York & Harlem, Hudson River, and the New York Central Railroads in 1863-67. Under his direction, a single terminal for the three railroads was planned and built, known as Grand Central Depot (1868-71, demolished). It was a large structure, consisting of an L-shaped head-house inspired by the Louvre in Paris, with entrances on 42nd Street and Vanderbilt Avenue, as well as a 652-foot-long train shed. The area immediately north, mainly between 45th and 49th Streets, served as a train yard. Traversed by

pedestrian and vehicular bridges, this busy facility occupied an irregularly-shaped site that extended from Lexington to Madison Avenue.

The earliest surviving buildings in midtown are residences in Murray Hill, directly south of 42nd Street. An 1847 covenant stipulated that all houses be built with brick and stone and many handsome ones survive, particularly east of Park Avenue. Following the Civil War, residential development continued up Fifth Avenue, transforming the area between St. Patrick's Cathedral (1853-88) and Central Park (begun 1857, both are New York City Landmarks). Though most of the large mansions – many owned by members of the Vanderbilt family – have been lost, other impressive residences survive on the side streets, between Park and Fifth Avenues. New York City Landmarks in the East 50s include: The Villard Houses (1883-85), William & Ada Moore House (1898-1900), Morton & Nellie Plant House (1903-05), and the Fiske-Harkness House (1871/1906).

In 1902, 15 railroad passengers were killed in a rear-end collision in the Park Avenue Tunnel, near 56th Street. In response to this tragic accident, William J. Wilgus, chief engineer of the New York Central Railroad, proposed that not only should steam locomotives be eliminated from Manhattan but that the terminal be expanded and completely rebuilt. The city agreed and Grand Central Terminal (a New York City Landmark and Interior Landmark) was completed in February 1913.

Wilgus envisioned the new terminal as part of a city-within-the-city, knitted together by more than two dozen buildings constructed above the newly-submerged rail tracks. Faced with tan brick and limestone, these handsome neo-classical style buildings formed an understated backdrop to the monumental Beaux-Arts style terminal. A key example is the New York Central Building, a New York City Landmark and Interior Landmark. Erected by the railroad in 1927-29, it stands directly above the tracks and incorporates monumental archways that direct automobile traffic towards the Park Avenue Viaduct (1917-19, a New York City Landmark).

The new terminal and subway attracted considerable commercial development to East Midtown, especially near 42nd Street, the original route of the IRT subway. Most of these buildings date to the 1910s and 1920s. In contrast to the neo-classical, City Beautiful, aesthetics that shaped Terminal City, these distinctive skyscrapers frequently incorporate unusual terra-cotta ornamentation inspired by medieval (and later, Art Deco) sources. Memorable examples include: the Bowery Savings Bank Building (1921-23, 1931-33) and the Chanin Building (1927-29, both New York City Landmarks).

In 1918, subway service was extended on Lexington Avenue, north of 42nd Street. Though Terminal City had several hotels, such as the Biltmore and Commodore (both have been re-clad), additional rooms were needed. A substantial number would rise on Lexington Avenue, between 47th and 50th Streets, including the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel (1929-32) and the Summit Hotel (1959-61, both are New York City Landmarks). East-west IND subway service, along 53rd Street, to Lexington Avenue and Fifth Avenue, began in 1933.

The New York Central Railroad struggled with debt following World War II and entered a significant period of decline. In response, it began to terminate lot leases and sell off real estate properties. The impact of the situation was most powerfully felt on Park Avenue. Apartment buildings and hotels were quickly replaced by an influx of glassy office towers, with such pioneering mid-20th century Modern works as Lever House (1949-52, a New York City Landmark) and the Seagram Building (1954-56, a New York City Landmark and Interior Landmark). The success of these and other projects helped make Park Avenue (and East Midtown) one of Manhattan's most prestigious corporate addresses.

Citibank / Citicorp²

Originally called City Bank of New York, Citibank was one of several institutions that were established by merchants in 1812 to fill the void created by the demise of The First Bank of the United States (1791-1811) in Philadelphia. It became known as National City Bank of New York in 1865 and by the start of the 20th century was the largest bank in the nation, leading “the movement by which commercial banks assumed the functions of investment institutions.”³ For more than a century, Citibank was based in Lower Manhattan, occupying buildings at 52 Wall Street, and later 55 Wall Street (the former Merchant’s Exchange and U.S. Customs House, 1836-42, a New York City Landmark and Interior Landmark) as well as the City Bank-Farmers Trust Company Building (1930-31, a New York City Landmark) at 20 Exchange Place. It became First National City Bank of New York in 1955, First National City Bank (and First National City Bank Corporation) in 1962, and Citibank/Citicorp in 1976.

In September 1958 the bank announced plans to move to East Midtown, erecting a 41-story office building at 399 Park Avenue (Carson & Lundin and Kahn & Jacobs), between East 53rd and 54th Streets.⁴ Completed in 1961, the east entrance faced the future site of the Citicorp Center. The U.S. Congress passed amendments to the Bank Holding Company Act in 1970, allowing banks to diversify and “expand their operations in this country and overseas beyond traditional banking functions.”⁵ Despite tough economic times, the city’s three largest banks – First National City Bank, Chase Manhattan Bank, and Manufacturers Hanover Trust – actively invested in real estate, leasing or constructing new buildings and office space throughout Manhattan. Citicorp Center was built under Walter B. Wriston, who served as Citibank/Citicorp’s chairman from 1970 to 1984.

Site

Citicorp Center is located on the block bounded by Lexington Avenue, 53rd Street, Third Avenue, and 54th Street. The southeast corner of the block is occupied by 880 Third Avenue (1962, re clad), an 18-story office building. A succession of glassy modern-style office buildings had been constructed in the vicinity following the 1955-56 demolition of the Third Avenue Elevated Railway – the last el to operate in midtown Manhattan. Examples in the immediate area include: 850 Third Avenue (1960), 845 Third Avenue (1963), 866 Third Avenue (1963), 900 Third Avenue (1967), and 825 Third Avenue (1969).

The Citicorp site was quietly assembled by Julien J. Studley Inc., commercial real estate brokers, under the name Lexman Realty. Formerly occupied by row houses, an apartment building, medical offices and a garage, it took more than five years to acquire the 31 parcels from 16 owners.⁶ The largest and most important parcel was occupied by Saint Peter’s Lutheran Church. Founded in 1862, the German-speaking congregation purchased the site in 1902 and services began in 1905. Located at Lexington Avenue and East 54th Street, the 56-by-80 foot limestone structure was designed in the Gothic Revival style by architects John G. Michel and P. Brander.⁷ The congregation flourished and erected a parish house at 132 East 54th Street (Maynicke & Franke, 1924). In the late 1960s, members considered moving to Turtle Bay, close to the United Nations. Though the congregation decided to remain on Lexington Avenue, brokers with Studley were intrigued by the block’s potential as a development site and met with Bob Graham, a senior vice president at First National City Bank, who in late 1968 “cautiously authorized [them] to attempt the assemblage.”⁸

Once several parcels on East 53rd Street had been acquired, Studley re-approached the congregation in late 1969. The church hired real estate consultant John R. White, president of James D. Landauer Associates, who conceived the idea of selling the building and replacing it with a new structure as part of a condominium agreement.⁹ Reverend Ralph E. Peterson, who joined the church as senior pastor in 1966, was credited for increasing church membership, from 291 in 1965 to 509 in 1971. He believed the real estate transaction offered “all kinds of possibilities for a more functional kind of ministry in the city . . . We are trying to trigger a different kind of environment on Lexington Avenue.”¹⁰ The church signed a “letter of intent” in February 1970 and in May 1971 the congregation voted to approve the sale.¹¹

The New York Times reported on the “land assemblage” in January 1971. At the time, a bank spokesman referred to it as an “annex,” with front rather than back office space planned. Stubbins was identified as the architect and the Office of Midtown Planning and Development was described as “working with the bank on plans for the new block.”¹² In July 1973, the same newspaper stated that “for all practical purposes” the assemblage was complete, including all of the lots on Lexington Avenue and 54th Street.¹³ A final parcel, at 884 Third Avenue, was acquired in November 1975.

Hugh A. Stubbins & Associates

First National City Bank made its plans public in July 1973.¹⁴ Hugh A. Stubbins & Associates was the principal designer, with Emery Roth & Sons as the associate architects. Henry J. Muller, a senior vice president at the bank since 1964, knew Stubbins from Harvard University, where he served as deputy director of buildings and grounds for about eight years.

Born in Alabama, Hugh A(sher) Stubbins Jr. (1912-2006) attended the Georgia Institute of Technology (1931) and the Harvard Graduate School of Design (1935). He joined Harvard’s faculty in the early 1940s and briefly chaired the architecture department before resigning in 1954. Though he established his own practice at the end of the 1930s, it was only much later that he began to work as an architect full time. Over the next 50 years, his firm proved extraordinarily prolific, designing 800 buildings in eight countries.¹⁵ The first project that won the firm wide recognition was Congress Hall in Berlin. Completed in 1957, this structure has a dramatic profile, with a sloping roof set between twin arches. Prior to building Citicorp, he had just two projects in New York City: a Volkswagen dealership (1959, demolished) in Long Island City and 13-story Thorndike Hall (1969-73), 525 West 120th Street, part of Teachers College, Columbia University.

The firm’s first skyscraper was the 34-story State Street Bank Building (with F. A. Stahl and Associates, 1965-66) in Boston. Faced with precast concrete, it made extensive use of cantilevers. The following year, 1967, Stubbins & Associates received the AIA Architecture Firm award. Citicorp was the firm’s first and only skyscraper in New York City. Sleek, monumental office buildings with ribbon windows became a specialty of the firm, including the 45-story Federal Reserve Bank of Boston (1970-76), the 31-story One Cleveland Place (1980-83) in Ohio, and the 71-story Yokohama Landmark Tower (1990-93) in Japan. In a departure from his modernist work, Stubbins also designed the vast low-rise Ronald Reagan Presidential Library (1988-91) in Simi Valley, California. Following his retirement in the mid-1990s, the firm was known as Stubbins Associates. It formed an affiliation with the Kling Lindquist Partnership in 2003 and is now part of the Jacobs Engineering Group.

Two principals played important roles on the Citicorp project. Peter Woytuck (1936-74), who joined the firm in 1961, “helped [Stubbins] most on the design”¹⁶ and W. Easley Hammer (b. 1937) served as project manager.

Construction

The ground breaking took place in April 1974 and construction began a year later in April 1975. HRH Construction Corporation was the general contractor. Established in 1888, this firm built the San Remo Apartments (1931, a New York City Landmark), the former Whitney Museum of American Art on Madison Avenue (1963-66, part of the Upper East Side Historic District), and the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center (1979-86). It became a subsidiary of the Starrett Housing Corporation in 1977 and declared bankruptcy in 2011.

As many as 3,000 workers were employed on the project – a significant number in what were difficult economic times.¹⁷ By the close of 1975, the steel frame had reached the 18th floor. The tower was topped out in October 1976, with the last beam, draped by a United States flag and a blue-and-white Citicorp flag, raised to top. The bank’s chairman, Wriston, praised the “plain hard work” that went into the project:

Many things go into creating a great building. It takes – besides large amounts of money – the skills and vision of all kinds of people . . . But, in the end, the most important, absolutely indispensable people are the men and women who actually put it all together. This day really belongs to them.¹⁸

A year later, on October 12, 1977, the tower was dedicated. Stubbins spoke, calling it “a skyscraper for the people.”¹⁹ In attendance were bank and church officials, as well as Governor Hugh Carey and Mayor Abraham Beame. The sunken plaza opened in July 1978. Construction had been, purportedly, completed on schedule and within budget.²⁰

Design

The Citicorp Center is an early mixed-use complex. Each interlocking structure has its own distinctive form and purpose. There is the church, a 59-story office building, and a 6-story office-and-retail building. A late example of 20th-century modernism, it has features associated with the Swiss-French architect Le Corbusier. In the “Five Points towards a new architecture,” published 1926, Le Corbusier encouraged the use of “piloti,” to elevate buildings off the ground, horizontal windows to “maximize illumination,” and roof gardens or terraces.²¹ Even Citicorp’s distinctive angled roof, which some writers see as anticipating the late 20th-century architectural style known as “Post-Modernism,” initially had a functional purpose.²²

From the start, Stubbins wanted an office building with a distinctive top. Several years after completion, he told British architect-writer Stephen Gardiner:

I held on to the shape because I wanted to capture something of the spirit of the magnificent old skyscrapers – and to get away from the usual boring kind of crate you see nowadays, everywhere.²³

During this era, architects moved away from the so-called “International” Style, which dominated mainstream American architecture after the Second World War. Philip Johnson, for instance, who helped launch the style in the early 1930s, had recently designed Penzoil Place

(1970-76) in Houston, Texas, a pair of dark glass towers with sharply angled tops. Likewise, Der Scutt of Kahn & Jacobs gave One Astor Plaza (1968-72) at 1515 Broadway, between West 44th and 45th Streets, a spiky stone crown.

A preliminary scheme for Citicorp featured a tower with a detached core and steeply sloping roofs. The bank initially hoped to obtain a substantial floor area bonus by including terraced residences at the summit but the Department of City Planning refused. When the plan for Citicorp was formally announced in July 1973 the residential component had been abandoned, as well as the original scissor-like profile. The tower looked much as it does today, except that the sloping roof initially faced west. A year later, the orientation was turned to the south, making the silhouette more conspicuous from the east (and west) where fewer tall buildings stand. Furthermore, some experts thought it could be used as platform for solar collectors.²⁴

The office tower stands 915 feet tall. Set back from Lexington Avenue by about 70 feet, it rises on four 24-foot-square “super” columns and a massive octagonal elevator core. Each soaring column is more than 100 feet tall – the height of many 10-story buildings. Located beneath the center of each facade, the dramatic use of cantilevers, 72 feet from column to corner, provided space for the church, plaza, and market building.²⁵

Stubbins choose to clad the tower and market building with “bright anodized aluminum” and “reflective glass.”²⁶ Contemporary observers said that the exceptionally smooth curtain wall had a “space age” quality, like various “high-tech” designs of the late 1970s and early 1980s that romanticized shiny industrial materials and visible engineering techniques. The aluminum selected has a silver color, similar to the matte panels on the Pepsi-Cola Building (1958-60) and One Chase Manhattan Plaza (1956-64), both New York City Landmarks. Stubbins explained:

I am a little bit tired of the very dark, sometimes black buildings that sort of deny their own shape, as one cannot see the shade and shadow on a dark building. For the Citicorp tower, we chose a skin of natural colored, bright aluminum – banded with double glazed reflective glass. Both have good reflective qualities. In a climate where there are many dark days, we wanted a building that would respond with subtle drama to the gradations of light, every hour of the day.²⁷

Flour City Architectural Metals, in Glen Cove, Long Island, fabricated the panels.²⁸ In *The New York Times*, Carter B. Horsley called the “satiny silver-colored facade, one of the building’s most distinguished features.”²⁹ The columns and base have rectangular panels, set on the vertical axis, while the spandrels and underside of the tower are covered with square panels.

Fixed ribbon windows extend continuously around the four facades. They have thin flush joints and the inside sheet of glass is coated with chrome to create a somewhat mirrored effect.³⁰ The reflective glass also disguises the V-shaped steel bracing that passes through some of the outermost offices. Architecture critic Paul Goldberger wrote that these features did “the nearly impossible – make an enormous building appear truly light . . . it glows rather than glares.”³¹

Engineering

The structural engineer was William LeMessurier (1926-2007). Based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, he and Stubbins had collaborated on many earlier buildings, including the State Street Bank and the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston. LeMessurier studied architecture at the Harvard School of Design and received a master’s degree in engineering and construction from

the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1953. He founded LeMessurier Associates in 1961 and was well-known for “super tall structures” that express a strong relationship between architecture and engineering.³² For Citicorp, he set up a New York City office and was associated with James Ruderman, a local structural engineer.

The tower is a “trussed tube.”³³ Arranged in eight-story tiers, the V-shaped steel bracing wraps around the sides, transferring the load in six stages to the four “super” columns and elevator core. It is worth noting that the columns could be visibly thinner. Not only do they enclose stairs and mechanical ducts but their ample proportions give the structure a more stable appearance. LeMessurier originally wanted the steel bracing exposed and visible, like the John Hancock Building (Skidmore Owings & Merrill, 1965-69) in Chicago, but a curtain wall was chosen because it was less expensive to build and maintain.³⁴ He later recalled: “I’m very vain . . . I would have liked my stuff to be exposed on the outside of the building, but Stubbins wouldn’t have it.”³⁵ The diagonal braces, however, are at times visible, through windows and inside some offices.

Due to LeMessurier’s innovative design, the steel skeleton weighs relatively little – 25,000 tons or about 40 per cent of the Empire State Building.³⁶ To stabilize the tower in high winds, it was equipped with a tuned-mass damper (TMD) – one of the first in a skyscraper. Located on the 59th floor, the main component is a 400-ton, 30 by 30 foot, concrete block.

When activated, a film of oil oozes onto the platform on which the concrete rests. The block then levitates on the oil . . . Through a sophisticated control mechanism, the block is set in motion opposite to the direction in which the building is swaying. Gradually, the opposing motions cancel each other, and the building is stilled.³⁷

This innovative device not only diminishes sway by as much as 50 per cent but it also reduced the amount of steel needed for wind bracing.³⁸

Less than a year after the tower was completed, in June 1978, LeMessurier learned that some of the calculations had been terribly flawed, resulting in the potential of a “catastrophic failure” by quartering winds – winds hitting the corners. Brought to the attention of the New York office by Diane Hartley, a graduate student at Princeton University, LeMessurier quickly alerted Citicorp, which hired engineer Leslie E. Robertson, a structural consultant for the World Trade Center in New York, to supervise immediate repairs.³⁹ Without fanfare, Citicorp announced on August 8, 1978:

A review of the Citicorp Center’s designation specifications was recently made . . . [it] caused the engineers to recommend that certain of the connections in Citicorp Center’s wind bracing system be strengthened through additional welding . . . there is no danger.⁴⁰

The repairs involved “welding two-inch-thick steel plates over each of more than two hundred bolted joints.”⁴¹ Work started immediately and was completed in about two months, during October 1978. Because New York City’s three daily newspapers were on strike, the story remained, for the most part, unknown until May 1995, when a major article appeared in *The New Yorker* magazine. LeMessurier later asserted these essential repairs made the tower “strong enough to withstand a seven-hundred-year storm.”⁴²

Public Spaces

Public space is a critical part of Citicorp Center. Indoor and outdoor spaces added luster to the bank's reputation for public service, while allowing for a significantly taller and more visible tower. Such amenities were designed by Stubbins, in consultation with the City Planning Commission. The New York City zoning resolution was revised in 1961 to encourage developers to provide open space at street level in exchange for a floor area bonus. This approach, which became known as incentive zoning, resulted in larger buildings with public plazas, many of which were sharply criticized. The City Planning Commission observed in 1975:

Almost every new building uses the plaza bonus. The formula works, but not every plaza works. Some are bleak, forlorn places. Some are hard to get to. Some, sliced up by driveways, are more for cars than people. Some are forbidding and downright hostile.⁴³

Under John Lindsay, who served as mayor from 1966 to 1974, steps were taken to address these problems. They included the establishment of the Mayor's Task Force on Urban Design, headed by William S. Paley,⁴⁴ followed by the Urban Design Group (part of the City Planning Commission) and five special mayoral development offices, including the Office of Midtown Planning and Development. Established in 1967, the Urban Design Group was described by critic Ada Louise Huxtable as a "constructive, trouble-shooting unit."⁴⁵ Many of its ideas were incorporated into *New Life for Plazas*, published by the City Planning Commission in 1975, shortly after Citicorp began construction. This illustrated booklet explained the purpose of the new zoning amendments, many of which went into effect *after* Citicorp's design was approved.⁴⁶

Stubbins submitted a preliminary scheme in January 1973. In September 1973, Citicorp filed a request for special permits which were granted by the City Planning Commission and Board of Estimate in November 1973. These permits mostly concerned floor area bonuses for creating a through-block arcade (not part of the designation), a covered-pedestrian space (not part of the designation) and an open-air concourse, often referred to as the sunken plaza. According to City Planning, "open air concourses would be plazas located at the subway level, adjacent to the subway entrances, which improve circulation and permit light and air to reach subway mezzanines."⁴⁷ These features reflect planning concepts found in *Urban Design Manhattan*, published by the Regional Plan Association. This influential 1969 study incorporated a proposal for Lexington Avenue in which future buildings around 53rd Street would integrate horizontal and vertical transportation systems. It also recommended widening the sidewalks. This was accomplished on Lexington Avenue, which functions as an "as of right" bonus plaza. In addition, both subway entrances were eliminated from the sidewalk, giving the corner, adjacent to the stairs that lead to the plaza, a much more open feel.

The main level of the sunken plaza is 12 feet below street level. Reached from diagonal stairs, it was, in contrast to earlier bonus plazas, intended to serve functions throughout the day.⁴⁸ It provides access to the subway, the church, the building lobby, and atrium. Amenities included retail space, moveable chairs and tables, drum-like lighting fixtures, and trees. In the application for the special permit, the bank promised to install "landscaping in the form of street trees and a substantial amount of public seating with open air food service similar to that available at "vest-pocket parks." Like the waterfall in nearby Paley Park, the concrete water feature that adjoins the stairs was intended to "mask much of the street noise and add to the feeling that the passerby is free from the congestion of the street."⁴⁹ Sasaki Associates acted as landscape architect. The

lower part of the plaza adjoins the church sanctuary. Reached by a second set of steps, it sits approximately five feet below the main level. The entrance to the church is on the north side of the lower plaza, recessed beneath the walkway (now enclosed by glass) that connects Lexington Avenue to the west part of the elevator lobby, referred to as 601 Lexington Avenue.

To unify the various public spaces, the sidewalks, sunken plaza and atrium were originally paved with identical brown brick. Citicorp also commissioned distinctive and innovative street furniture. These include a group of three flagpoles on Lexington Avenue near 53rd Street, a newsstand, and multi-purpose cruciform pylons and posts that combine lighting, traffic signals and signage (not part of the designation). These sleek fixtures remain in use and were designed by Designetics, a New Jersey lighting consultant. Initially “given a glossy black finish,” they are currently painted a light shade of gray.⁵⁰

William H. Whyte, author of *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* (1980), praised Citicorp and the role played by City Planning Commission, calling the complex “a splendid place . . . the fortuitous coming together of a lot of elements at the right moment.”⁵¹ He appreciated many of the design choices, particularly the width of the sidewalks, the plaza’s “superb” corner entry, and the way the adjacent ledges were “sit-able” and “low enough so that you could look down and see what was going on.”⁵²

Sustainable Design

Citicorp was one of the first major skyscrapers to employ energy saving features. With growing concern about declining American oil production and the nation’s dependence on foreign oil in the early 1970s, the bank announced: “we intend to put technology to work to reduce our energy requirements.”⁵³

Various strategies were considered and adopted, some of which had a dramatic impact on the building’s appearance. For instance, not only would the sloping roof be “easily recognizable”⁵⁴ but for a brief time the bank considered using it as a platform for solar energy panels. This scheme was dropped in February 1976. Different explanations were given, including problems with the supplier, as well as overall expense.⁵⁵ The idea was revisited again in 1983, when a four-year solar energy test was co-sponsored by the bank and Consolidated Edison. Six photovoltaic panels, consisting of 5,000 cells, were temporarily installed on a section of the roof which powered a modest exhibition in the atrium.⁵⁶

The elevations also had far less glass than most mid-20th century modern office buildings. The aluminum panels contained two inches of thermofiber insulation and the ribbon windows were double glazed with a reflective chrome coating to reduce heat gain. Even the “perfectly square floor plan” had benefits. A 1978 brochure claimed this shape required “less energy to heat or cool. The only configuration that is more economical is a perfect circle.”⁵⁷ Tenants used “double deck elevators,” possibly the city’s first installation since the Cities Service Building (1929-32, a New York City Landmark). Manufactured by the Otis Elevator Company, this unusual system was chosen because they “take up 20% less space and answer calls 16% faster.”⁵⁸

Such strategies were estimated to reduce the building’s energy consumption by 42 per cent.⁵⁹ Stubbins called Citicorp the “most energy efficient building of comparable size in the world . . . we just used a lot of state-of-the-art things . . . things that people didn’t bother with before high energy prices.” *The New York Times* described his remarks as “impelled by a patriotic passion for saving energy” and “economic common sense.”⁶⁰

Saint Peter's Church

At the northwest corner of the site, at Lexington Avenue and 54th Street, is Saint Peter's Church. Negotiations with the congregation began in 1969, with architect Edward Larrabee Barnes serving as design consultant.⁶¹ A similar type of hybrid development was occasionally pursued in the 1920s, with the construction of the Fifth Church of Christ Scientist (1922, altered), the New Calvary Baptist Church (1924) and the Madison Avenue Baptist Church (1931). While these houses of worship were integrated into a larger residential or office structures, the condominium agreement with Citicorp gave the church ownership of the property, exempting it from real estate taxes and sales taxes on building materials.⁶² In addition, First National City promised that "at least 63 per cent of the perimeter" of the church would be "free-standing – that is, with nothing built above it."⁶³ This was accomplished by raising the office tower above the ground and by placing it far from the corner, where the church was built.

Citicorp and Saint Peter's collaborated on a "mutually acceptable design." It was especially important that the new church not resemble the bank building or "even part of it."⁶⁴ Peter Woytuck, in Stubbins office, is credited for developing the preliminary design.⁶⁵ In an early scheme from 1973, he proposed a somewhat blocky form that resembled a right angle triangle. Raised on corner piers, it had a sloping roof, not unlike the top of the tower. The massing of the final design, by Stubbins, who recalled that he "had to struggle like mad" to satisfy the architectural committee, was considerably less boxy and more angular.⁶⁶ Set at a 45 degree angle to the office tower, it features a continuous skylight that divides the structure in half.

Erected on the same corner where the earlier church stood, Stubbins compared the steel-framed structure to "hands held up in prayer" and *The New York Times* architecture critic Paul Goldberger called it a "great granite tent sitting beneath the Citicorp tower" in which the sanctuary "begins one level below the ground and soars to a height of 85 feet."⁶⁷ The exterior is faced with Caledonia granite, laid in a regular coursed ashlar, and the roof with lead-coated copper. While the gray color complements Citicorp's silver skin, this choice of material (and its orientation) helps distinguish the church as an autonomous place of worship. Stubbins called it "a dramatic but friendly confrontation."⁶⁸ Nonetheless, the church is integrated into the complex and could originally be entered from the lobby and market building, sunken plaza, 54th Street and Lexington Avenue – where a large, angled window overlooks the sanctuary. A second and larger window, at the corner of Lexington Avenue and 54th Street, frames a view of the top of the pipe organ.

Saint Peter's Church was dedicated on December 4, 1977. Mayor-elect Ed Koch attended the ceremony. This event was "topped off by an all-night 'soul' session, including 45 jazz musicians."⁶⁹ Golberger called the building's completion "an event to be welcomed in architectural circles as much as religious ones."⁷⁰ The interior, which is not part of the designation, was designed by Vignelli Associates. A bronze cross, designed by Italian sculptor Arnaldo Pomodoro, was installed in November 1982. Originally located to the left of the Lexington Avenue entrance, it is now installed in the angled planting bed at the corner of 54th Street.⁷¹

The church is justly famous for its jazz ministry. Founded by Rev. John Garcia Gensel, who was appointed Pastor to the Jazz Community at Saint Peter's in 1965, it sponsors such notable programs as Jazz Vespers, All Nite Soul, Midday Jazz, and Jazz on the Plaza. Many funerals and memorial services for celebrated jazz musicians have occurred here, including events for Thelonius Monk, Miles Davis, and Dizzy Gillespie.

David Dunlap, reporter for *The New York Times*, would later describe Saint Peter's Church as "New York's most architecturally successful postwar sanctuary ... an ambitious and largely successful attempt to create a serene, voluminous, contemplative spiritual space without resorting to traditional liturgical iconography."⁷²

Reception

From the start, the Citicorp Center garnered considerable attention. An ambitious project commissioned by a leading financial organization, it was one of only three new Manhattan office buildings approved by the Building Department in 1974. Nearly every construction milestone generated media coverage, from the assembly of the site in 1971 to the dedication of Saint Peter's Church in 1978.

Ada Louise Huxtable penned two substantial essays in *The New York Times*. In January 1974, she wrote: "At this stage, it seems to be very strong on urban design and very weak on architecture." As the complex neared completion in June 1977, she became somewhat more enthusiastic, calling it "a singular suave blockbuster that comes down to the street with innovative drama." Though Huxtable still regretted the bulk and angled top, she praised Citicorp for exhibiting a "clear desire for design quality."⁷³ Paul Goldberger described it as a "remarkably intelligent synthesis of a number of architectural themes that have been in the air for a number of years." He said it was a "brilliant, dazzling achievement, one that will probably give more pleasure to more New Yorkers than any other high-rise building of the decade."⁷⁴ Jack Egan wrote in *The Washington Post*, it "will not please those nostalgic for skyscraper fantasies nor modernists looking for some novel breakthrough. But the 915-foot building is both distinctive and elegant, with many unusual architectural features."⁷⁵

Citicorp received a Bard Award for excellence in architecture and urban design in 1978, an AISC (American Institute of Steel Construction) Architectural Award of Excellence in 1978, and the AIA Honor Award in 1979. The 1978 edition of the *AIA Guide to New York City* said it was "A tour-de-force for the skyline as a stylish silhouette; and for the pedestrian a hovering cantilevered hulk."⁷⁶ John Tauranac wrote in 1979 that it was the "city's most dramatic new skyscraper, its first great soaring thing since the RCA Building."⁷⁷

Outside New York City, many writers praised the complex. William Marlin wrote in the *Baltimore Sun*: "There is simplicity here that goes beyond sophistication – sophistication of bold architectural design, brilliant structural engineering (seen to by the firm of William Lemessurier) and a practically cybernetic host of mechanical systems (seen to by the firm of Joseph R. Loring.)" Marlin also reported that architect-visionary Buckminster Fuller had been "enthralled by Citicorp's dynamic yet delicate balance of athletic bearing and esthetic grace."⁷⁸ In London's *Observer*, Stephen Gardiner said "easily the best New York skyscraper since the great days is, in my view, Citicorp Centre, the prestige HQ of high tech in the US . . . It's a beautiful building, a unique contribution to the East Side skyline."⁷⁹

Later History

When Citicorp Center opened, the bank occupied 26 floors in the tower. The rest of the building was leased to outside firms. Early tenants included law and accounting firms, as well as IBM and the Consulate General of Japan. According to the *Washington Post*, rents were "considered premium, even in the high-rent Midtown office district where it is located."⁸⁰ The complex has three condominium units, consisting of the church and two office units. Citicorp sold the larger of the two units, office unit one (61.55 per cent), to a Japanese insurance

company, Dai-Ichi Life Investment Properties, in 1987.⁸¹ The sale coincided with construction of the 50-story Citigroup Building (1985-89) in Long Island City, Queens. The Dai-Ichi unit, as well as office unit two (32.85 per cent), which was still controlled by the bank, was acquired by Boston Properties, Inc. and Allied Partners in 2001. Boston Properties became the sole owner of the two units, then known as Citigroup Center, in 2006. Three years later, in 2010, it was renamed 601 Lexington Avenue.⁸²

One of the most widely-discussed elements was the atrium (not part of the designation), featuring commercial space and restaurants on three levels. Originally called The Market and currently called The Atrium, this interior adjoins the elevator lobby and incorporates two bonus spaces: a covered pedestrian space and a through block (north-south) arcade, connecting 53rd and 54th Streets. Former Parks Commissioner, August Heckscher, wrote in *The New York Times* that the atrium was “an amenity in which we can all rejoice.”⁸³ The largest retailer, occupying the northeast corner of the multi-level atrium, was Conran’s, part of an international chain of home furnishing stores. In 1980, Citicorp estimated that 25,000 people passed through the complex each day.⁸⁴ Despite impressive statistics, some businesses failed to attract sufficient customers and closed. The manager of the atrium suggested that it may have been due to a “lack of visibility” from the street, while others criticized Citicorp, saying it was more concerned with corporate image than profit.⁸⁵

Gwathmey Siegel & Associates Architects were hired by Dai-Ichi Life to renovate the complex in 1995. Completed in spring 1997, significant changes were made to exterior signage, the entrances to the concourse level from the sunken plaza, and inside the atrium.⁸⁶ At this time, the brown brick was replaced with gray granite pavers. *The New York Times* reported: “Citicorp is redoing the center practically from scratch.”⁸⁷ Additional changes were made in 2008. An ADA-compliant ramp was installed on 53rd Street and the walkway that led from Lexington Avenue to the west part of the elevator lobby was replaced with a glass pavilion that incorporates the south wall of Saint Peter’s Church. On 54th Street, the north entrance to the church was expanded, adding a reception area.

STATEMENT OF REGULATORY INTENT

Prior to designation and after City Planning Commission review and approval, the owner of Citicorp Center obtained Department of Buildings’ permits to modify the sunken plaza and the adjoining market building. The Landmarks Preservation Commission recognizes that the sunken plaza and other architectural elements, public benefits and amenities (and subsequent alterations to them) were designed with the approval of the City Planning Commission in connection with the granting of floor area bonuses, and that future changes to these public spaces will remain under the City Planning Commission’s jurisdiction. The Landmarks Preservation Commission will review future proposed alterations to these public spaces in this context and recognizes the need to coordinate the review processes.

Researched and written by
Matthew A. Postal
Research Department

NOTES

¹ This section is mostly based on designation reports prepared by members of the research staff at the Landmarks Preservation Commission. Also see Kurt C. Schlichting, *Grand Central Terminal* (John Hopkins University Press, 2003), Robert A. M. Stern and others, *New York 1880: Architecture and Urbanism in the Gilded Age* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1999), Robert A. M. Stern and others, *New York 1900: Metropolitan Architecture and Urbanism* (New York: Rizzoli Books, 1983) and Robert A. M. Stern and others, *New York 1930: Architecture and Urbanism Between Two World Wars* (New York: Rizzoli Books, 1987).

² This section is based on “Citibank,” *The Encyclopedia of New York City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, second edition, 2010), 253-54.

³ Lewis Corey, quoted in Landmarks Preservation Commission, *National City Bank Building Designation Report* (LP-1979), report by Gale Harris (New York: City of New York, 1979), 2.

⁴ “Skyscraper Gets First 40-Ton Base,” *The New York Times*, September 19, 1958; “Steel Frame for 41-Story Bank Rising on Park Ave.,” *The New York Times*, April 23, 1959. These articles, as well as *The New York Times* articles that follow below, were viewed at nytimes.com.

⁵ “Big Banks in City Expanding,” *The New York Times*, April 13, 1975.

⁶ Peter Hellman, “How They Assembled the Most Expensive Block in New York’s History,” *New York Magazine*, February 24, 1974, 31, viewed at googlebooks; Peter Hellman, *Shaping the Skyline: The World According to Real Estate Visionary Julien Studley* (John Wiley & Sons, 2004).

⁷ “Lexington Av. Church,” *Real Estate Record and Guide*, May 30, 1903, 1079.

⁸ Hellman, 95.

⁹ Hellman, 103.

¹⁰ Peterson retired as senior pastor in September 1980. “Office Complex to House an Old East Side Church” and “Church at Citicorp Center Losing Its Pastor,” *The New York Times*, September 25, 1980.

¹¹ “Office Complex to House An Old East Side Church,” *The New York Times*, May 24, 1971.

¹² “Bank Assembling Site,” *The New York Times*, January 31, 1971, R7.

¹³ “News of the Realty Trade,” *The New York Times*, July 8, 1973.

¹⁴ “Plan for Skyscraper on Lexington Ave. Detailed by Citibank,” *The New York Times*, July 25, 1973. This article describes Barnes as consulting architect.

¹⁵ “Hugh Stubbins Jr., 94, Creator of Emblematic Skyscrapers, is Dead,” *The New York Times*, July 11, 2006; “Hugh Stubbins Dies at 94,” *AIA Architect*, July 14, 2006, viewed at AIA.org.

¹⁶ Mildred F. Schmertz, “Citicorp Center: If You Don’t Like the Crown Look At Its Base,” *Architectural Record* (June 1978), 115.

¹⁷ About 550 workers were “on site at one time.” See “A New Wrinkle on the City’s Skyline,” *The New York Times*, September 19, 1976, 262.

¹⁸ Walter B. Wriston, “Remarks at the Topping Out Ceremony,” viewed at Tufts Digital Library.

¹⁹ Hugh Stubbins, “A skyscraper for people,” *Christian Science Monitor*, November 1, 1977, 27.

²⁰ “NY building a hopeful sign for sagging economy,” *Chicago Tribune*, September 11, 1977, A13.

²¹ See *Programs and Manifestos on 20th Century Architecture* (MIT Press, 1971), 99-100.

²² Eric P. Nash, *Manhattan Skyscrapers* (Princeton Architectural Press, 1999), 141.

²³ Stephen Gardiner, “Transparently Beautiful,” *The Observer*, November 23, 1980, 32; also see Wriston quote in “Profiles: The Money Machine,” *The New Yorker*, January 5, 1981, 59.

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- ²⁴ The reorientation may have been suggested by a researcher at the Consolidated Edison energy company. See “Citicorp Takes Its Place in the Sun,” *American Banker*, September 23, 1983, no page number visible.
- ²⁵ “Architect Designed Citicorp Center for People,” 2. During the years when Stubbins was working on his design for the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston (1970-76), Kevin Roche and John Dinkeloo developed a related proposal for the Federal Reserve Bank of New York (c. 1969-72). Had this building in Lower Manhattan gone ahead, a 42-story tower would have stood on four 160-foot-tall corner columns, creating space for a sizable public plaza.
- ²⁶ “Credits and Data,” *Process Architecture* (1979), 162.
- ²⁷ “Architect Designed Citicorp Center for People,” October 1977 press release, 3, City Center for Culture.
- ²⁸ “Citicorp’s Skyscraper ‘Weathering,’” *The New York Times*, March 16, 1980, R1.
- ²⁹ Ibid.
- ³⁰ “Tower Uses Energy Efficiently,” *The New York Times* (October 29, 1977), 33.
- ³¹ Paul Goldberger, “Citicorp’s Center Reflects Synthesis of Architecture,” *The New York Times*, October 12, 1977, 49.
- ³² “William J. LeMessurier’s Super-Tall Structures,” *Architectural Record* (February 1985), 151.
- ³³ William J. LeMessurier, “Hugh Stubbins – Leader of Innovation,” *Process Architecture* (1979), 148.
- ³⁴ Schmertz, *Architectural Record* (June 1978), 115.
- ³⁵ Joe Morgenstern, “The Fifty-Nine-Story Crisis,” *The New Yorker*, (May 25, 1995), 46.
- ³⁶ Morgenstern, 47.
- ³⁷ “How Much Wind Can a Building Take?,” *The New York Times*, April 27, 1980, R1.
- ³⁸ *Architectural Record*, 70; Mario Salvadori, Saralinder Hooker and Christopher Ragus, *Why Buildings Stand Up: The Strength of Architecture* (New York: Norton, 1980), 53.
- ³⁹ See Caroline Whitbeck, “Addendum: The Diane Hartley Case,” at <http://www.onlineethics.org/DianeHartley.aspx>
- ⁴⁰ Citicorp press release, August 8, 1978, Citi Center for Culture.
- ⁴¹ Morgenstern, 50.
- ⁴² Morgenstern, 53. It is also worth noting that in 2002 structural plates were added to “the most exposed of the four stiltlike legs that support the bulk of the building.” See “Midtown Skyscraper Quietly Adds Armor,” *The New York Times*, August 15, 2002, A1.
- ⁴³ *New Life for Plazas* (New York: City Planning Commission, 1975), 5.
- ⁴⁴ This task force was headed by William S. Paley, sponsor of Paley Park on East 53rd Street, two blocks west of the Citicorp site. Opened in 1967, this “vest-pocket” park was widely praised.
- ⁴⁵ Ada Louise Huxtable, “Adding Up the Score,” *The New York Times*, January 20, 1974.
- ⁴⁶ “City Planning Unit Moving to Create ‘Human’ Open Space at Skyscrapers,” *The New York Times*, April 17, 1975.
- ⁴⁷ *New Life for Plazas*, 5.
- ⁴⁸ Inspired by the sunken plaza at Rockefeller Center (1932), examples have included the J. C. Penney Building at 1301 Sixth Avenue (1964, removed), General Motors Building at 767 Fifth Avenue (1968, removed), McGraw Hill Building at 1221 Sixth Avenue (1971), 1633 Broadway (1971), and 201 East 17th Street (1973).
- ⁴⁹ “Architect Designed Citicorp Center for People,” press release, October 1977, 2, Citi Center for Culture.
- ⁵⁰ “Pylons as a War to Cut Clutter,” *The New York Times*, June 18, 1978.
- ⁵¹ “Citicorp Center: A megastructure that ties into the street,” *Urban Design* 9 (Spring 1978) 25.

⁵² Ibid, 24.

⁵³ Press release, July 24, 1973, Citi Center for Culture. This was an especially tumultuous period for the United States economy. The stock market suffered a serious decline and OPEC mounted two oil embargos, including a temporary halt of production in May 1973 to protest the 25th anniversary of the founding of Israel, and another, from October 1973 to March 1974.

⁵⁴ Press release, Ibid.

⁵⁵ "Citiscraper," *The New York Times*, March 14, 1976, F15.

⁵⁶ "Solar Study Starts on Citicorp Roof," *The New York Times*, September 23, 1983.

⁵⁷ Citicorp Center brochure, c. 1978, 8, Citi Center for Culture.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Stubbins, "A skyscraper for people."

⁶⁰ "Tower Uses Energy Efficiently," *The New York Times*, October 29, 1977, 41.

⁶¹ Barnes had designed the Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis, Indiana, in c. 1966.

⁶² Peter W. Bernstein, "Pastor Peterson Makes Deal With Citicorp," *Fortune* (November 1977), 142.

⁶³ "Office Complex to House an Old East Side Church," *The New York Times*, May 24, 1971; "Saint Peter's Church," *Process Architecture* (1979), 38-40.

⁶⁴ Bernstein.

⁶⁵ "Peter Woytuk, architect, director of Stubbins firm," *Boston Globe*, May 12, 1974, 111; "An Office Tower on Columns Designed for Church Facility," *The New York Times*, April 8, 1974; Stern, 492.

⁶⁶ Bernstein.

⁶⁷ Paul Goldberger, "No Taint of Materialism in Church Design at Bank Center," *The New York Times*, December 5, 1977.

⁶⁸ Citicorp press release, 1977, 5, Citi Center for Culture.

⁶⁹ "New Sanctuary Built Midst of Urban Bustle," *The New York Times*, December 3, 1977, 2.

⁷⁰ Goldberger, "No Taint of Materialism in Church Design at Bank Center," *The New York Times*, December 5, 1977.

⁷¹ "A Cross for St. Peter's," *The New York Times*, November 5, 1982. Notable spaces inside the church include the Erol Beker Chapel of the Good Shepherd, featuring a sculptural environment by Louise Nevelson, and an off-Broadway theater.

⁷² David Dunlap, *From Abyssinian to Zion: A Guide to Manhattan's Houses of Worship* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 241.

⁷³ Huxtable, "An Acrobatic Act," 33.

⁷⁴ "Citicorp's Center Reflects Synthesis of Architecture," *The New York Times*, October 12, 1977, 49.

⁷⁵ "Citicorp Center Takes Its Place in Manhattan," *The Washington Post*, October 15, 1977, E1.

⁷⁶ American Institute of Architects, *AIA Guide to New York City* (New York: MacMillan, 1978), 152.

⁷⁷ The RCA Building is part of Rockefeller Center, a New York City Landmark.

⁷⁸ "Citicorp – 2 Years old and still astonishing," *The Baltimore Sun*, June 24, 1979, D17.

⁷⁹ Stephen Gardiner, "Transparently Beautiful."

⁸⁰ "Trials of a Skyscraper Mall," *The New York Times*, June 28, 1980.

⁸¹ "Citicorp Selling Part Offers Headquarters," *The New York Times*, October 3, 1987.

⁸² “‘Citigroup Center’ to Become Scintillating ‘601 Lexington Avenue,’” *Observer*, December 12, 2008, viewed at <http://observer.com/2008/12/citigroup-center-to-become-scintillating-601-lexington-ave/>

⁸³ “Design Notebook,” *The New York Times*, December 22, 1977.

⁸⁴ “Trials of a Skyscraper Mall,” *The New York Times*, June 28, 1980.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ As of July 2016, the marquees have been removed. “\$15 Million Makeover Set for Retail Plaza; Citicorp Center Gets a Redesign,” *The New York Times*, May 7, 1995.

⁸⁷ “The Shops at Citicorp Center; Giving Wings to a Camel Helps It Over Hump,” *The New York Times*, June 16, 1996.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, architecture, and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that Citicorp Center (now 601 Lexington Avenue), including Saint Peter's Church, has a special character and a special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, history, and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that the Citicorp Center (now 601 Lexington Avenue), including Saint Peter's Church, is a major example of late 20th-century modern architecture; that it was designed by the Cambridge, Massachusetts, architect Hugh A. Stubbins, in association with Emery Roth & Sons; that it was constructed between 1973 and 1978; that this early mixed-use complex contains three interlocking buildings, a 59-story office tower, a 6-story retail-and-office structure, and Saint Peter's Church; that it was commissioned by First National City Bank, now Citibank; that the 915-foot-tall tower is one of New York City's most recognizable skyscrapers; that it is important for its slanted top, four "super" columns and generous public spaces; that each of the 24-foot-square columns is centered beneath one facade, using bold cantilevers to open up the corners of the site, where the church and plaza are located; that the silvery aluminum panels and ribbon windows disguise eight tiers of V-shaped bracing designed by the noted structural engineer William LeMessurier; that the roof was initially conceived for terraced apartments but was later reoriented to face south and considered as a platform for solar panels; that although this idea was abandoned the Citicorp Center was one of the first skyscrapers to employ energy saving features; that such features had a significant impact on the building's appearance and were estimated to use 42 percent less energy than comparable structures; that Stubbins, in consultation with architect Edward Larrabee Barnes, also designed Saint Peter's Church; that this prism-like structure is clad with granite, rather than aluminum, to distinguish it from the office tower; that it has been compared to a "tent" and "hands help up in prayer;" that the Citicorp Center made innovative use of zoning incentives which provided floor area bonuses for public space, such as the sunken plaza and some interiors (not part of the designation); that the layout, design and maintenance of these amenities were reviewed and approved by the City Planning Commission; that the plaza was planned to enhance connections to the 53rd Street subway station, a heavily-used transit hub; that these spaces remain under jurisdiction of the City Planning Commission and with its approval have undergone alterations; that Citicorp Center received considerable attention from the press and architectural critics; that *The New York Times* critic Ada Louise Huxtable called it a "suave blockbuster" and Paul Goldberger viewed it as a "remarkably intelligent synthesis of a number of architectural themes;" that reporter David Dunlap would later describe the church as "New York's most architectural successful postwar sanctuary;" and that the principal owner, Boston Properties, renamed the complex 601 Lexington Avenue in 2010.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark Citicorp Center (now 601 Lexington Avenue), including Saint Peter's Church, and designates Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1308, Lot 7501 (1001, 1002, 1005), as its Landmark Site.

Meenakshi Srinivasan, Chair

Frederick Bland, Diana Chapin, Wellington Chen

Michael Devonshire, Michael Goldblum, John Gustafsson

Jeanne Luffy, Adi Shamir-Baron, Kim Vauss, Commissioners



Citicorp Center (now 601 Lexington Avenue), including Saint Peter's Church
Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1308, Lot 7501 (1001, 1002, 1005)
Office tower, west facade, viewed from Park Avenue and 53rd Street

Photo: Jenna Adams, 2016



Citicorp Center
West facade of office tower; Sunken plaza and entrance to subway
Photos: Jenna Adams, 2016



Citicorp Center
 Sunken plaza and Lexington Avenue entrance pavilion
 53rd Street entrance to office tower
Photos: Jenna Adams, 2016



Citicorp Center
 View north from 53rd Street towards Saint Peter's Church
 Market Building, East 53rd Street, view east
Photos: Jenna Adams and Matthew A. Postal, 2016



Citicorp Center
 Third Avenue facade at corner of 54th Street
 Market Building and entrance to Saint Peter's Church, 54th Street
Photos: Jenna Adams, 2016



Citicorp Center and Saint Peter's Church
Corner of Lexington Avenue and 54th Street
Photo: Matthew A. Postal, 2016



West part of 54th Street, including Saint Peter's Church
Lexington Avenue block front
Photos: Jenna Adams, 2016

