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**IN THE MATTER OF** a communication dated December 2, 2016, from the Executive Director of the Landmarks Preservation Commission regarding the landmark designation of the Hotel Lexington (Block 1302, Lot 51), by the Landmarks Preservation Commission on November 22, 2016 (Designation List No.490/LP-2559), Borough of Manhattan, Community District 6.

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Pursuant to Section 3020.8(b) of the City Charter, the City Planning Commission shall submit to the City Council a report with respect to the relation of any designation by the Landmarks Preservation Commission, whether of a historic district or a landmark, to the Zoning Resolution, projected public improvements, and any plans for the development, growth, improvement or renewal of the area involved.

On November 22, 2016, the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) designated the Hotel Lexington, located at 511 Lexington Avenue (Block 1302, Lot 51), as a City landmark. The landmark site is located at the southeast corner of East 48<sup>th</sup> Street and Lexington Avenue, within Manhattan Community District 6.

The Hotel Lexington (1928-29), at the southeast corner of Lexington Avenue and East 48th Street, is one of the premiere hotels constructed along the noted "hotel alley" stretch of the avenue north of Grand Central Terminal. It was built as part of the redevelopment of this section of East Midtown that followed the opening of Grand Central Terminal and the Lexington Avenue subway line. Constructed after the passage of the 1916 zoning law, the tiered massing of the building represents the early evolution of skyscraper design.

The Hotel Lexington is designed in a neo-Romanesque style, complexly massed with ornamented setbacks. It is clad in limestone, brick and terra cotta, and features a differentiated base, continuous piers, and a distinguished skyline profile as it rises 27 stories including the pyramidal roofed towers.

The Hotel Lexington was the location of the famous Hawaiian Room (1937-66), which featured Polynesian cuisine and the best in Hawaiian music and dance. In 1984, the base of the building,

previously altered, was reconstructed according to a modified version of the original design.

The Hotel Lexington is a skyscraper with L-shaped footprint at the southeast corner of Lexington Avenue and East 48th Street. Above a two- to three-story limestone base, the upper façade is executed in red brick decorated with random projecting headers; windows, beginning at the fifth story, have geometrically-patterned brickwork spandrels (traced in limestone at the fifth story). Light courts begin above the second story of the base on both the west and north elevations. The upper stories of the south and east façades are visible from East 47th and 48<sup>th</sup> Streets and are executed in brick with decoration similar to that on the two main façades. Portions of the east and south façades are unfenestrated and the one on the south has two chimneys and is articulated by brick and terra cotta decoration. The base was reconstructed in the 1980s by the architectural firm of William B. Tabler to approximate its original appearance. The historic recessed entrance on Lexington Avenue has been enclosed and converted into retail space; the decorative elements and sculptural details within the space are extant but are not covered by this designation since this is now an interior. Subsequent repairs have been made to the brick walls and some terra cotta elements on the upper floors have been replaced with tan brick. Site features include siamese hydrants and raised vents.

Hotel development along Lexington Avenue was spurred by the construction of Terminal City over the New York Central Rail Road tracks to the west, and by the extension of the IRT subway under Lexington Avenue north of 42nd Street in 1918. The Hotel Lexington is one of the premier hotels constructed along the stretch of Lexington Avenue north of Grand Central Terminal. In 1928, the *New York Times* remarked that along this stretch of Lexington Avenue land values since the construction of the Shelton Club Hotel (525 Lexington Avenue, 1922-23, Arthur Loomis Harmon) had increased 300%, and that in the previous five years over \$100 million had been invested. The Lexington Hotel Corporation purchased the 100 x 75 foot lot at the southeast corner of Lexington Avenue and East 48th Street from the Tishman Realty and Construction Company, Inc. in 1928. A subsidiary of the American Hotels Corporation, the Lexington Hotel Corporation planned this as the largest in the parent firm's chain of 52 first-class hotels in the United States and Canada.

Following the end of the Second World War, the New York Central Rail Road struggled with debt 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 replaced with new glass-curtain-wall office buildings, 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.

The landmark site is located within a C6-6 zoning district. With a maximum allowable floor area ratio (FAR) of 15, the 17,522-square-foot lot could be developed with approximately 262,830 square feet of floor area.

Pursuant to Section 74-79 of the Zoning Resolution, a landmark building may transfer its unused development rights to a lot contiguous to the zoning lot occupied by the landmark building or one which is across the street and opposite to the zoning lot occupied by the landmark building, or in the case of a corner lot, one which fronts on the same street intersection as the lot occupied by the landmark. The zoning lot on which the landmark building is located contains 314,568 square feet of floor area; accordingly, it has no unused development rights available for transfer to eligible receiving sites under the existing zoning.

Pursuant to Section 74-711 of the Zoning Resolution, landmark buildings or buildings within Historic Districts are eligible to apply for use and bulk waivers upon application to the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

The landmark is located within the proposed East Midtown Subdistrict. If the proposed East Midtown Subdistrict text amendment (N 170186 ZRM) is approved, landmarks located within the proposed subdistrict will be permitted to transfer their unused development rights to any eligible building similarly located within the proposed subdistrict. The Hotel Lexington, located at 511 Lexington Avenue, does not have any unused development rights.

The subject landmark does not conflict with the Zoning Resolution. In addition, the Commission is not aware of any conflicts between the subject landmark designation and projected public improvements on any plans for development, growth, improvement or renewal in the vicinity of the landmark building.

**CARL WEISBROD, Chairman**  
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