



April 23, 2013

Honorable Robert Tierney, Chair
New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
1 Centre Street, 9th Floor
New York, New York 10007

Re: Hagop Kevorkian Center and South Village Historic District boundaries

Dear Chair Tierney:

I am writing on behalf of DOCOMOMO US New York/Tri-State, the local chapter of a national and international organization focused on identifying and protecting significant buildings and sites of Modern architecture.

We are requesting that the proposed South Village Historic District include the 1972 Hagop Kevorkian Center for Near Eastern Studies, designed by Philip Johnson and Richard Foster.

The Kevorkian Center is one of the most distinguished—and the most distinctive—of Johnson and Foster's several buildings for New York University. It is particularly notable in the way it departs from Johnson's own Master Plan for new NYU buildings around Washington Square.

Rather than maintaining the cornice line established by Johnson's Bobst Library, this building on a small site, adjoining a row of historic structures, instead conforms to the height of its neighbors. Similarly, it eschews the signature red sandstone of Johnson's other NYU designs in favor of a subdued brown granite more harmonious with the adjacent structures. Yet at the same time, its minimalist geometric composition gives the building a monumental character of its own.

This willingness to depart from his own Master Plan is indicative of Johnson's sensitivity to larger issues of urban design—how a building relates to its surrounding context. This, of course, is the purpose of Historic Districts—to assure that new buildings in historic contexts do what Johnson's building does.

Consequently, DOCOMOMO New York/Tri-State believes that it is both logical and important that the South Village Historic District include the Hagop Kevorkian Center, protecting this example of distinguished and contextually appropriate Modern architecture.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kyle Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Kyle Johnson
Vice-President
DOCOMOMO US New York/Tri-State