

(Former) Whitney Museum of American Art and Interior

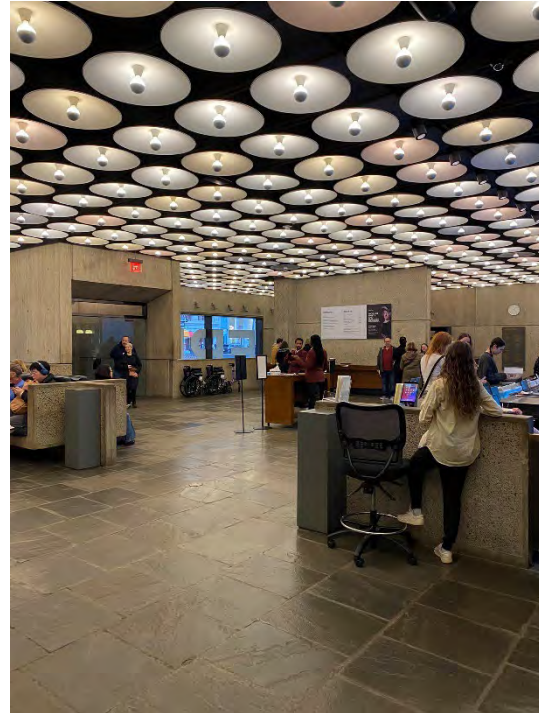
945 Madison Avenue, Manhattan
Tax Map Block 1389 Lot 50

Built: 1964-1966

Architect: Marcel Breuer & Associates

Style: Brutalist

Proposed Action: Proposed for Calendaring as Individual
Landmark and Interior Landmark on December 17, 2024



945 Madison Avenue, LPC

945 Madison Avenue was home to the Whitney Museum of American Art from its construction in 1966 until 2014. It is a Brutalist-style inverted ziggurat clad in granite and raw concrete situated at the corner of Madison Avenue and East 75th Street on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, in stark contrast with the surrounding 19th century rowhouses. The building's interior features open floor plans, distinctive overhead lights, and interconnected public spaces that together create an enduring emblem of modern urban architecture.

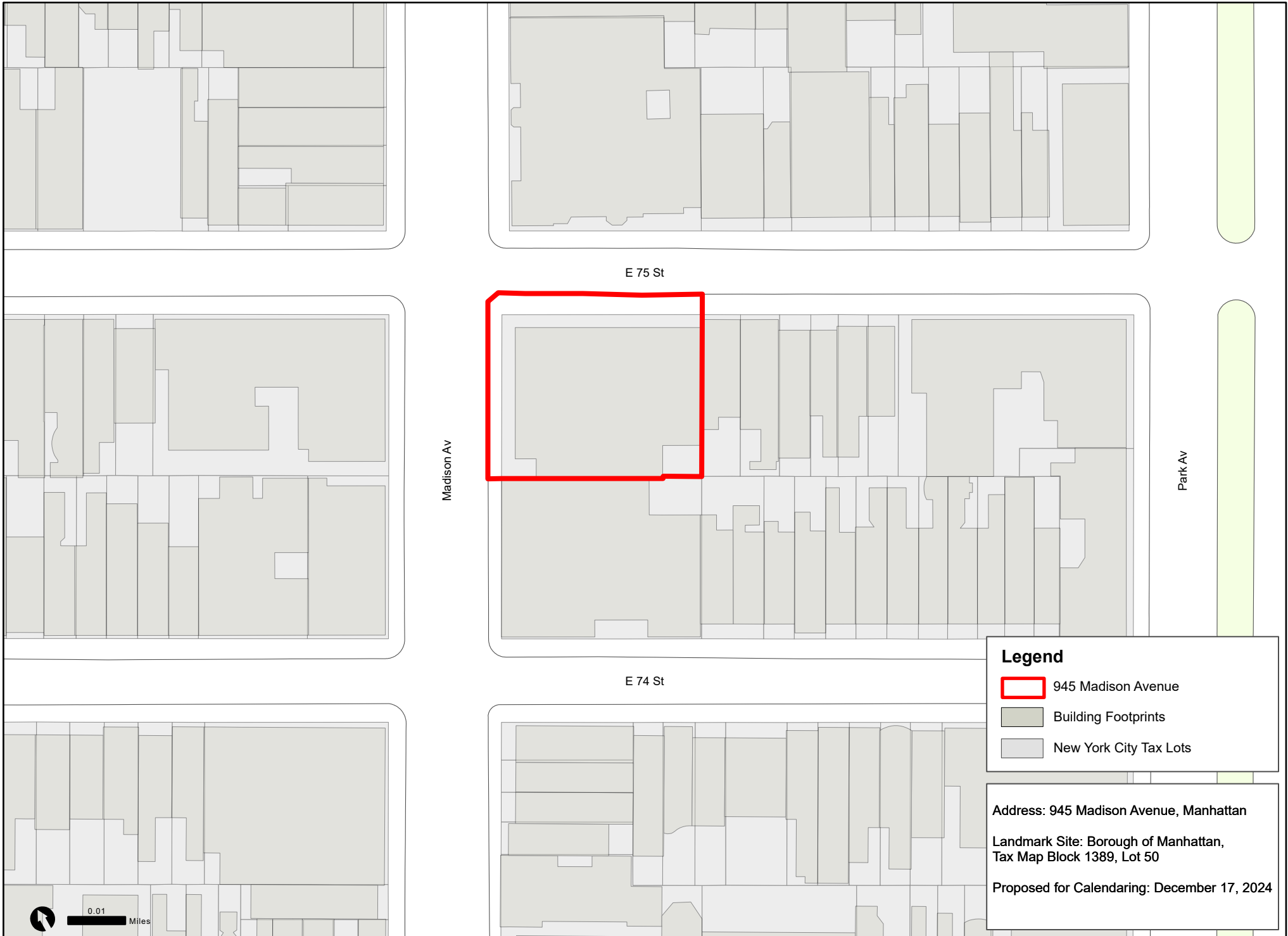
The museum was founded as the Whitney Studio in 1929 by sculptor Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney to showcase contemporary American artists, including John Sloan and Reginald Marsh. Located in a series of buildings in Greenwich Village and later sharing space with the Museum of Modern Art, by the 1950s the Whitney Museum needed a permanent home. The museum's trustees acquired property in Manhattan's Upper East Side neighborhood and engaged Marcel Breuer and Associates to design a new museum. Completed in 1966, it was the first new museum built in Manhattan since the Guggenheim opened in 1959, and the first devoted exclusively to American art.

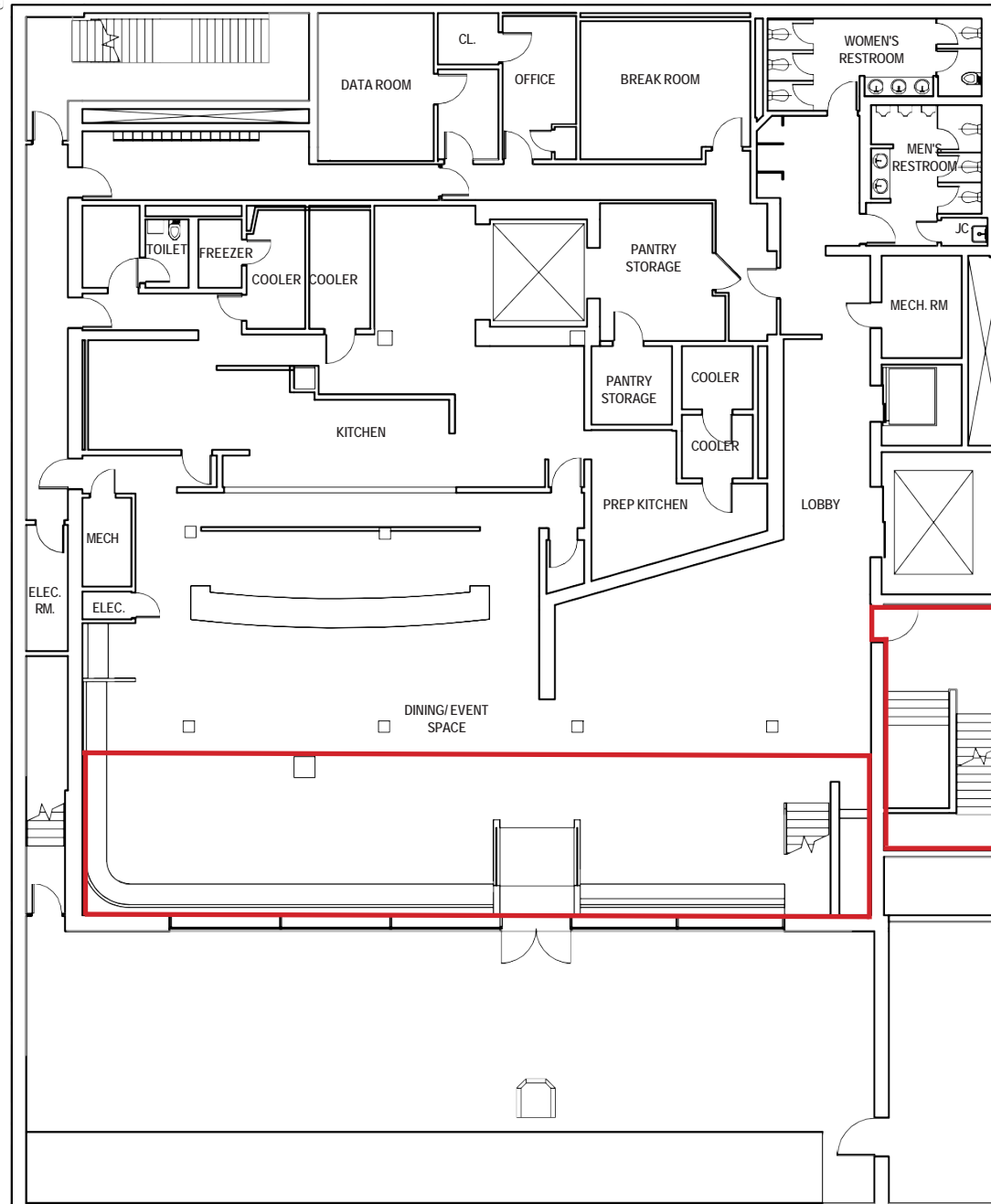
Marcel Breuer trained as a carpenter at the Bauhaus in Weimar, Germany between the World Wars, where he designed iconic furniture, including the still-popular Wassily Chair, and subsequently served as a master of the school's carpentry program in Dessau. Breuer left the school in 1929 and relocated to London in 1935, subsequently immigrating to the United States in 1937 to join his mentor Walter Gropius at Harvard University. In a creative partnership with Gropius, Breuer greatly influenced a group of young architects and by extension, the course of modern American architecture. After breaking with Gropius, he went on to design notable buildings such as the UNESCO headquarters (1958) in Paris and Begrisch Hall (1961) at the former uptown New York University campus (now Bronx Community College), a New York City Landmark.

The Whitney Museum's site originally contained several row houses. At 100 feet by 125 feet, the relatively small lot required an innovative approach to space planning. Breuer joined the project after the site was selected and settled on an inverted pyramid form with each level slightly larger than the one it rests upon, creating a stepped cantilever on the primary facade. The heavy masonry building projects permanence and solidity yet appears to float above a transparent glass ground story, revealing open floorplans adorned with cast concrete furnishings, and a ceiling studded with modern lighting. The interior's walls and built-in furnishings are bush-hammered and board-form concrete, typical of the Brutalist style, interspersed with natural wood details, including on the stair railings.

By the 1980s, the Whitney Museum found their new home did not offer adequate space to accommodate their extensive collections and rotating exhibitions and relocated to a new building in 2014. After the departure of the Whitney, 945 Madison Avenue temporarily housed collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and subsequently the Frick Museum while their facilities underwent renovation. The auction house Sotheby's acquired the building in 2024.

The former Whitney Museum of American Art remains as Marcel Breuer envisioned it: a monumental building that contrasts with its surroundings both stylistically and in its massing. Its iconoclastic design is unlike anything built in New York City before or since.





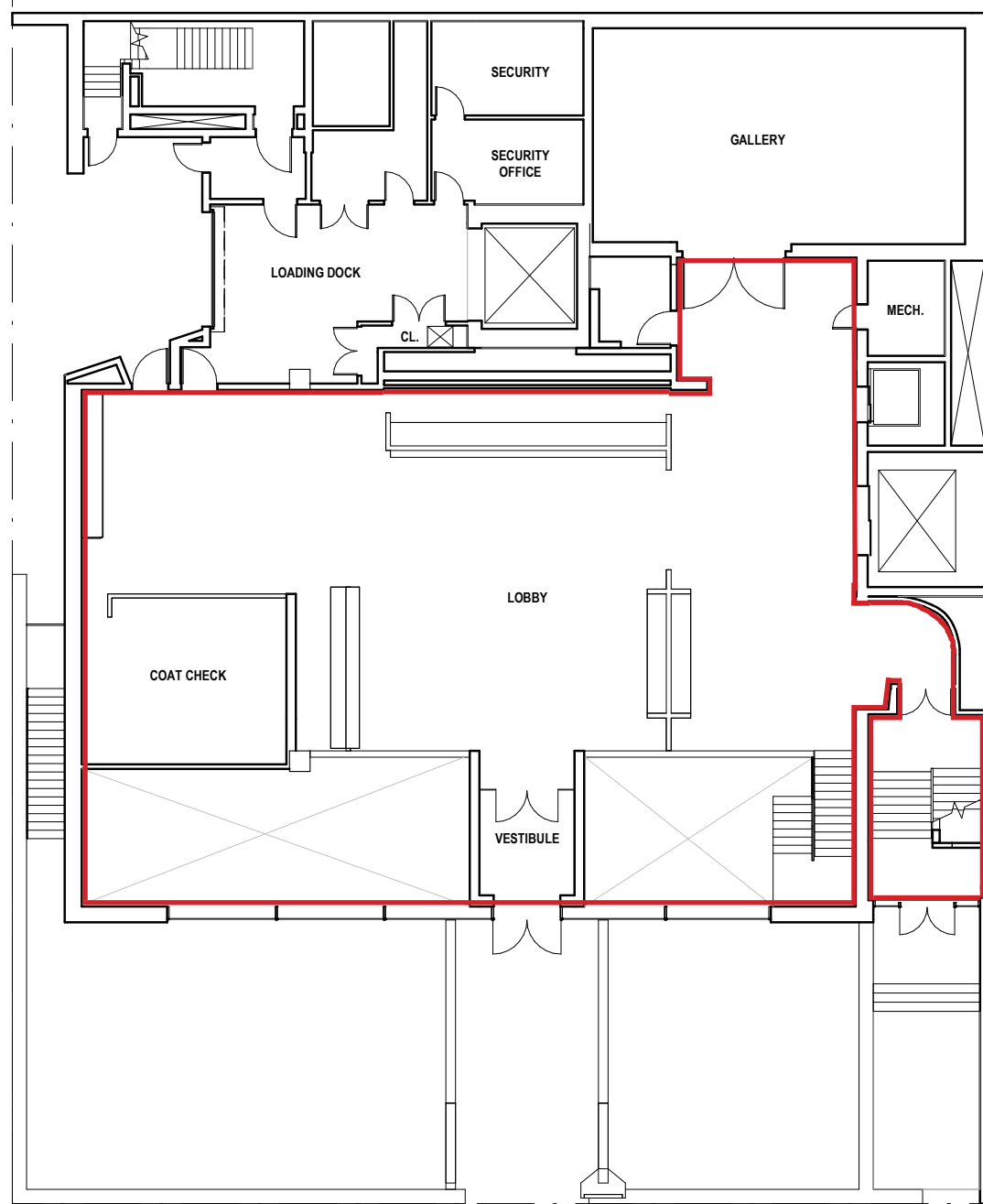
Legend

- Lower Level Floor Plan
- Proposed Interior Landmark

Address: 945 Madison Avenue
Landmark Site: Manhattan, Block 1389 Lot 50
Proposed for Calendaring: December 17, 2024



Lower Level Floor Plan

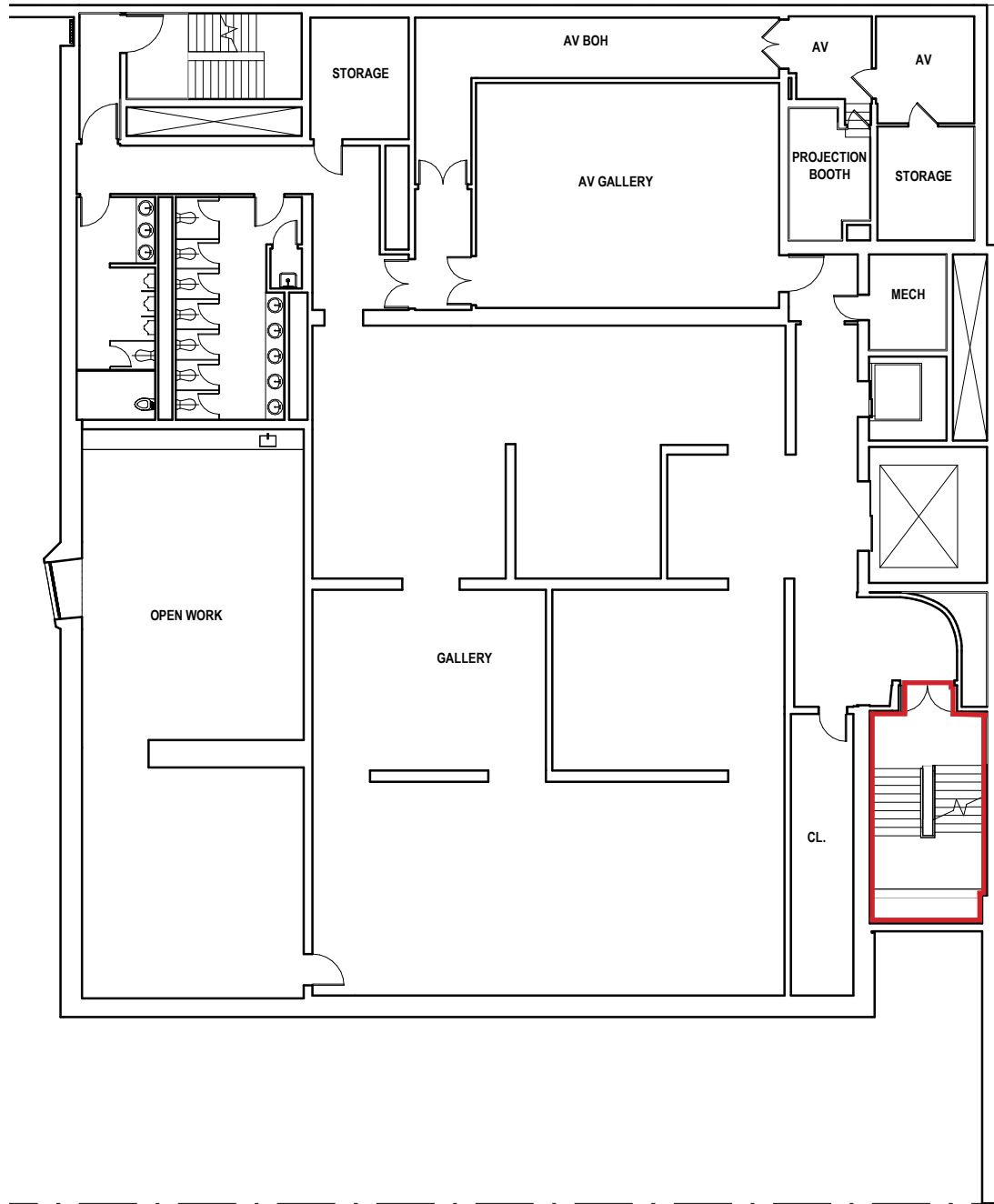


Legend

- Level 1 Floor Plan
- Proposed Interior Landmark

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 **Level 1 Floor Plan**



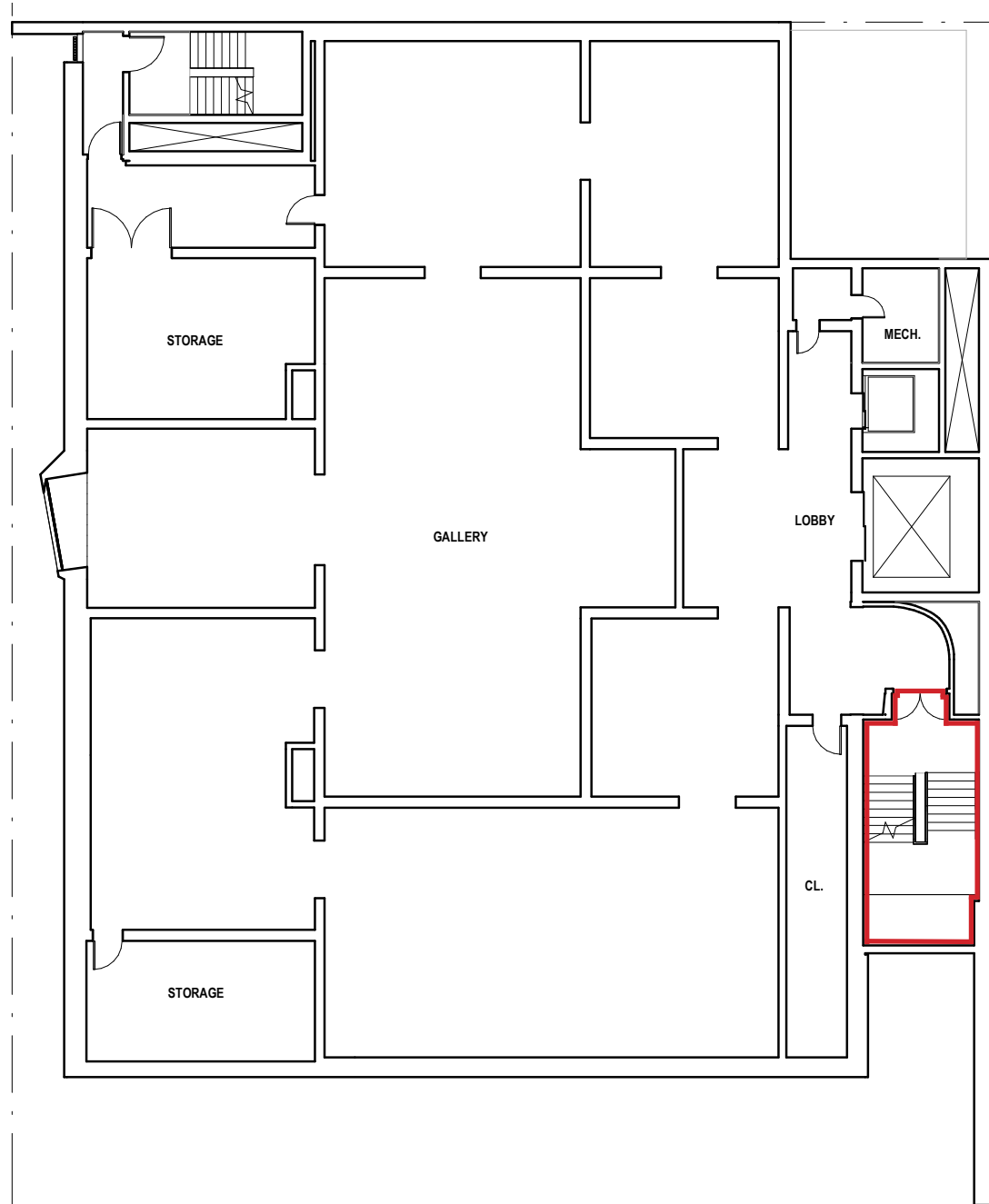
Legend

- Level 2 Floor Plan
- Proposed Interior Landmark

Address: 945 Madison Avenue
Landmark Site: Manhattan, Block 1389
Lot 50
Proposed for Calendaring: December 17, 2024



Level 2 Floor Plan



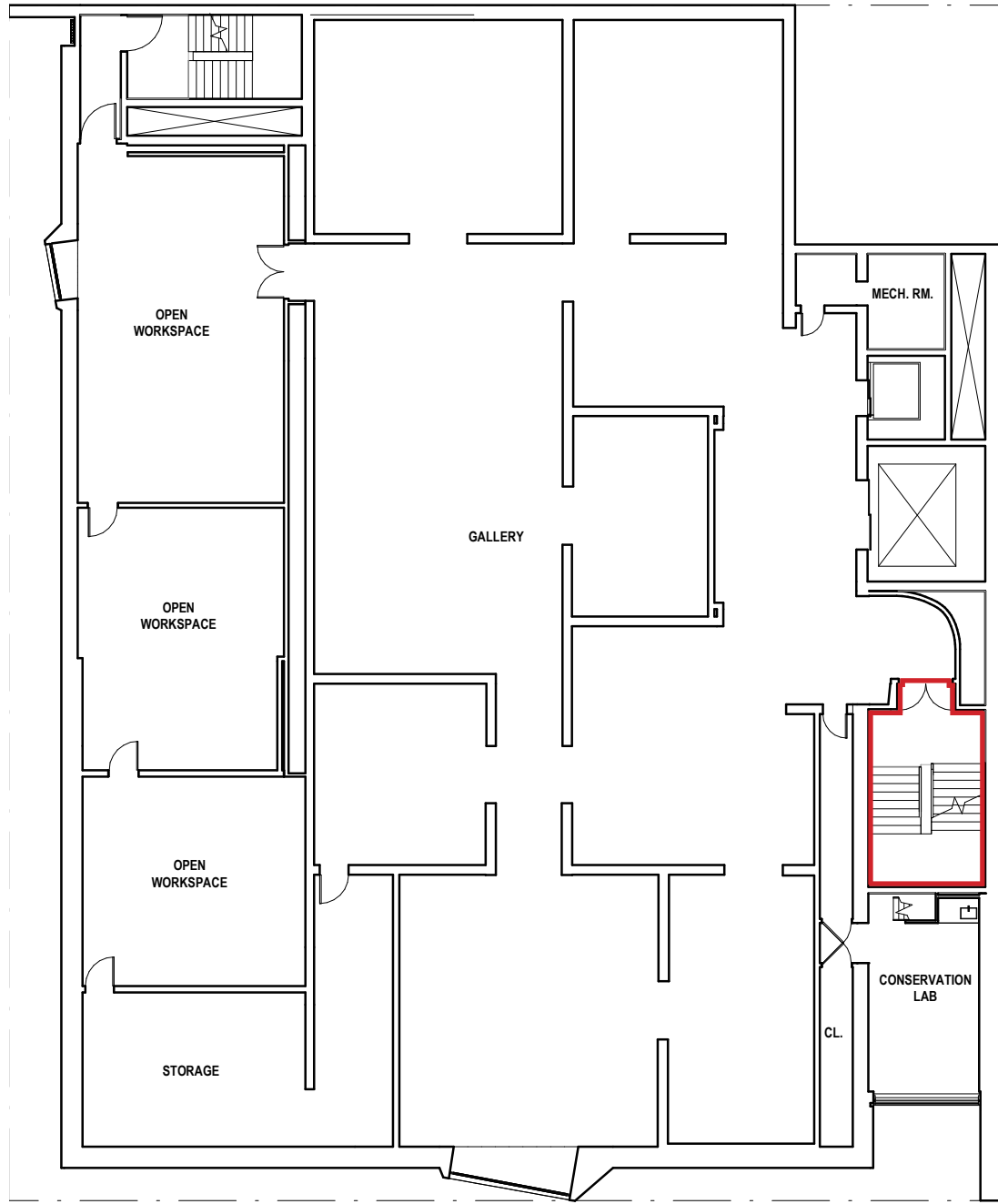
Legend

- Level 3 Floor Plan
- Proposed Interior Landmark

Address: 945 Madison Avenue
Landmark Site: Manhattan, Block 1389
Lot 50
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Level 3 Floor Plan



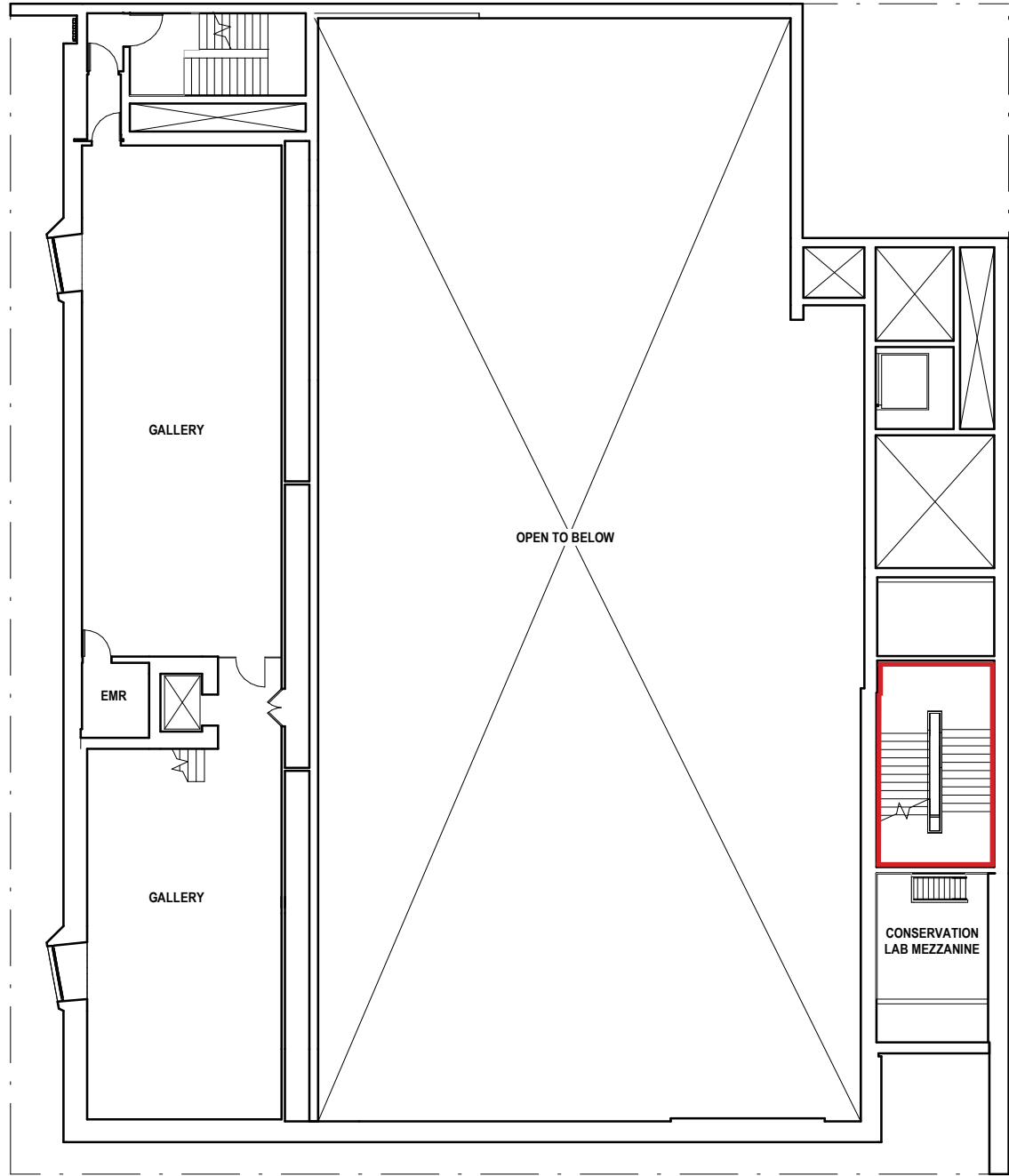
Legend

- Level 4 Floor Plan
- Proposed Interior Landmark

Address: 945 Madison Avenue
Landmark Site: Manhattan, Block 1389 Lot 50
Proposed for Calendaring: December 17, 2024



Level 4 Floor Plan



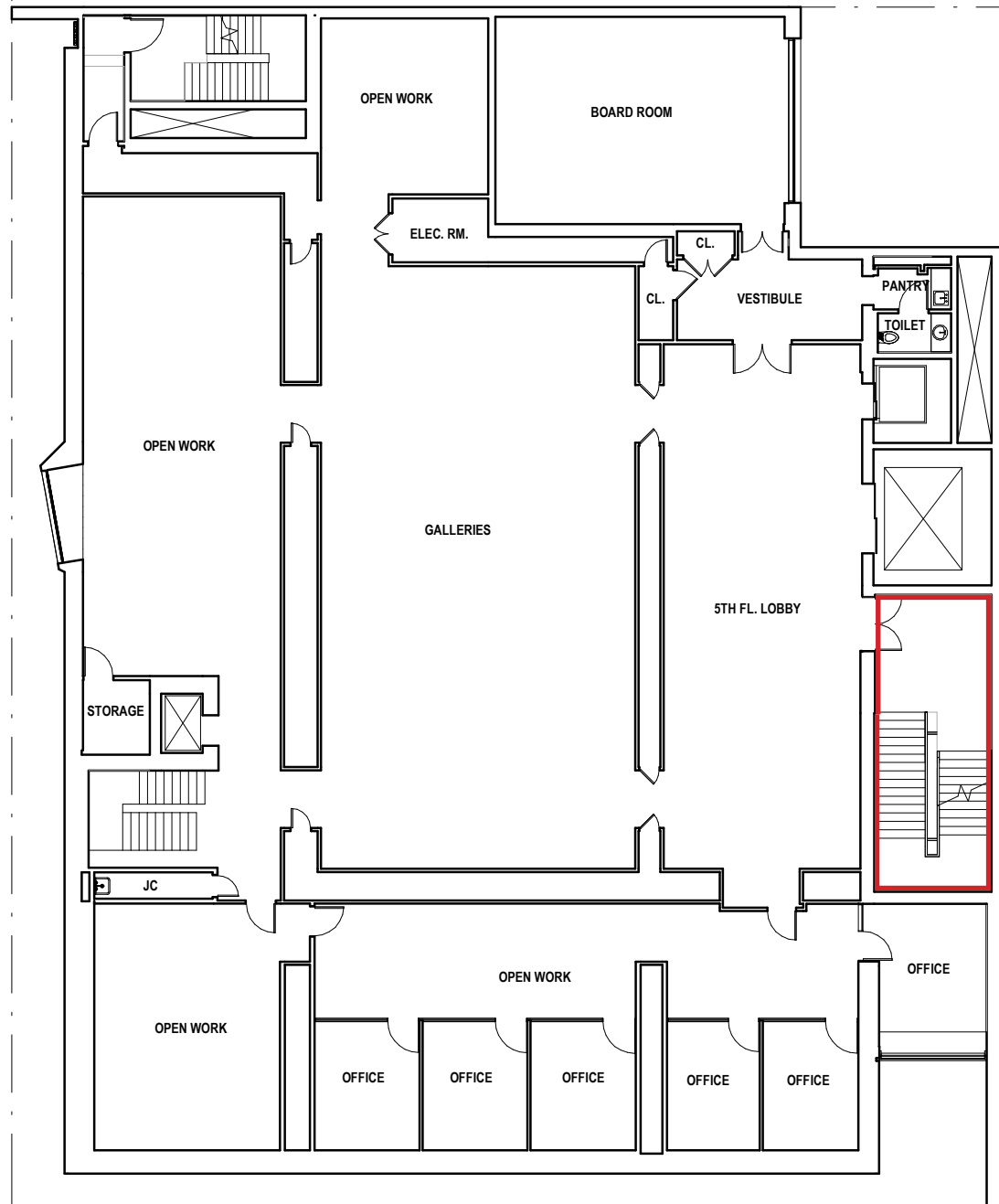
Legend

- Level 4 Mezzanine Floor Plan
- Proposed Interior Landmark

Address: 945 Madison Avenue
Landmark Site: Manhattan, Block 1389
Lot 50
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Level 4 Mezzanine Floor Plan



Legend

- Level 5 Floor Plan
- Proposed Interior Landmark

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Level 5 Floor Plan