

## **Citicorp Center (now 601 Lexington Avenue) and St. Peter's Church**

601 Lexington Avenue (aka 601-635 Lexington Avenue, 884-892 Third Avenue  
139-153 East 53<sup>rd</sup> Street, 140-160 East 54<sup>th</sup> Street) and 619 Lexington Avenue  
Tax Map Block, 1308, Lot 7501

Built: 1973-78, alterations c. 1996, 2002, 2008

Architect: Hugh Stubbins & Associates, with Emery Roth & Sons

Style: Late 20<sup>th</sup>-century Modernism

Actions: Item Proposed for the Commission's Calendar on May 10, 2016

Commissioned by First National City Bank, the Citicorp Center consists of three buildings – a 59-story office tower, a six-story office and retail building, and St. Peter's Church. A major work of late 20<sup>th</sup> century modernism, it was designed by Hugh Stubbins & Associates, an architectural firm based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in association with Emery Roth & Sons.

The tower, which stands approximately 910-feet-tall, rises on four 115-foot-tall pylons. Each pylon is centered beneath one façade, using bold cantilevers to create additional space at each corner of the site. The façades comprise smooth, alternating tinted ribbon windows with polished aluminum panels. At the summit, the roof is cut off at a 45-degree angle. The roof profile was initially conceived for terraced apartments, but later reoriented to the south and proposed as a platform for solar panels. This unusual feature made the Citicorp tower one of New York City's most recognizable skyscrapers in Manhattan's skyline. Though the economic benefit of using solar panels made them unfeasible at that time, various other energy saving strategies were adopted within the building. A pioneering effort at sustainable design, the owners asserted that their building would use 43 percent less energy than a comparable skyscraper.



The complex represents an innovative use of various zoning incentives that provided floor area bonuses for a variety of public spaces including the plaza and an open-air concourse on site, and a covered pedestrian space and through-block arcade within the interior (those interior spaces are not part of the proposed landmark site). Now commonly referred to as Privately Owned Public Spaces, (POPS), the layout, design, functionality and maintenance of these amenities were reviewed and approved by the City Planning Commission. The spacious sunken plaza, tucked beneath the tower, was planned to enhance connections to the subway station – a major transit hub that provides access to both north-south and east-west subway lines. These POPS remain under the jurisdiction of the City Planning Commission, and, with its approval, have undergone several alterations.

Stubbins, in consultation with architect Edward Larrabee Barnes, is also credited with the design of St. Peter's Church. Located at the corner of 54<sup>th</sup> Street, this low-rise structure has a prismatic form with a substantial skylight and sloping granite walls.

Completed at a time when few large buildings were being erected in New York City, the Citicorp Center received considerable attention from the press and architectural critics. In the *New York Times*, Ada Louise Huxtable called it a "suave blockbuster" and Paul Goldberger viewed it as "remarkably intelligent synthesis of a number of architectural themes." David Dunlap later described the church as "New York's most architecturally successful postwar sanctuary." Boston Properties acquired the Citicorp Center in 2001; the complex was renamed 601 Lexington Avenue in 2008.

