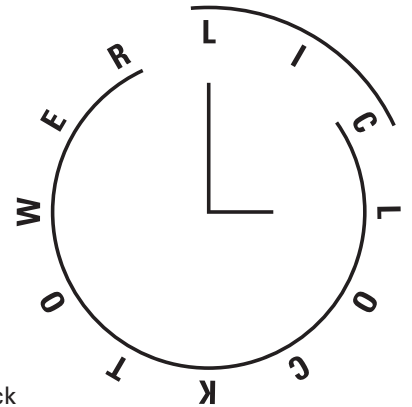


Help us landmark the Long Island City Clock Tower



The iconic Long Island City Clock Tower, which has towered over Queens Plaza since 1927, is one of the most significant architectural landmarks in Queens. Known historically as the Bank of Manhattan Building (29–27 Queens Plaza North), the Clock Tower was designed by architect Morrell Smith and was the tallest building in the borough until the Citigroup building (1 Court Square) was erected in 1990. The building’s 14 stories—three of which comprise the tower and house its monumental 14’ four-faced illuminated clock—are faced with buff-colored pressed brick and Indiana limestone trim and boast neo-Gothic historical references that culminate in the crests and gargoyles decorating the battlements.

The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission is currently evaluating the Clock Tower to determine its eligibility for designation, and it has already passed preliminary review. With the recent sale of the building, however, we need an immediate and strong show of community support to ensure that it is preserved. Help us at licclocktower.org by signing our petition and sending a letter of support to the LPC! (More details on the next page.)

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+Partners



Photos by
Clemens Koiss

How to help

In addition to collecting signatures for our petition, we're asking community members and leaders to submit letters of support to the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission. At licclocktower.org you can find a sample letter of support, as well as the address where it should be sent. (And please send us a digital copy at everyone@pluspartners.org!)

History of The Clock Tower Building

The Long Island City branch of the Bank of Manhattan—or the “Clock Tower,” as the building is referred to casually—was designed by architect Morrell Smith, whose Queens-based offices were located in Jamaica. Smith won multiple awards from the Queensboro Chamber of Commerce for his Bank of Manhattan buildings erected throughout the borough between 1920 and 1926, and in 1927 the Clock Tower was recognized by the same organization as the Best Business Building in Queens. Another of Smith's Queens banks, the 1939 Jamaica Savings Bank, was designated by the Landmarks Preservation Commission on February 9, 2010.

The Clock Tower, the tallest building in Queens at the time of its completion, was immediately well received. The Bank of Manhattan opened the branch for business on May 10, 1927, just one day after it was opened for inspection. During its opening reception on May 10, from 2 to 6 in the afternoon, it welcomed city and state officials, as well as officers of the Queensboro Chamber of Commerce, patrons of the bank, and local guests. The Bank itself occupied the basement, ground floor, and mezzanine of the building, and the upper floors were rented out as office space. The building reached 75% occupancy capacity shortly after its completion.

The Clock Tower was built by C.T. Willis on a plot running along Skillman Ave and measuring 50.5 x 100.7 feet, with the building itself spanning the full width and extending back 76.4 feet. It is constructed of buff-colored pressed brick with Indiana limestone trim. The building features vertical bands of contrasting brick that accentuate the building's height and lead the eye toward the crests, monograms, and gargoyles decorating the battlements. The Tower also features an unusual light well that opens out to the east of the building (rather than being centrally located) and provides small balconies for each floor.

Three of the building's fourteen stories comprise the Clock Tower itself, which houses its most prominent feature: a 14'-diameter four-faced electron clock whose mechanism was designed and built by the Electime Company of Brooklyn. Interestingly, the exterior walls of the tower follow the gentle tapering of the building plot, but viewed from the street below, the tower still appears orthogonal.

The main banking hall was finished in marble with brass fixtures and hardware. The basement vault storage is still partially intact, including a heavy steel and concrete safe deposit vault that was both fire and explosion proof. Although these interior details are not strictly related to the Request for Evaluation submitted to the Landmarks Preservation Commission, it is worth noting that much of the original marble banking hall remains intact behind gypsum wallboard.

Since the building's most recent transfer of ownership, the Tower's clock faces are no longer illuminated at night.