



# New York State Pavilion Disgrace

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E-Mail to [pitbull@theparkwatchdog.org](mailto:pitbull@theparkwatchdog.org) from Bill Young, Director of NYWF64.com:



To <[pitbull@theparkwatchdog.org](mailto:pitbull@theparkwatchdog.org)>  
Subject NY State Pavilion at Flushing Meadow-Corona Park  
Date Wed, 2 Aug 2006 22:15:17

*The New York State Pavilion as it appeared at the 1964-65 New York World's Fair.*

I'm writing to you now because, as a Park Watch Dog, I believe you will take an interest in what I am about to say. As you are aware, Manhattan architect Mr. Frankie Campione of CREATE Architecture Planning and Design and Mr. Charles Aybar, a Flushing, Queens native, undertook a four-plus year effort to stabilize and restore the NY State Pavilion of the 1964/65 World's Fair at Flushing Meadows as an Air & Space Museum.

I wanted to let you know that, as host of their project's website, I've undertaken the task of putting together a complete timeline of their project from its inception in December 2000 to their receipt of the rejection letter from the Parks Department of NY City regarding the Request for Expression of Interest that Campione & Aybar submitted for their proposal. I have also placed online for public scrutiny copies of the Parks Department's 1992 and 1996 engineering studies regarding the serious foundation problems of the pavilion, the RFEI put out by the Parks Department in 2004 to solicit adaptive reuses for the pavilion, and the response to the RFEI submitted by Campione & Aybar concerning their plans to stabilize and adapt the pavilion. I was spurred to action to persuade Mr. Campione & Aybar to agree to this by two recent events:

The first were the comments by Assistant Parks Commissioner Estelle Cooper that appeared in the Queens Gazette on June 1, 2006 regarding a "50's Sock Hop" fundraiser she was hosting to raise money for the stabilization and restoration of the NY State Pavilion. In the article, Ms. Cooper is quoted as saying, "Let's fix it up or tear it down." The article reports that a decision will depend on how much money the event brings in.

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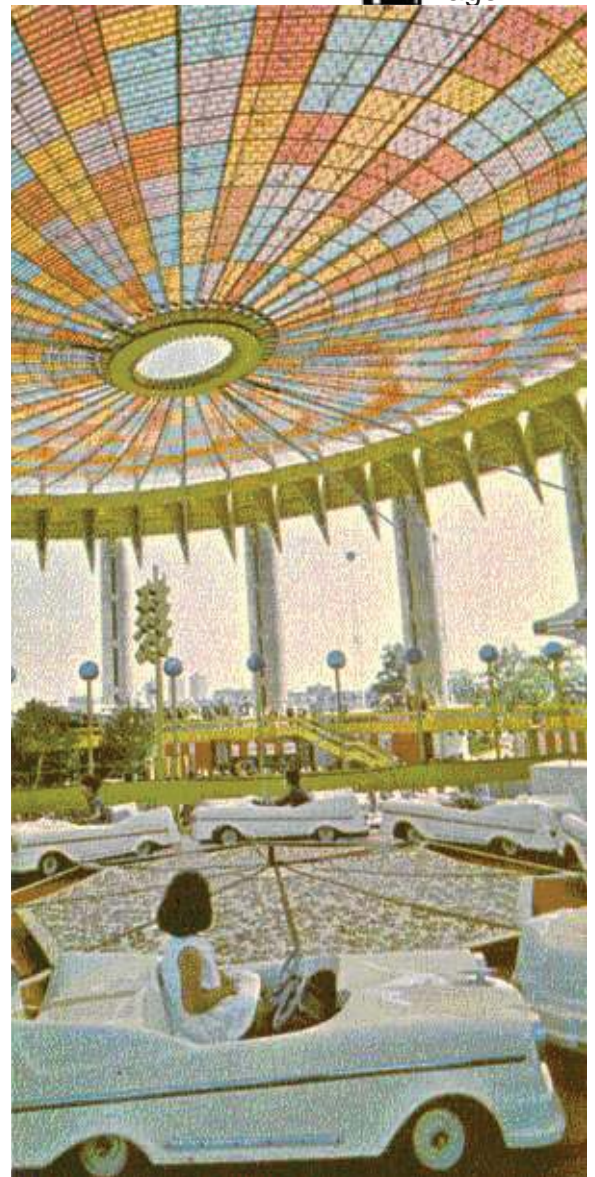
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The second event was the discovery of this quote on the NY Landmarks Conservancy website:

The New York State Pavilion from the 1964 World's Fair is the most-nominated modern building in the EBI survey. As it continues to deteriorate, even as the adjacent Queen's theatre brings new life back to the site, more and more preservationists and others are concerned about its future. The Parks Department issued a Request for Expression of Interest (REFI) in 2004 for interested parties to propose restoration, adaptive reuse, and programming for the Pavilion. A few responses were received, but deemed non-feasible because of insufficient funding projections. The University of Pennsylvania Graduate Student Preservation Program has also taken a keen interest in the structure. Under the direction of Frank Matero, two students have adopted the aspects of the Pavilion as thesis work and provided valuable information to the Parks Department on the structure. One paper focused on the extensive history and importance of the Pavilion and the second provided a detailed conservation treatment study of the fragile map of New York terrazzo floor. The University has been exploring additional grant sources to study, stabilize, and restore the Pavilion.

<http://www.nywf64.com/savenys01.1.html>

Please take some time to study the timeline of events concerning the project. I am hoping that Investigative Reporting is still something that today's journalists are willing to tackle. The story of Campione & Aybar's struggle to get the Parks Department to take seriously the deterioration of the pavilion was long, difficult and costly for both of them and ultimately unsuccessful. The fact of the matter is that



*Terrazzo map of New York State in the Pavilion during the World's Fair. The giant map and stained glass roof have been destroyed.*

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*Ruins of the New York State Pavilion as it appears today in Flushing Meadows - Corona Park.  
Photo: Greg Godfrey.*

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two years after the Parks Department called a public halt to their project by saying that “no one met funding requirements” the Parks Department claims they are STILL studying stabilization and reuse possibilities. They hope to raise, via annual fundraisers, the millions of dollars that will be needed to restore and stabilize the pavilion. They have had the audacity to accept \$55,000 in grant money from the NEA and the Samuel Kress Foundation to study the restoration of the floor of the pavilion that is a complete and utter shambles before addressing the stabilization issues. Based on the reports that you can review, I believe the Parks Department will and should be held criminally liable for damages and injury or death resulting from a catastrophic failure of the pavilion while they have played a waiting game against disaster, hoping they can raise the funds to restore the pavilion before some sort of disaster strikes.

Perhaps you think I’m being an alarmist? Please, read the timeline and the history of Campione & Aybar’s dealings with the Parks Department. Study the RFEI and their response. Take a look at the little the Parks Department has accomplished towards stabilization and restoration in the six years since Campione and Aybar came to them, and in the years prior when they had knowledge of the foundation problems. Then tell me that you cannot come to the same conclusions that I have -- that the Parks Department, in their efforts to keep the pavilion tightly in their grasp so that it can someday produce concessions revenue for them, is playing a dangerous waiting game with the public’s safety.

For years, Campione & Aybar tried to get the news media in New York City to take seriously their con-

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cerns. If, with all of this information online at the media's disposal the local Queens Borough media and NY City media as a whole do not investigate further than taking a few quotes from bureaucratic Parks officials regarding "half-baked" and "outer space" plans as they have in the past, then the media should also be held liable for damages and injury should there be a catastrophic failure of the New York State Pavilion. And it is to that end that Campione and Aybar agreed to put this information online: so that it can be of help to others trying to save the pavilion and so that the truth about their efforts and the inadequacy of the Parks Department bureaucracy is in black and white for the public to see.

As former editor of the Queens Tribune, I am certain that you know many member of the New York media. I also know that you care deeply about Flushing Meadows-Corona Park and have a long, personal history with the Park dating back to your childhood. You now host a website that acts as a Park Watchdog. In my opinion, the state of deterioration of the NY State Pavilion, as supported by reports commissioned by the Parks Department in 1992 and 1996 and confirmed by Meyer Consulting Engineers in 2001, is a public safety hazard to patrons of Flushing Meadows Park and the Queens Theater-in-the-Park. I am concerned that the Parks Department is placing their own interests above the safety of the park patrons, as supported by their own documents. I am enlisting your help, as a journalist and as someone who cares about the Park and its World's Fair legacies, to bring this story to someone in the NY media who will do some serious investigative reporting into why the



*Architect's rendering of a proposal to rehabilitate the New York State Pavilion which has been ignored by the New York City Park's Department.*

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Parks Department has not acted on their own findings regarding the safety of the Pavilion. The news media have, to date, have taken Parks Department comments at face value and have looked into the problems with the pavilion no further. With the facts of the Air & Space Museum project in hand, and copies of the Parks Departments reports, isn't there one journalist in the city of New York who cares enough to pursue the actions, or lack of action, of the Parks Department and the Borough of Queens in light of the condition of the foundation of the pavilion?

Respectfully,

Bill Young

host, nywf64.com -- the 1964/1965 website of the NY World's Fair