

## View From the Sunburst Spire

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The disadvantage of having an office in the Chrysler Building is that you can't see the Chrysler Building from your window—no view of the sunburst spire that has been a romantic highpoint of the New York skyline for nearly half a century. The advantage of a well-situated office in the behemoth-like Pan Am Building is that the Chrysler's spectacular Art Deco top is right there at eye level, its stainless steel gargoyles and hubcap frieze affording an incomparable vista of skyscraper art.

The view inside and outside the Chrysler Building has not been so good for a while, however; neglect by its recent owners, preoccupied with high-wire real estate speculation, dimmed its luster and its market appeal. When the Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company acquired the building through default, it found a deteriorating structure of faded glory, only slightly more than half rented, and confronted a hard decision on whether to keep it or let it go:

¶ The decision was to invest in the building and in

New York City. Massachusetts Mutual is gambling \$23 million to restore the Chrysler's splendor. Its impeccable objective is to retain and enhance the building's quality while making it more marketable. But to do this, some changes are being planned in lobby lighting and entrance details. They need review by the Landmarks Commission to insure the character of the building without interfering with its economic appeal. Though famous since its completion by William Van Alen in 1929, the building is only now being considered for landmark designation.

As important as the rebirth of a landmark, however, is the boost Massachusetts Mutual has given the whole Grand Central neighborhood. The view from the Chrysler Building will soon include the remodeled Commodore Hotel, the refurbished exterior of Grand Central Terminal, a new Philip Morris headquarters at the East Side Airlines Terminal site and an office skyscraper by a Canadian builder. The preservation and development of this key midtown area are indeed once again looking up. ¶

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