



CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

August 18, 2021/Calendar No. 30

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IN THE MATTER OF a communication dated July 1, 2021, from the Executive Director of the Landmarks Preservation Commission regarding the landmark designation of the Kimlau War Memorial (Block 117, Lot 100), by the Landmarks Preservation Commission on June 22, 2021, (Designation List No. 525/LP-2653), Borough of Manhattan, Community District 3.

Pursuant to Section 3020.8(b) of the City Charter, the City Planning Commission shall submit to the City Council a report with respect to the relation of any designation by the Landmarks Preservation Commission, whether a historic district or a landmark, to the Zoning Resolution, projected public improvements, and any plans for the development, growth, improvement or renewal of the area involved.

On June 22, 2021, the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) designated the Kimlau War Memorial (Chatham Square, Manhattan) as an individual landmark. The landmark designation consists of Block 117, Lot 100. The landmark site is within Kimlau Square in Chatham Square in Chinatown, Manhattan Community District 3.

Designed by Chinese American architect Poy Gum Lee and dedicated in 1962, the Kimlau War Memorial is a granite ceremonial gateway located in Kimlau Square at the intersection Chatham Square, Oliver Street, and East Broadway in Manhattan. The memorial honors Chinese American soldiers who died in action during World War II. It consists of a granite arch and a flanking pair of benches, which together create a unique blend of traditional Chinese architectural forms with a streamlined mid-century modern aesthetic.

The memorial is named after Second Lieutenant Benjamin Ralph Kimlau (1918–1944), a Chinese American pilot who died while attacking Japanese military installations in the South Pacific. As part of Kimlau Square, the arch serves as the site of an annual celebration to honor war veterans and remains an important marker at the heart of Manhattan's historic Chinatown. The Kimlau War Memorial combines modern design with a streamlined interpretation of traditional Chinese architecture, with a peaked roof, interlocking brackets, and a symmetrical configuration. The arch itself is a typical Chinese architectural element that can be used both as a physical gateway or as a decorative symbol. The memorial and Kimlau Square, are under the care of the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR). Notably, the memorial retains a high degree of integrity to its original design.

The Kimlau War Memorial is significant for its design by the architect Poy G. Lee, and as a prominent monument dedicated to the contributions of Chinese American veterans. While there are numerous New York City landmarks in the Chinatown area, the Kimlau War Memorial is the first New York City landmark that specifically recognizes Chinese American history and culture. Although managed as a public monument by DPR, the subject landmark is not located within a City mapped park.

The Kimlau War Memorial is at the junction of several neighborhoods: Civic Center to the west, Chinatown to the north, the Lower East Side to the east, and Two Bridges to the south. It sits on a 3,311 square foot lot in a C6-1G zoning district that has a maximum allowable Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 6.0 for commercial use, 3.44 for residential use, and 6.5 for community facility use. The landmark site is currently used as open space (built to 0 FAR) and is unlikely to develop in the future, absent the landmark designation. The site has approximately 19,866 square feet of unused development rights.

Pursuant to Section 74-79 of the Zoning Resolution, a landmark building may transfer its unused development rights to a lot contiguous to the zoning lot occupied by the landmark building or one which is across the street and opposite to the zoning lot occupied by the landmark building, or in the case of a corner lot, one which fronts on the same street intersection as the lot occupied by the landmark. There are 15 sites adjacent sites, 13 are eligible to receive the landmark's unused floor area as transferable development rights.

Pursuant to Section 74-711 of the Zoning Resolution, landmark buildings or buildings within Historic Districts are eligible to apply for use and bulk waivers upon application to the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

The subject landmark does not conflict with the Zoning Resolution. The Commission is not aware of any conflicts between the subject landmark designation and projected public improvements or any plans for development growth, improvement or renewal in the vicinity of the landmark.

MARISA LAGO, Chair

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