



CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

November 17, 2010 / Calendar No. 6

N 110093 HKM

IN THE MATTER OF a communication dated September 23, 2010, from the Executive Director of the Landmarks Preservation Commission regarding the landmark designation of the Loew's Canal Street Theatre Building, 31 Canal Street (Block 297, part of Lot 1), by the Landmarks Preservation Commission on September 14, 2010 (Designation List No. 433/LP-2368), 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 of 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 September 14, 2010, the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) designated the Loew's Canal Street Theatre, located at 31 Canal Street (Block 297, part of Lot 1), as a city landmark.

The Loew's Canal Street Theatre Building is located on the north east side of Canal Street between Ludlow Street and Essex Street in the Lower East Side neighborhood of Manhattan. The approximately four-story theater building was constructed in 1926-27 to the design of the nationally recognized design firm of Thomas W. Lamb, Inc.

Thomas White Lamb, born in Scotland in 1871. By 1883, he moved to New York with his family and around 1892, opened an architectural office, prior to having any architectural training. He graduated from the Cooper Union in 1898, and earned his earliest design commissions in 1903 for a hotel on 125th Street in Harlem and the Pastime Athletic Club clubhouse on 79th Street. He soon aligned himself with the entertainment industry, particularly the emerging motion picture business, and by 1914 had established himself as a leading figure in the design of local storefront nickelodeons as well as large-scale movie palaces.

The emergence of the motion picture as the dominant form of entertainment in the U.S. coincided almost exactly with the growth of the Lower East Side as a Jewish immigrant district. Many leading figures in the early history of the movies were originally from the neighborhood, which was the home of the greatest concentration of movie houses in the country for much of the early 20th century.

To minimize real estate costs, local movie houses of this period tended to be sited on irregularly shaped lots with a narrow lobby structure facing onto a busy commercial street, with the auditorium itself located on less-expensive land fronting onto an adjacent side street. The primary facade of the Loew's Canal featured a ground floor almost entirely taken up by a large rectangular opening that was once fitted with a series of doors flanking a central box office. The upper floors are clad in terra cotta with projecting piers running the full height of the building's corners. The blind openings on the second floor, fitted with rare black terra cotta designed to mimic window panes, hid the mechanical equipment of what was the theater's fan room. The building's cornice line features a great deal of flamboyant ornamentation in the form of griffons, eagles and sea monsters interspersed with garlands, festoons and other foliate motifs.

The landmark site is located in a C6-2 zoning district. With an allowable floor area ratio (FAR) of 6.02, the zoning lot could be developed with approximately 95,537 square feet of floor area. The Loew's Canal Street Theatre Building contains approximately 40,716 square feet of floor area. Therefore, there are approximately 54,821 square feet theoretically available for transfer.

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 or one which is across the street and opposite to the 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 building. There are approximately sixteen potential receiving sites available for the transfer of the landmark's unused floor area.

All landmark buildings or buildings within Historic Districts are eligible to apply for use and bulk waivers pursuant to Section 74-711 of the Zoning Resolution.

The subject landmark does not conflict with the Zoning Resolution. In addition, 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 building.

AMANDA M. BURDEN, FAICP, Chair
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SHIRLEY A. MCRAE, KAREN A. PHILLIPS, Commissioners