



CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

May 20, 2009/Calendar No. 13

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IN THE MATTER OF a communication dated April 1, 2009, from the Executive Director of the Landmarks Preservation Commission regarding the landmark designation of New York Botanical Garden Museum (now Library), Fountain of Life, and Tulip Tree Allee, Watson Drive and Garden Way, New York Botanical Garden, Bronx Park (Block 3272, Lot 1), by the Landmarks Preservation Commission on March 24, 2009 (List No. 411/ LP-2311), Borough of The Bronx.

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 development, growth, improvement, or renewal of the area involved.

On March 24, 2009, the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) designated the New York Botanical Garden Museum (now Library), Fountain of Life, and Tulip Tree Allee, Watson Drive and Garden Way, New York Botanical Garden, Bronx Park, (Block 3272, Lot 1) as a city landmark.

The grand neo-Renaissance style New York Botanical Garden Museum Building, along with the Fountain of Life and Tulip Tree Allee, form a distinguished and monumental Beaux-Arts civic space within the largest most renowned botanical garden in the country. Founded in 1891 and located within Bronx Park, the New York Botanical Garden showcases one of the world's great collections of plants and serves as an educational center for gardening and horticulture.

The New York Botanical Garden Museum (now Library) building was designed by architect Robert W. Gibson and constructed in 1898-1901. It was the first American museum devoted solely to botany; it originally housed the Garden's preserved botanical specimens. The Museum (now Library) building is a four story structure, with a front façade of over 300 feet in width and a central pavilion surmounted by a copper-clad saucer dome. It was constructed with steel framing and concrete floors, and is clad in light grayish-buff brick, with extensive buff terra cotta ornament.

The Bronx sculptural group of the *Fountain of Life* was built in 1903-1905. The sculptor designed by Carl (Charles) E. Tefft for Gibson's marble plinth and basins, depicts a cherub astride a dolphin atop a globe and two webbed footed plunging horses being restrained by a female and a boy, surprising a merman and a mermaid in the basin below. The fountain was restored in 2005 by A. Ottavino Corp. and Building Conservation Associates.

The Tulip Tree Allee, consisting of trees lining both sides of drives leading to the fountain, was planted in 1903-1911 at the direction of Nathaniel Lord Britton, first director of the Garden. Today, the allee is formed by 25 trees. The drives are currently paved with asphalt with concrete curbs, and are lined with benches. Asphalt and concrete sidewalks along the drive lead to the front steps of the Museum Building, and asphalt paths lead from the drive to the west of the northern and southern pavilions of the front façade.

The landmark site is located in mapped parkland. Therefore, Sections 74-79 and 74-711 of the Zoning Resolution do not apply.

The Commission notes that since the landmark is city-owned, the Landmarks Preservation Commission would issue an advisory report rather than a permit for any proposed alteration to the building.

There are no projected public improvements or plans for development, growth, improvement, or renewal in the vicinity of the landmark building. The subject landmark designation does not conflict with the Zoning Resolution, projected public improvements or any plans for development, growth, improvement or renewal in the vicinity of the landmark.

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