CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

February 1, 2017/Calendar No. 18

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IN THE MATTER OF a communication dated December 23, 2016, from the Executive Director of the Landmarks Preservation Commission regarding the landmark designation of the Excelsior Steam Power Company Building (Block 77, Lot 24), by the Landmarks Preservation Commission on December 13, 2016 (Designation List No. 492/LP-0962), Borough of Manhattan, Community District 1.

> 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 December 13, 2016, the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) designated the Excelsior Steam Power Company Building as a City landmark. The landmark site, at 33-43 Gold Street (Block 77, Lot 24), is located on the southeast corner of Gold and Fulton Streets, in the Seaport neighborhood of Manhattan, Community District One.

The Excelsior Building is oldest-known purpose-built commercial generating station standing in Manhattan. Designed by engineer and architect William C. Gunnel, and constructed by master mason Robert L. Darragh, it is one of the few structures remaining from Manhattan's pioneering era for electric lighting and power, which began with the illumination of a portion of Broadway with arc lamps in 1880 and ended with the consolidation of dozens of utilities into the New York Edison Company in 1901.

The Excelsior Building was operational by 1888, when it began generating and distributing electric power to industrial buildings within the surrounding area using seven 50-horsepower dynamos that were designed and manufactured by Leo Daft, a leading figure in the development of commercial electric power systems. Daft had earlier installed New York's first two electric elevator motors in 1884, which were powered by a Daft generator installed alongside the engines of the Excelsior Steam Power Company in its Spruce Street headquarters. Over the subsequent years, Daft's electrical network, powered by Excelsior's steam engines, spread rapidly in Lower Manhattan enabling many New York manufacturers to replace steam generated machinery with

smaller electric motors. The success of the Excelsior's steam engines led to the planning and construction of the Excelsior Building in 1887 and by 1888, Daft was upgrading the building's generators to, which include a ten-ton, 250- horsepower model reported to be the largest dynamo in the world.

The Excelsior Building is an example of the muscular industrial architecture of the 1880's. It was constructed in the Romanesque Revival style and has a five-part main façade with projecting end and tower pavilions, a high base decorated with foliated terra-cotta plaques and a metal sign identifying the building in elegant period lettering. The precision and quality of Darragh's brickwork is evident throughout the façade, but especially in its large round arches. The building's machicolated cornice and stout tower add to its massive, fortress like appearance.

The Excelsior Building provided electricity for lighting and power to local factories and office buildings for many years and was later converted from a generating station into a substation. In 1978, Consolidated Edison sold the building and it was subsequently converted for residential use.

The landmark site is located in a C6-4 zoning district within the Special Lower Manhattan District, which allows a maximum floor area ratio (FAR) of 10. The 20,890 square foot zoning lot could be developed with 208,900 square feet of floor area. The Excelsior Steam Power Company Building contains approximately 159,000 square feet of floor area (7.61 FAR). The site, therefore, has approximately 49,900 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 nine potential receiving sites for the transfer of the landmark's unused floor area.

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. Furthermore, 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.

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