



CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

February 4, 2009 / Calendar No. 15

N 090254 HKM

IN THE MATTER OF a communication dated December 24th, 2008, from the Executive Director of the Landmarks Preservation Commission regarding the landmark designation of the Society House of the American Society of Civil Engineers, located at 220 West 57th Street (Block 1028, Lot 42), by the Landmarks Preservation Commission on December 16th, 2008 (List No. 408/LP- 2297), Borough of Manhattan, Community District 5.

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.

The Society House of the ASCE built in the French Renaissance Revival style was the headquarters of the organization founded in 1852. The Society House of ASCE is located on the south side of West 57th Street between Broadway and Seventh Avenue in Manhattan's Community District 5.

As the engineering profession grew rapidly in the 19th Century the ASCE needed a new building to house their organization. A design competition was held and in 1896 the firm of Eidlitz & McKenzie was selected, the building was constructed between 1896 and 1897. Eidlitz & McKenzie designed a number of office buildings for the telephone industry as well as the New York Times Building in 1905, at that time the tallest structure in New York City.

The Society House is clad in white glazed brick with carved Indiana limestone. The façade features an enframed elliptical arch on the second story and a tripartite window group. As the organization grew ASCE found it necessary to construct an annex in 1905-1906 also designed by Eidlitz & McKenzie in the same style.

In 1917 the ASCE moved into a new building but retained ownership of the Society House until 1966. Because of its proximity to Broadway's "Automobile Row" it was leased in 1917 to the Ajax Rubber Company, a leading manufacturer of tires, and then Stearns-Knight, a manufacturer of luxury automobiles. The 1918 ground story alteration by architect Arnold Brummer including the creation of wide storefront bays to facilitate the buildings use as a showroom. Its later uses included a Schrafft's restaurant and a Lee's Art Shop which is the current ground floor use.

The surrounding neighborhood is a high density commercial district with large office buildings on Broadway and Seventh Avenue. West 57th Street is a wide cross town street with mixture of retail, office, and residential uses. Carnegie Hall is located a half block to the east of the site on West 57th Street and Seventh Avenue.

Situated in a C5-3 zoning district the landmark's building contains approximately 33,497 square feet of floor area. The FAR is 16 for the purposes of determining the amount of floor area that can be transferred from a landmark site in a C5-3 zoning district in the Special Midtown District.

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. The landmark site merged with an adjacent site to the east – 888 Seventh Avenue – and has no remaining floor available for transfer.

All buildings on the same zoning lot as a landmark building or buildings within Historic Districts are eligible to apply for use and bulk waivers pursuant to Section 74-711 of the Zoning Resolution.

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.

AMANDA M. BURDEN, FAICP, Chair
ANGELA M. BATTAGLIA, IRWIN G. CANTOR, P.E., ANGELA R. CAVALUZZI, AIA,
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