



CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

January 7, 2009/Calendar No. 16

N 090214 HKM

IN THE MATTER OF a communication dated November 24, 2008, from the Executive Director of the Landmarks Preservation Commission regarding the landmark designation of Guardian Life Insurance Company of America Annex, located at 105-117 East 17th Street a.k.a.105-117 East 17th Street and 108-116 East 18th Street (Block 873, Lot 10), by the Landmarks Preservation Commission on November 18, 2008 (List No. 407/LP- 2247), 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 Guardian Life Insurance Building is a well-preserved and rare example of a low-rise office building built in the International Style. The Guardian Life Insurance Annex Building is located to the north and east of Union Square on a through block, midblock site between East 17th Street and East 18th Street and between Park Avenue South and Irving Place in Manhattan's Community District 5. The building was constructed between 1959-1963 and designed by Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill.

The building is four stories tall and its important features include a curtain wall of anodized aluminum spandrel panels and tinted glass. The Guardian Life Insurance Company

contemplated moving its headquarters out of NYC in the 1950s but instead chose to construct an annex directly east of the company's 1911 neo-classical headquarters. The Annex was designed to spread the operations of Guardian Life across a minimum number of floors. SOM partners Robert W. Cutler and Roy O. Allen supervised the project while an associate partner, Roger Radford, is credited with the building's design.

The approach to the façade in particular, a sleek aluminum surface with large glass windows, is of note and reflected the building techniques being popularized by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, who quoting from the LPC report attempted "to reduce building elevations to non-load bearing skins of standardized metal and glass components." After the building was completed much of the Guardian Life staff moved into the Annex building. The company relocated to lower Manhattan in 1999 and the buildings were sold to the Related Companies. A few modifications have been made to the main entrance on East 17th Street but the building facades are well preserved and still capture the original design.

The landmark site is located in an R8B zoning district. With an allowable floor area ratio (FAR) of 4, the zoning lot could be developed with approximately 112,980 square feet of floor area. The Guardian Life Annex Building contains approximately 109,375 square feet of floor area. Therefore, there are approximately 3,605 of 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 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 building. There are approximately twelve potential receiving sites available for the transfer of the landmark's unused floor area.

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
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