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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 Loew's 175<sup>th</sup> Street Theater, located at 4140 – 4156 Broadway (Block 2145, Lot 1), by the Landmarks Preservation Commission on December 13, 2016 (Designation List No. 492/LP-0656), Borough of Manhattan, Community District 12.

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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 December 13, 2016, the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) designated the Loew's 175<sup>th</sup> Street Theater, located at 4140 – 4156 Broadway (Block 2145, Lot 1), as a City landmark. The landmark site occupies a full city block that is bounded by Broadway, Wadsworth Avenue, West 175<sup>th</sup> Street and West 176<sup>th</sup> Street, in Washington Heights, Manhattan Community District 12.

Designed by Thomas W. Lamb and constructed in 1929-30, the Loew's 175<sup>th</sup> Street Theater features four primary façades that are located on West 175<sup>th</sup> and 176<sup>th</sup> Streets, Broadway, and Wadsworth Avenue. The building consists of two basic elements: one, entered under the marquee at the building's southwest corner, containing the theater; and the other, comprising two stories, that extends along Broadway, with retail and office space. Although technically one story in height, the theater element, which includes the auditorium, towers above the adjacent retail and office space. At the time of designation, the retail and office space did not contain any retail tenants.

Most of the 175<sup>th</sup> Street Theatre's exterior ornament, including its elaborate tiered pilasters, niches, and high panels filled with pointed arches, hexagons, and ziggurats, were also used at Lamb's Pitkin Theatre, which had opened in 1929 and was described as being "reminiscent of

Persian or Indian architecture." Lamb's chief inspiration appears to have been the architecture of India's 16th-to-18th-century Mughal Empire, which incorporated Indian, Islamic, and Persian influences and includes many of India's greatest landmarks, including the Taj Mahal. The exterior's cusped and lancet arches, elaborate pilasters, and cresting over the large pointed arch on the Broadway façade are consistent with Mughal architecture, as are its hexagonal motifs and honeycomb-like forms known as muqarnas, which are traditional Islamic features incorporated into Mughal-era structures. Its vertical blade sign may have been intended to resemble a minaret attached to the building's side. Lamb appears to have drawn upon historic Indian structures outside the Mughal era as well; *New York Times* architecture reporter David Dunlap, who in 1981 described the Loew's 175th Street Theatre as a "delirious masterpiece" and its exterior as "a feast," noted similarities to traditional Hindu temple architecture, as did Ben M. Hall, who saw Dravidian influences, a possible inspiration for the ziggurat-like forms executed on a grand scale on all four facades and crowning the entrance to the Broadway retail and office block. As with movie-palace-like architecture in general, the ornament was chosen for its evocative qualities—its ability to transport moviegoers to a far-off fantasyland—rather than historical accuracy, and the Loew's 175th Street Theatre remains an outstanding example of the "freewheeling eclecticism" that marked so much of the movie-palace style.

Over nearly four decades, the Loew's 175th Street Theatre introduced moviegoers to dozens of classic films and hosted appearances by movie stars such as Eleanor Powell, Judy Garland, Roy Rogers, Dale Evans, and Joan Crawford. By the 1960s, the economics of operating large urban movie theaters had become increasingly difficult, and in 1969, Loew's sold the building to the United Christian Evangelistic Association, led by Reverend Frederick Joseph Eikerenkoetter II, known as Reverend Ike, who renamed it the United Palace. At the United Palace, Reverend Ike's ministry reached its peak, welcoming thousands of worshippers each week and becoming one of the country's largest congregations. Reverend Ike's television program, which was the first hosted by an African-American religious leader when it debuted in 1973, often featured him on the United Palace stage. Maintained in an excellent state of preservation, the United Palace continues to function as a house of worship while hosting community performing-arts groups, film screenings, and other cultural events.

The landmark site is located within a C8-3 zoning district. With a maximum allowable floor area ratio (FAR) of 6.5, the 30,475-square-foot lot could be developed with approximately 198,087 square feet of floor area. The existing building on the lot contains 113,373 square feet (3.72 FAR), resulting in 84,714 square feet of unused development rights available for transfer to eligible receiving sites under the existing zoning.

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 13 potential receiving sites available for the transfer of the landmark's unused floor area, as all eligible lots comprising the potential receiving sites are currently underbuilt.

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. In addition, the Commission is not aware of any conflicts between the subject landmark designation and projected public improvements on any plans for development, growth, improvement or renewal in the vicinity of the landmark building.

**CARLWEISBROD**, Chairman  
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