



CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

November 19, 2008/Calendar No. 7

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IN THE MATTER OF a communication dated September 25, 2008 from the Executive Director of the Landmarks Preservation Commission regarding the landmark designation of the Betsy Head Play Center, located in Betsy Head Memorial Playground (Block 3570, Lot 1), by the Landmarks Preservation Commission on September 16, 2008 (Designation List 405/LP-2240), Borough of Brooklyn, Community District 16.

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 an 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 September 16, 2008, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designated the Betsy Head Play Center as a city landmark. The landmark includes the bathhouse, swimming pool, diving and pool, bleachers, filter house, and cast iron perimeter fencing.

The Betsy Head Play Center is one of a group of eleven immense outdoor swimming pools opened in the summer of 1936 by Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia and Parks Commissioner Robert Moses. It was constructed with funds provided by the Works Progress Administration (WPA), one of many public New Deal relief agencies.

The Betsy Head Play Center occupies the eastern third of a block bounded by Dumont and Livonia Avenues, Strauss Street and Hopkinson Avenue (aka Thomas S. Boyland Street) in Betsy Head Memorial Playground in the Brownsville Section of Brooklyn. Surrounding uses are predominantly residential.

The Betsy Head Play Center replaced one of the first public outdoor swimming pools in New York City which had opened in 1914. With Robert Moses' appointment as Parks Commissioner in 1934, design for the current pool began. The original plans only included an enlarged and modernized pool and diving pool while keeping the old bathhouse, bleachers and filter house. A

fire in 1937, however, damaged the original bathhouse which was replaced by the still-existing structure that opened in 1939.

The Betsy Head Play Center was designed for 4,660 visitors at a time and features the streamlined curvilinear forms of the Art Moderne and Modern Classical styles to create a monumental public space using the low-cost building materials mandated by WPA. The central architectural element of the Play Center is the bathhouse, featuring two wings containing the men's and women's locker and shower rooms originating from a central entrance with curved glass block walls and a roof deck covered by a canopy supported by eight parabolic metal arches. The bleachers and filter house date back to the older structure from 1914.

The Betsy Head Play Center underwent major rehabilitation between 1980 and 1983. The main Olympic-sized swimming pool is still in use while the diving pool is filled with sand and is used as a volleyball court.

The designated landmark building is located within designated parkland. Therefore, Sections 74-79 and 74-711 of the Zoning Resolution are not applicable.

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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