



IN THE MATTER OF a communication dated November 8, 2019, from the Executive Director of the Landmarks Preservation Commission regarding the landmark designation of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Brooklyn Office, Shelter, and Garage Building, 233 Butler Street (Block 405, Lot 51) by the Landmarks Preservation Commission on October 29, 2019 (Designation List No. 515/LP No. 2637), Borough of Brooklyn, Community District 6.

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 October 29, 2019, the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) designated the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) Brooklyn Office, Shelter, and Garage (“ASPCA Building”) at 233 Butler Street (Block 405, Lot 51), and a portion of the Butler Street sidewalk in front of Lot 51, as a City landmark.

Founded in New York City in 1866, the ASPCA was the first anti-cruelty organization in the United States. It was instrumental in establishing and expanding the protection of animal rights, and preventing neglect and abuse. The ASPCA opened its first Brooklyn shelter on Malbone Street in 1895. The Butler Street facility was constructed to replace the outdated Malbone Street shelter with a modern, sanitary, and fireproof structure in a location more convenient for most Brooklynites. Upon its 1913 opening, the ASPCA hailed its new Brooklyn shelter at 233 Butler Street as “the most modern establishment of its kind in existence” and the largest animal shelter in the country, surpassing even the ASPCA Manhattan shelter.

In 1922, the Butler Street Shelter was expanded to include all the ASPCA’s Brooklyn operations. With the expansion, the ASPCA was able to accomplish its long-term goal of bringing its

Brooklyn offices, shelter, and garage together under one roof. The *Brooklyn Citizen* called the new facility “the most modern and up-to-date structure of its kind in the country,” representing “all of the wonderful humane work being done by” the ASPCA. The building at 233 Butler Street is the city’s finest surviving building associated with the ASPCA.

Both the 1913 shelter and its 1922 expansion were designed by Renwick, Aspinwall & Tucker, which had recently completed several high-profile projects. The shelter, housed in the expanded building’s western end, was mirrored on its east by a new ambulance portal. A classical limestone entrance crowned by a relief of the ASPCA’s seal provided access to the new second floor. The design of the building is primarily neo-Romanesque, with classical features and patterned brick enlivening its main facade. Historically associated with fortresses, castles, and churches, the Romanesque was a fitting inspiration, reinforcing the ASPCA’s image as guardian of the vulnerable, and reflecting the spiritual undertones of its work. Many of its features are consistent with the design of armories and other secure structures of the time.

The landmark site includes the sidewalk in front of the building, which contains an animal drinking trough funded by a major ASPCA benefactor, Edith G. Bowdoin, and installed with the original shelter’s opening in 1913. Horses were ubiquitous on the streets of New York City into the early 20th century, and the lack of public drinking water caused many to suffer, especially during summer. The ASPCA was a leader in erecting public drinking fountains, and by the early 20th century, hundreds had been installed throughout the city. The trough-like granite fountain in front of 233 Butler Street is a rare survivor of these efforts. It is of a standardized design approved by the city’s Art Commission in 1909 following a campaign led by Bowdoin to “erect a large number of simple, inexpensive drinking troughs ... where they are most needed.” The only animal drinking fountain remaining in front of a historic ASPCA facility, this trough and the building behind it constitute a unique monument to the work of local advocates in promoting the humane treatment of animals, and reminder of New York’s historic role at the center of the national anticruelty movement.

The site is located in an M1-2 zoning district, a light manufacturing district that allows a floor area ratio (FAR) of 2.0 for community facility, manufacturing and most commercial uses. The 15,900-square-foot lot could be developed with approximately 31,800 square feet of floor area. The existing floor area of the building is 15,260 square feet (0.96 FAR), resulting in 16,540 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 that is across the street and opposite to the zoning lot occupied by the landmark building, or in the case of a corner lot, one that fronts on the same street intersection as the lot occupied by the landmark building. There are 16 potential receiving sites available for the transfer of the landmark's unused floor area.

There are four other active landmark applications within proximity to the ASPCA Building to be concurrently designated: the Brooklyn Rapid Transit Company Central Power Station Engine House at 153 Second Street (LP-2639); the Gowanus Canal Flushing Tunnel Pumping Station and Gate House at 201 Douglass Street (LP-2638); the Montauk Paint Manufacturing Company Building at 170 Second Avenue (LP-2641); and the Somers Brothers Tinware Factory (later American Can Company) at 238-246 Third Street, 365-379 Third Avenue, and 232-236 Third Street (LP-2640). In addition, the site is within the New York City Department of City Planning Gowanus Neighborhood Study area.

All landmark buildings or buildings within Historic Districts are eligible to apply for use and bulk waivers pursuant to Section 74-711 of the Zoning Resolution.

The subject landmark does not conflict with the Zoning Resolution. In addition, the City Planning 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 building.

MARISA LAGO, *Chair*
DAVID J. BURNEY, ALLEN P. CAPPELLI, ALFRED C. CERULLO, III,
MICHELLE R. DE LA UZ, JOSEPH I. DOUEK, RICHARD W. EADDY,
HOPE KNIGHT, ANNA HAYES LEVIN,
LARISA ORTIZ, RAJ RAMPERSHAD, *Commissioners*