



CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

September 29, 2010/Calendar No. 8

N 110035 HKM

IN THE MATTER OF a communication dated August 4th, 2010, from the Executive Director of the Landmarks Preservation Commission regarding the landmark designation of the Look Building, 488 Madison Avenue (Block 1287, Lot 14), by the Landmarks Preservation Commission on July 27, 2010 (List No. 431/LP-2329), Borough of Manhattan, Community District 5.

Pursuant to Section 3020.8(b) of the New York 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 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 July 27, 2010 the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) designated the Look Building as a city landmark. The landmark designation consists of Block 1287, Lot 14. The Look Building is located in Midtown Manhattan on the west side of Madison Avenue between East 51st and East 52nd Streets in Community District 5. The block and the surrounding neighborhood are of a mixed character with large commercial buildings on Madison Avenue and mid-rise apartment buildings and office buildings on the side streets. St. Patrick's Cathedral is a block to the south.

The 21-story Look Building was built between 1948-50, when the minimalist aesthetics of European Modernism first began to transform the design of setback office buildings. The building followed the setback requirements of the 1916 zoning code to maximize the square footage while using industrial materials to create sleek, streamlined elevations. The building combines tiers of ribbon-like windows with tightly-rounded corners and setbacks faced with white brick to create a unique silhouette.

The project was developed by the Uris Brothers and designed by Emery Roth & Sons, architects. This partnership, which lasted until the 1970s, produced a number of large Manhattan office buildings. Richard Roth served as lead architect.

The new building was named for Look magazine, which was part of the Cowles media empire. With an emphasis on photography, Look became one of the most widely-read magazines in the United States and it remained at this location until ceasing publication in 1971. Other prominent tenants of the building included Esquire Magazine; Pocket Books; the music publisher Witmark & Sons, where Bob Dylan made some of his earliest studio recordings; and the building's architects.

During the late 1990s, a major restoration of the facade was undertaken by the architects Hardy Holzman & Pfeiffer Associates. Steel windows were replaced with similar aluminum frames and a new entrance portico was created. The Look Building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2004 and the facade is subject to a conservation easement filed with the Trust for Architectural Easements.

The landmark site is located in a C5-3 zoning district. With an allowable floor area (FAR) of 15, the zoning lot could be developed with approximately 340,000 square feet of floor area. The Look Building contains approximately 391,114 square feet of floor. Since the landmark site is built above the allowable floor area ratio, there are no development rights which may be available for transfer pursuant to Section 74-79 of the Zoning Resolution.

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 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.

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