



CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

May 12, 2010 / Calendar No. 11

N 100281 HKM

IN THE MATTER OF a communication dated March 31, 2010, from the Executive Director of the Landmarks Preservation Commission regarding the landmark designation of the Joseph B. and Josephine H. Bissell House, located at 46 West 55st Street (Block 1270, Lot 60), by the Landmarks Preservation Commission on March 23, 2010 (List No. 427 /LP- 2340), 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.

On March 23, 2010 the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) designated the Joseph B. and Josephine H. Bissell House (Bissell House) in Manhattan, as a city landmark. The landmark designation consists of Block 1270, Lot 60.

The Bissell House is located at 46 West 55th Street and was originally constructed as one of five Italianate style brownstone row houses designed by architect Thomas Thomas and built in 1869 by owner and builder John W. Stevens.

In 1903, the building was purchased by Josephine H. Bissell who subsequently hired prominent architect Edward L. Tilton to alter the house by removing the traditional Italianate style brownstone façade and its high stoop and replacing it with a more fashionable neo-classical style brick and limestone façade with an American basement plan.

The Bissell House is a rare example of a private residence designed by Tilton, who is particularly associated with the design of libraries as well as a number of buildings within the Ellis Island Complex. The facade features a bowed front, red and black brick laid in a Flemish bond pattern

and limestone details including two prominent cornices with block modillions and scroll brackets. The building is part of “Vanderbilt Row” which refers to the ten blocks of Fifth Avenue south of Central Park.

The block and the surrounding neighborhood are of a mixed character with large commercial buildings on Fifth and Sixth avenues and mid-rise rowhouse and apartment buildings and office buildings on the side streets.

The landmark site is located in a C5-P zoning district in the Special Midtown District. With an allowable floor area ratio (FAR) of 8.0, the zoning lot could be developed with approximately 16,064 square feet of floor area. The Bissell House contains approximately 6,000 square feet of floor area. Therefore, there are approximately 10,064 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 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 approximately five potential receiving sites available for the transfer of the landmark’s unused floor 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.

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, AICP, Chair
ANGELA M. BATTAGLIA, RAYANN BESSER, IRWIN G. CANTOR, P.E.,
ALFRED C. CERULLO, III, BE TTY Y. CHEN, MARIA M. DEL TORO,
RICHARD W. EADDY, NATHAN LEVENTHAL, ANNA HAYES LEVIN,
SHIRLEY A. MCRAE, KAREN A. PHILLIPS, Commissioners.