



IN THE MATTER OF a communication dated December 2, 2016, from the Executive Director of the Landmarks Preservation Commission regarding the landmark designation of 18 East 41st Street (Block 1275, Lot 61), by the Landmarks Preservation Commission on November 22, 2016 (Designation List No. 490/LP-2581), 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 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 November 22, 2016, the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) designated 18 East 41st Street as a City landmark. The landmark site, at 18 East 41st Street (Block 1275, Lot 61), is located on the south side of East 41st Street, between 5th and Madison Avenues, in the East Midtown neighborhood of Community District 5.

The building at 18 West 41st Street was constructed between 1912-14 by the Holland Holding Company, headed by real estate lawyer Judson Scott Todd. This building represents the first phase of commercial development in East Midtown, the period in which various high-rise structures were built in the vicinity of the newly constructed Grand Central Terminal (1910s-1920s). 18 West 41st Street was the first high-rise constructed on the block, an ideal location for a speculative property as it was near to the 42nd Street subway station, the New York Public Library, Grand Central Terminal, and the 5th Avenue shopping corridor. The architecture is an example of the early work of George and Edward Blum, a firm celebrated for designing unique and ornamental facades. While 18 West 41st Street was most likely their first office building, George and Edward Blum proceeded to work on over 170 projects, primarily residential buildings on the Upper West Side.

The 21-story office building is a prime example of early 20th century office architecture and was cited in a 1914 article by the architectural critic H.W. Frohne as an illustration “a new line of thought in exterior commercial architecture.” While many new office buildings in Midtown at the time used classical details, 18 East 41st Street is neo-Gothic, a style that gained popularity

during the first decades of the 20th century. This style can be seen on other notable skyscrapers such as the New York Times Building, Liberty Tower, and the Woolworth Building. The beige and blue terra cotta façade with its alternating thick and thin piers, draws the eye vertically toward the elaborately decorated crown. The façade recalls the pioneering skyscrapers of Louis Sullivan, while the terra cotta embellishments suggest the influence of both late medieval and modern sources, from Gothic cathedrals to contemporary European designs by Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Josef Hoffman. The base of the building has been respectfully modified, but the rest of the façade remains unchanged, particularly the ornate upper stories. In 2008 the current owners, 18 East 41st Street Partners, Inc., undertook repair and restoration using cast-stone panels that blend with the historic terra cotta.

18 East 41st Street is within the Special Midtown District, situated primarily in a C5-2.5 zoning district, which allows a maximum base FAR of 10 for residential uses and 12 for commercial and community facility uses. A small portion of the lot (less than 25 linear feet) is in a C5-3 district, which allows a maximum base FAR of 10 for residential uses and 15 for commercial and community facility uses. The building contains 92,949 square feet of floor area on a 4,950 square foot zoning lot (18.78 FAR).

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 (“adjacent lot”). The 18 East 41st Street Building stands on a 4,950 zoning lot in a C5-2.5 zoning district. The building is built above the maximum allowable zoning FAR, so there is no floor area available for transfer.

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 landmark is located within the proposed East Midtown Subdistrict. If the proposed East Midtown Subdistrict text amendment (N 170186 ZRM) is approved, landmarks located within the proposed subdistrict will be permitted to transfer its unused development rights to any eligible building similarly located within the proposed subdistrict. The landmark designation does not conflict with the proposed East Midtown Subdistrict text amendment.

The subject landmark does not conflict with the Zoning Resolution. Furthermore, 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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