



CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

August 24, 2011 / Calendar No. 20

N 120006 HKM

IN THE MATTER OF a communication dated July 6, 2011, from the Executive Director of the Landmarks Preservation Commission regarding the landmark designation of Fisk-Harkness House, 12 East 53rd Street (Block 1288, Lot 63), by the Landmarks Preservation Commission on June 28, 2011 (List No. 444/LP-2406), 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 June 28, 2011 the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) designated the Fisk-Harkness House (the “Building”) as a city landmark. The landmark designation consists of 12 East 53rd Street (Block 1288, Lot 63), between Fifth and Madison avenues in the Special Midtown District, Community District 5.

The Building is a town house originally constructed in 1871 and substantially altered in 1906 to the designs of architect Raleigh C. Gildersleeve, who transformed the building into a grand five-story American Basement-plan house with an asymmetrical neo-Tudor gothic style limestone façade. Gildersleeve practiced architecture in New York City and New Jersey between 1892 and 1915, and is best known for the Tudor-inspired buildings he designed for the campus of Princeton University. Harvey E. Fisk, the owner of the house at the time of the alterations, was a prominent investment banker attracted to this area of Fifth Avenue because of its residential prestige. This town house is a rare survivor of the period when the area around Fifth Avenue in midtown was home to Manhattan’s wealthiest citizens, who built mansions or updated existing row houses for their private residences. In 1909, Fisk sold his town house to Standard Oil heir William L. Harkness, whose widow sold the building to an art gallery in 1922. Later occupants

of the Fisk-Harkness House include the Automobile Club of America (1924 to 1932); Symons Galleries (1938 to 1949), an antiques dealer; and the Laboratory Institute of Merchandising (1965 to present), a college of fashion merchandising and business.

Situated in a C5-2.5 district (max FAR 10.0 residential & 12.0 commercial), the Building's zoning lot contains approximately 18,934 square feet of floor area and 4,250 square feet of lot area. Since the lot is located in the Special Midtown District, however, transferable development rights generated on the site are calculated as if the FAR was 13.0 (see Sec. 81-211 of NYC Zoning Resolution), which would result in 36,316 square feet 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 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. As provided for in Section 74-792 of the Zoning Resolution, as modified by 81-211, the maximum amount of unused development rights available for transfer from this site is approximately 36,316 square feet.

There are five potential receiving sites available for the transfer of the landmark's unused floor area.

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.

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.

AMANDA M. BURDEN, FAICP, Chair
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ORLANDO MARIN, Commissioner ABSTAINING