



IN THE MATTER OF a communication dated June 27, 2019, from the Executive Director of the Landmarks Preservation Commission regarding the landmark designation of The Caffè Cino (Block 590, Lot 30), by the Landmarks Preservation Commission on June 18, 2019 (Designation List No. 513/LP-2635), Borough of Manhattan, Community District 2.

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 June 18, 2019, the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) designated the Caffè Cino, located at 31 Cornelia Street (Block 590, p/o Lot 47) as a City landmark. The landmark site is located on the west side of Cornelia Street between Bleecker and West 4th streets, within Manhattan Community District 2.

The Caffè Cino is one of six buildings that the LPC designated as individual landmarks for their historical significance to the LGBT community. On the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall riots and coinciding with World Pride NYC, LPC recognized these sites as places associated with groups and individuals that helped move forward the LGBT civil rights movement by creating political and community support structures and by bringing LGBT cultural expression into the public realm.

31 Cornelia Street, located between Bleecker and West 4th streets in Manhattan, is culturally significant for its association with the Caffè Cino, which occupied the building's ground-floor commercial space from 1958 to 1968. The coffee shop served as a theater venue, becoming the birthplace of Off-Off-Broadway and New York City's first gay theater. The four-story brick building was constructed by Benjamin Warner in 1877 for Michael Maloney and has a stone foundation and Philadelphia brick walls, with cast iron and wood storefront elements. Designed

in a modest Italianate style, the building is located within the city's Greenwich Village Historic District Extension II, which was designated in 2010 (LP-2366).

Joe Cino opened the Caffè Cino in 1958 as a coffee shop and art exhibition space. Soon, the cafe was also used for poetry readings and small, experimental theater productions. The Caffè Cino emerged as a venue for new and unknown playwrights, most of whom were gay men. At this time, portraying homosexuality in theatrical productions was illegal under the Wales Padlock Law of 1927 and the Caffè Cino became a center for gay artists to share their work. Many of these projects overtly depicted homosexual themes in a positive manner on stage for the first time. The venue established the Off-Off-Broadway scene, freed from the usual constraints of Broadway and Off-Broadway projects that were required to adhere to specific financial structures and more conventional narrative subjects. Performances at the Caffè Cino were produced on a tight budget and were unusually cheap to attend, requiring only a one-dollar purchase at the cafe. As a result, the shows were available to a diverse audience.

Playwrights and performers who presented their work at the Caffè Cino pioneered the Off-Off-Broadway, experimental, and gay theater movements. Theater at the Cino consistently acknowledged the existence and experiences of gay people, without the prevailing homophobic stereotypes. While the Cino legitimized the value of experimental theater, many artists who started there also experienced success later with Broadway or Off-Broadway productions. Several notable playwrights that started at Caffè Cino include Tom Eyen, who wrote the Broadway hit *Dreamgirls* in 1981 for which he won a Tony; John Guare, author of *Six Degrees of Separation*; Sam Shepard, actor and playwright who won a Pulitzer in 1979 for his play *Buried Child*; and Lanford Wilson, who wrote the Broadway hit *Fifth of July*. Other well-known names also became patrons of the venue, including playwright Edward Albee and artist Andy Warhol.

The Caffè Cino closed in 1968, the year after Joe Cino's tragic suicide. Prior to the 1969 Stonewall riots, the cafe provided a safe and nurturing space for gay artists to congregate, stage their work, and openly portray narratives and themes significant to the gay community. The

building retains a high degree of integrity to the period associated with the Caffè Cino.

The landmark site is located within a R6 zoning district, a medium-density residential district. R6 districts allow residential development up to 2.43 floor area ratio (FAR) and community facility uses up to 4.8 FAR. With a maximum allowable residential floor area ratio of 2.43 FAR, the 2,056-square-foot lot could be developed with approximately 4,996 square feet of floor area. The existing building on the lot contains 4,878 square feet (2.3 FAR), resulting in 118 square feet of unused development rights available for transfer to eligible receiving sites under the existing zoning.

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 which fronts on the same street intersection as the lot occupied by the landmark. There are four potential receiving sites available for the transfer of the landmark's unused floor area, as all eligible lots comprising the potential receiving sites are currently underbuilt.

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 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 on any plans for development, growth, improvement or renewal in the vicinity of the landmark building.

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