



## CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

---

May 11, 2011 / Calendar No. 16

N 110278 HKM

---

**IN THE MATTER OF** a communication dated March 31, 2011, from the Executive Director of the Landmarks Preservation Commission regarding the landmark designation of the Japan Society Headquarters, 333 East 47<sup>th</sup> Street (Block 1340, Lot 16), by the Landmarks Preservation Commission on March 22, 2011 (List No. 440/LP-2420).

---

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 March 22, 2011, the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) designated the Japan Society Headquarters (the “Headquarters”) located at 333 East 47<sup>th</sup> Street (Block 1340, Lot 16), as a city landmark.

The Headquarters is located on the east side of Midtown Manhattan on the north side of East 47<sup>th</sup> Street between First and Second Avenues in Community District 6. It was constructed between 1969 and 1971 as offices for the (then) 60 year old Japan Society. The Japan Society functions as a cultural and educational institution as well as a forum for dialogue between business leaders of Japan and the United States. The design and construction of the Headquarters was supervised by the president of the Japan Society at the time, John D. Rockefeller III, and his wife Blanchette Rockefeller. It is considered the first permanent structure in New York to have been designed by a Japanese citizen.

The Junzo Yoshimura and George G. Shimamoto (who was hired “to ensure compliance with NYC licensing requirements”) were commissioned to design the Headquarters. Yoshimura is

considered a major figure of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Japanese architecture and this would be his only work in New York City (although he designed two structures on the Rockefeller estate in Pocantico Hills, New York).

The building is noteworthy for its taking of Japanese elements such as angled railings, metal sun screens and the use of black and gold and reinterpreting them with modern industrial elements such as bronze and painted concrete. The design has a strong horizontal orientation with unbroken lines the length of the main façade, both characteristics common in Japanese architecture. The main elevation has four horizontal sections divided by bands of concrete which shade the lower floors, act as a balustrade for each terrace and, above the fourth floor, to suggest a cornice. The design received a Certificate of Merit from the New York Society of Architects in 1972.

The zoning lot containing the landmark consists of eight tax lots (13, 16, 23, 37, 38, 40, 43, 44) and stretches along East 47<sup>th</sup> Street from First Avenue to within 100 feet of Second Avenue. The zoning lot is located in a C1-9 district. With a maximum allowable floor area ratio (FAR) of 10.0 the zoning lot could be developed with approximately 897,660 square feet of floor area. The zoning lot is currently developed with 912,441 square feet of floor area and so is overbuilt by approximately 14,781 square feet.

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. Since the zoning lot is built with more FAR than is allowable today, there are no unused development rights 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 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**

**ANGELA M. BATTAGLIA, RAYANN BESSER, IRWIN G. CANTOR, P.E.,  
ALFRED C. CERULLO, III, BETTY Y. CHEN, MARIA M. DEL TORO,  
RICHARD W. EADDY, NATHAN LEVENTHAL, ANNA HAYES LEVIN,  
SHIRLEY A. McRAE, Commissioners**