



IN THE MATTER OF a communication dated November 8, 2019, from the Executive Director of the Landmarks Preservation Commission regarding the landmark designation of the Somers Brothers Tinware Factory (later American Can Company), 238-246 Third Street, 365-379 Third Avenue, and 232-236 Third Street (aka 361-363 Third Avenue) (Block 980, Lot 8) by the Landmarks Preservation Commission on October 29, 2019 (List No. 515/LP No. 2640), Borough of Brooklyn, Community District 6.

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 October 29, 2019, the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) designated the Somers Brothers Tinware Factory (later American Can Company) at 238-246 Third Street, 365-379 Third Avenue, and 232-236 Third Street (aka 361-363 Third Avenue) (Block 980, Lot 8), as a City landmark. The landmark site is located on the southeast corner of Third Avenue and Third Street in the Gowanus neighborhood of Brooklyn, Community District 6.

The Somers Brothers Tinware Factory (later American Can Company) was built in 1884 for Somers Brothers, a pioneer of American tinware production and prominent Brooklyn manufacturer in the latter half of the 19th century. Daniel Somers designed numerous devices and processes used in the manufacturing of tin boxes, becoming one of the earliest companies to market tinware with integrated decorative surfaces. In 1898, a portion of the Somers Brothers' operation was absorbed by the American Tin Plate Company, a tinplate trust that owned 90 percent of all tin mills in the United States. In 1901, the entirety of Somers Brothers was absorbed by the American Can Company. By 1917, the American Can Company was the 31st largest business in the United States. At the same time, the former Somers Brothers tinware

factory became an asset to the American effort in World War I, helping to produce gas masks with metal canisters for American soldiers abroad. From the 1950s until the 1970s, the factory was underutilized. In the 1970s, as industrial manufacturing declined in the area around the Gowanus Canal, local groups began to advocate for the cleanup of the canal and surrounding neighborhood.

Since the 1970s, several non-profit organizations and others moved into the former manufacturing complex, which is currently used by more than 300 artists, performers, designers and publishers. In 1983, the current owner, LMS Realty Associates, acquired the former factory and made efforts to stabilize and rehabilitate the structure. Today, the building contains a music studio and serves as a venue for the annual Rooftop Films series. Known as the Old American Can Factory, the complex contributed to the neighborhood's transition from primarily industry to a mix of land uses, including arts and manufacturing, and remains a vital contributor to the historic, architectural, and cultural character of the neighborhood.

The former tinware factory building is significant because some features, including the L-shaped plan, flat roof, regular fenestration pattern, and narrow width to allow for daylight penetration, are now recognized as hallmarks of late nineteenth-century industrial architecture. The mixture of segmental and semicircular arches and the regular grid of vertical piers and horizontal bands are characteristic of the American Round Arch style. The building's distinctive polychromatic brick, patterns, projections, and prominent corner pavilion conveyed a strong public presence for the Somers brothers, longtime residents of Brooklyn, and strengthened the building's prominence in the Gowanus neighborhood.

The site is located in a C8-2 zoning district, which allow a maximum allowable floor area ratio (FAR) of 2.00. As such, the 49,400-square-foot lot could be developed with approximately 98,800 square feet of floor area. The existing building (including other existing buildings on the lot) contains 86,000 square feet of floor area, for an FAR of 1.74, resulting in 12,800 square feet of unused development rights.

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 that fronts on the same street intersection as the lot occupied by the landmark building. There are five potential receiving sites available for the transfer of the landmark's unused floor area.

There are four other active landmark applications within proximity to the Somers Brothers Tinware Factory to be concurrently designated: the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Brooklyn Office, Shelter, and Garage at 233 Butler Street (LP-2637); the Gowanus Canal Flushing Tunnel Pumping Station and Gate House at 201 Douglass Street (LP-2638); the Montauk Paint Manufacturing Company Building at 170 Second Avenue (LP-2641); and the Brooklyn Rapid Transit Company Central Power Station Engine House at 153 2nd Street (LP-2639). In addition, the site is within the New York City Department of City Planning Gowanus Neighborhood Study 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.

The subject landmark does not conflict with the Zoning Resolution. In addition, the City Planning 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 building.

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