



CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

April 1, 2008 / Calendar No. 12

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IN THE MATTER OF a communication dated February 19th, 2009 from the Executive Director of the Landmarks Preservation Commission regarding the Alice and Agate Courts Historic District, designated by the Landmarks Preservation Commission on February 10th, 2009 (Designation List 410/LP-2309). The district boundaries are:

property bounded by a line beginning at the intersection of the northern curbline of Atlantic Avenue and a line extending southerly from the western property line of 1 Alice Court (aka 1463 Atlantic Avenue), continuing easterly along said curbline to a point formed by its intersection with a line extending southerly from the eastern property line of 2 Agate Court (aka 1491 Atlantic Avenue), northerly along said line and the eastern property lines of 2 through 18 Agate Court, westerly along the northern property line of 18 Agate Court, continuing westerly along a line extending from the northern property line of 18 Agate Court to the northern property line of 17 Agate Court, along the northern property lines of 17 Agate Court and 18 Alice Court, continuing westerly along a line extending from the northern property line of 18 Alice Court to the northern property line of 17 Alice Court, along the northern property line of 17 Alice Court, to the western property line of 17 Alice Court, southerly along said property line and the property lines of 15 through 1 Alice Court, to the point of the beginning. The boundary description is intended to encompass the wall along the northern edge of Agate Court between lot 72 and 74.

Pursuant to Section 3020.8(a) and (b) of the City Charter, the City Planning Commission shall submit to the City Council a report with respect to the relation of the 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.

The Alice and Agate Courts Historic District encompasses 36 row houses set on two half-block cul-de-sacs. It is located in Brooklyn's Bedford Stuyvesant neighborhood, which was rural farmland until the 1870s. However, the construction of row houses and the Brooklyn Bridge contributed to the area's urbanization and subsequent population increase. Bedford Stuyvesant, then known as Bedford, served as a popular middle-class suburban community, developing rapidly and losing its former countrified atmosphere. Its status as a fashionable residential

district was maintained and enhanced during the brownstone-building phase which began in the early 1870s.

The row houses in Alice and Agate Courts were designed by Walter M. Coots in 1888-1889 in the then popular Queen Anne style. Compared with earlier styles, Queen Anne style row houses exhibit a greater freedom in their massing and a more varied, and frequently whimsical, use of ornament. Constructed of red brick, bluestone, brownstone and terra cotta, the homes on Agate Court are two stories high on rock-faced, rusticated basements. The two center houses are connected by a shallow, pressed-metal oriel with geometric and classically-inspired detailing and a starburst-patterned, triangular pediment and finial, which is evident at nos. 9 and 11 Agate Court and provides a focal point for the row. Nos. 1 and 2, the anchor buildings at Atlantic Avenue, have full-height round corner bays on the front facades, and deep, three-sided bays on the rear facades, both characteristic of the Queen Anne style. Nos. 3, 4, 9, 10, 11 and 12 have arched windows on the first floor that historically contained stained-glass transoms with a handsome “peacock tail” pattern (several of which remain). Other smaller stained-glass windows appear above the entry at the second floor of several buildings. In lieu of elaborate decoration, Coots’ design employed contrasting materials and asymmetrical facades, but used collective symmetry within the rows themselves to create an interesting overall composition. The flat facades are relieved by swelled brick bays set on corbels with a decorative, terra-cotta bands at nos. 5, 6, 7, 8, 11A, 14, 15, and 16, while nos. 17 and 18 have full height two-sided bays.

The buildings at Alice Court employ the same contrasting materials and details, but designed a year later, are slightly more ornate. The rows are anchored at Atlantic Avenue by nos. 1 and 2, which feature conically-roofed corner turrets, dormers set into mansard roofs, and two-story elliptical bays with foliate and geometric patterning along the avenue. These two-and-a-half-story homes on rock-faced, rusticated basements share common elements such as high stoops, wide, geometric and foliate-patterned, terra-cotta stringcourses, and alternating rectangular and arched window openings with rusticated voussoirs. At the second stories, flat facades with a variety of window styles capped by rock-faced and foliate-carved lintels alternate with either three-sided or swelled bays. Like those at Agate Court and characteristic of the Queen Anne style, the row houses features elaborate stoop and areaway ironwork and basement-level window and door grilles. The corner buildings also are decorated by metal roof cresting and applied metal quatrefoil ornaments.

Alice and Agate Courts remain a secluded and well-maintained enclave that retains the scale and details representative of the Queen Anne style and late-19th century, small-scale residential development. The Alice and Agate Courts Historic District is contained within an R6B zoning district. The R6B zoning district allows a maximum FAR of 2.0 and permits Use Groups 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Pursuant to Section 74-79 of the Zoning Resolution, no transfer of development rights is permitted from any structure within an historic district. All landmark buildings within historic districts are eligible to apply for use and bulk waivers pursuant to Section 74-711 of the Zoning Resolution.

CITY PLANNING COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING

Pursuant to Section 3020.8(a) of the City Charter, the City Planning Commission held a public hearing on March 18th, 2009. There were no speakers and the hearing was closed.

CONSIDERATION

The City Planning Commission has evaluated the Alice and Agate Courts Historic District in relation to the Zoning Resolution, projected public improvements and plans for the development, growth and improvements in the vicinity of the area involved. The historic district designation does not conflict with the Zoning Resolution, projected public improvements or any plans for development, growth, improvement, or renewal within the historic district or surrounding area.

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