



CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

July 28, 2004/Calendar No. 34

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IN THE MATTER OF a communication dated June 11, 2004, from the Executive Director of the Landmarks Preservation Commission regarding **the landmark designation of the Hecla Iron Works Building**, 100-118 N. 11th Street, (Block 2296, Lot 14), by the Landmarks Preservation Commission on June 8, 2004 (List 354/LP-2146), Borough of Brooklyn, Community District 1.

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.

The Hecla Iron Works Building, located on Block 2296, Lot 14 on N. 11th Street between Berry Street and Wythe Avenue in the Northside section of Williamsburg, was constructed in 1896-97. Four stories tall, the front and rear elevations are faced with cast-iron panels enriched by simple classical details. While most iron fronts incorporate rows of weight-bearing columns, this facade is only a few inches thick, suggestive of skin rather than structure. In combination with metal frame windows, which are all original to the building, it anticipates the decline of masonry fronts and the rise of the modern curtain wall.

Niels Poulson, who co-founded the company with Charles Enger in 1876, is likely to have supervised the building's design and construction. During the 1880's, Hecla pioneered various technologies, most notably the Bower-Barff process which was used to treat the iron. In contrast

to most cast-iron facades, which were painted to resemble stone and prevent corrosion, the panels were exposed to super-heated steam that converts rust to magnetite, creating an unusual black, velvety surface that is unaffected by moisture. As the company's headquarters, the building served as a showpiece for the types of architectural and ornamental metalwork that Hecla produced.

Hecla's contribution to New York City's built fabric was extremely significant. Named for an active volcano in Iceland, this versatile firm supplied ornamental work for the exteriors and interiors of many designated New York City landmarks, most notably the American Surety Building, New York Life Insurance Company Building, B. Altman & Co. Department Store, Macomb's Dam Bridge and 155th Street Viaduct, and Grand Central Terminal. Hecla also produced the 133 original kiosks for the IRT subway system.

Block 2296, Lot 14 is 45,000 square feet in area and is currently zoned M1-2, with an allowable floor area ratio (FAR) of 2.0. In addition to the proposed landmark building, this lot contains several other one- and two-story industrial buildings. The lot is currently developed at an FAR of 2.91 with a total built floor area of 131,000 square feet. The lot is currently overbuilt and has no transferrable 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, or one which is across a street and opposite to the lot occupied by the landmark building, or in the case of a

corner lot, one which fronts on the same intersection as the lot occupied by the landmark building.

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 designation does not conflict with the Zoning Resolution, projected public improvements or any plans for development, growth, improvement or renewal in the vicinity of the landmark.

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