



## **CITY PLANNING COMMISSION**

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May 26, 2010 / Calendar No. 5

N 100279 HKM

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**IN THE MATTER OF** a communication dated March 31, 2010, from the Executive Director of the Landmarks Preservation Commission regarding the landmark designation of the Germania Fire Insurance Company Bowery Building, 357 Bowery (Block 459, Lot 7), by the Landmarks Preservation Commission on March 23, 2010 (Designation List No. 427/LP-2354), Borough of Manhattan, Community District 3.

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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 March 23, 2010, the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) designated the Germania Fire Insurance Company Bowery Building, located at 357 Bowery (Block 459, Lot 7), as a city landmark.

The Germania Fire Insurance Company Bowery Building is located on the east side of the Bowery between East 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and East 4<sup>th</sup> Street in the East Village neighborhood of Manhattan. The building was constructed in 1870 to the design of architect Carl Pfeiffer.

Pfeiffer, who studied architecture and engineering in Germany before emigrating to the United States in 1863, had successfully completed commissions for hospitals, churches and private residences. Pfeiffer's design for the Germania building, which features a high basement, cast-iron storefront and imitation mansard roof with dormer windows, was inspired by the grand office buildings then being constructed by the nation's insurance companies and remains a well-preserved and significant survivor from the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Bowery.

The Germania Fire Insurance Company, founded in 1859, had a number of prominent German-born New Yorkers among its executives and directors. At the time of the building's opening, the

company was thriving in the city's *Kleindeutschland* neighborhood, then home to hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers of German descent. When the company relocated further uptown a decade later, the building housed residential tenants, including Irish, German and Chinese immigrants. At the turn of the century a number of industrial tenants began to occupy the building, and in 1929, two family businesses involving the manufacture of barber shop and beauty parlor equipment took over the building, holding it into the 1970s when residential uses began to return the building. Over its 140-year history, the building at 357 Bowery has changed its function from commercial to residential to industrial and back to residential, but it remains largely intact. Its main façade retains a faded reminder of its early 20<sup>th</sup>-century history: barely visible black-painted lettering over the second floor, that once spelled out “R. Laraia & Co. Inc.,” “357,” and “Barber Shop Equipment”.

The landmark site is located in a C6-1 zoning district. With an allowable floor area ratio (FAR) of 6.0, the zoning lot could be developed with approximately 9,972 square feet of floor area. The Germania Fire Insurance Company Bowery Building contains approximately 5,676 square feet of floor area. Therefore, there are approximately 4,296 square feet theoretically available for transfer.

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

There are no projected public improvements or plans for development, growth, improvement, or renewal in the vicinity of the landmark building.

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.

**AMANDA M. BURDEN, FAICP, Chair**

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