



IN THE MATTER OF a communication dated June 27, 2019, from the Executive Director of the Landmarks Preservation Commission regarding the landmark designation of the Gay Activists Alliance Firehouse (Block 501, Lot 30), by the Landmarks Preservation Commission on June 18, 2019 (Designation List No. 513/LP-2632), Borough of Manhattan, Community District 2.

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 June 18, 2019, the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) designated the Gay Activists Alliance Firehouse, located at 99 Wooster Street (Block 501, Lot 30) as a City landmark. The landmark site is located on the west side of Wooster Street between Spring and Prince streets, within Manhattan Community District 2.

The Gay Activists Alliance Firehouse is one of six buildings that the LPC designated as individual landmarks for their historical significance to the LGBT community. On the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall riots and coinciding with World Pride NYC, LPC recognized these sites as places associated with groups and individuals that helped move forward the LGBT civil rights movement by creating political and community support structures and by bringing LGBT cultural expression into the public realm.

A major activist force in New York City and across the United States, the Gay Activists Alliance (GAA) was founded in December 1969 with a mission to secure basic human rights, dignity, and freedom for all gay people. It was most significant in 1971-74, when the former firehouse at 99 Wooster Street served as the organization's headquarters. This influential group lobbied for passage of LGBT civil rights legislation through sit-ins and picket lines and planned memorable "zaps" to confront politicians and celebrities about their positions on LGBT issues and gain media attention.

The site has been described as New York City's "first gay community center." In addition to containing alliance offices on the second and third floors, it was an important gathering place, where weekly committee meetings, Saturday night dances, and cultural activities were held. GAA produced weekly programs that were broadcast on cable television and published *Gay Activist*, a monthly newsletter. Many LGBT groups met in the building, such as Lesbian Feminist Liberation, Gay Youth, the Gay Men's Health Project, and Dignity. The second and third floor interiors were partly destroyed by arson in October 1974 and GAA was evicted.

The Gay Activists Alliance Firehouse site has been developed with a firehouse since the early 1850s. Over the years, this building was substantially redesigned by the NYC Fire Department (FDNY) to accommodate FDNY vehicles and equipment. The exterior is identical to the former Engine Company No. 27 at 173 Franklin Street (1881-82) in the Tribeca West Historic District.

The cast-iron first story has a wide center bay that incorporates twin glass-panel pocket doors, currently painted red. To either side of the center bay are piers, single glass-panel doors, and engaged piers with incised ornament. Above the center doors is a lintel with rosettes and rectangular stained-glass windows. Above the side doors are square gridded transoms and stained-glass windows. A single vertical row of quoins, crowned by fluted panels and blank cartouches, mark the left and right edges of the first story.

The second and third stories are red brick with stone trim. Divided into three bays, the center opening is wider and incorporates two windows. All the windows are one over one. Above the center window on the second floor is a projecting molding. At the top of the third story is a grid of terracotta reliefs. These small rosettes, two to four squares high, extend the full width of the facade. A projecting bracketed metal cornice crowns the facade.

In August 1973, while GAA was leasing the building, SoHo was designated a historic district by the LPC. On October 8, 1974, the second and third floor offices were destroyed by arson, causing

substantial damage. By June 1975, the building had been renovated and was available for new tenants. In the 1980s, the first floor was rented as commercial space with offices above. Tenants have included Peter Blum Gallery from 1993 to 2012, as well as various stores.

The landmark site is located within a M1-5A zoning district, which allows commercial and manufacturing uses up to 5.0 floor area ratio (FAR). Residential uses are not allowed; however, M1-5A districts allow joint living-work quarters for artists. Additionally, in buildings occupying more than 3,600 square feet of lot area, uses below the second story are limited to wholesale, business service, warehouse and light industrial uses. For the landmark site, local retail uses (i.e., Use Group 6) are not permitted as-of-right.

With a maximum allowable floor area ratio of 5.0 FAR, the 2,500-square-foot lot could be developed with approximately 12,500 square feet of floor area. The existing building contains 5,951 square feet (2.1 FAR), resulting in 6,549 square feet of unused development rights available for transfer to eligible receiving sites under the existing zoning.

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 which fronts on the same street intersection as the lot occupied by the landmark. There are four potential receiving sites available for the transfer of the landmark's unused floor area, two of which are eligible to receive a transfer of unused development rights from the subject landmark.

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 on any plans for development, growth, improvement or renewal in the vicinity of the landmark building.

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