



CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

August 21, 2013, Calendar No. 19

N 140006 HKM

IN THE MATTER OF a communication dated July 8, 2013, from the Executive Director of the Landmarks Preservation Commission regarding the landmark designation of the New York Public Library, Seward Park Branch, 192-194 East Broadway (Block 311, Lot 31), by the Landmarks Preservation Commission on June 25, 2013 (Designation List No. 465/LP-2531), Borough of Manhattan, Community District 3.

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 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 25, 2013, the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) designated the New York Public Library, Seward Park Branch, located at 192-194 East Broadway (Block 311, Lot 31), as a city landmark. The landmark site is located on the north side of East Broadway between Jefferson and Clinton Streets, in the Lower East Side neighborhood, Manhattan Community District 3.

The Seward Park Branch of the New York Public Library has served the community of the Lower East Side since it opened its doors on November 11, 1909. This building was one of 20 branch libraries in Manhattan funded by steel magnate Andrew Carnegie's 1901 donation of 5.2 million dollars to the New York Public Library. It was built as a permanent home for the growing needs of the branch, which had originally been the downtown branch of the Aguilar Library.

In the early 20th century, the Seward Park Branch housed book collections for adults, young

adults, and children, as well as foreign language collections, including an extensive Yiddish language collection. It offered classes in English for immigrants and worked in conjunction with local social service and cultural organizations to provide programs that made it one of the most heavily used of the branches within the New York Public Library system.

By the 1960s, the ethnic character of the neighborhood had shifted and the Seward Park Branch was serving an expanding population of Puerto Ricans, African-Americans and Chinese and Asian immigrants. Responding to these changes, the library became a center for Civil Rights and anti-poverty programs, and added materials in Chinese, Spanish, and other languages. Renovated in 2002-2004, the Seward Park Branch continues to serve a diverse population and is a significant reminder of the Lower East Side's rich heritage.

The Seward Park library was designed by the firm Babb, Cook & Welch, a leading architecture firm of the day, and among the handful of firms chosen to carry out designs for the Carnegie libraries. The three-story brick and limestone-trimmed Italian Renaissance Revival style building features a rusticated limestone base, arched window and door openings with keystones and console brackets, molded window surrounds, rusticated quoining at the building corners, a limestone frieze with the "New York Public Library" inscribed below a modillioned cornice, a limestone balustrade with piers capped by finials, and a copper railing of anthemion running between each pier. The railing supported the canvas awning for an "open-air" reading room on the roof. It was one of five such roof-top reading rooms constructed on branch library buildings in the early 1900s and is the only one to survive on a building still in active use as a library.

The landmark site is located in an R8 zoning district. With an allowable floor area ratio (FAR) of

6.02, the 6,050 square foot lot could be developed with approximately 36,421 square feet of floor area. The New York Public Library, Seward Park Branch contains 18,028 s.f., resulting in 18,393 s.f. of unused development rights available for transfer 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 which 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 three receiving sites available for the transfer of the landmark's unused floor area.

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.

AMANDA M. BURDEN, FAICP, Chair
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