



IN THE MATTER OF a communication dated April 30, 2018, from the Executive Director of the Landmarks Preservation Commission regarding the landmark designation of the Richard Webber Harlem Packing House (Block 1784, Lot 5), by the Landmarks Preservation Commission on March 27, 2018, (Designation List No. 505/LP-2595), Borough of Manhattan, Community District 11.

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 March 27, 2018, the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) designated the Richard Webber Harlem Packing House (207-215 East 119th Street) as an historical landmark. The landmark designation consists of Block 1784, Lot 5. The landmark site at 207-215 East 119th Street fronts East 119th Street between Second and Third Avenues in the East Harlem neighborhood of Manhattan, Community District 11.

The former Richard Webber Harlem Packing House is a historic meat market building constructed in 1895 and originally part of a larger commercial slaughterhouse, meat packing and retail complex. Designed by the architectural firm of Bartholomew & John P. Walther for the prominent butcher Richard Webber, this Romanesque Revival and Renaissance Revival style building is a fine example of 19th century architectural design and an intact reminder of East Harlem's commercial and industrial past. Active in the late-19th and early-20th century, the architects Bartholomew Walther and his son John Peter Walther specialized in warehouses, factories and flats buildings and designed a number of buildings in Upper Manhattan.

Richard Webber, an English immigrant, started a small butcher shop in East Harlem in the late 1870s. The company was very successful, expanding into a large complex with a staff of 500.

Webber maintained other businesses, and at the time of his death in 1908, he was described in the New York Times as “one of the largest butchers in this city if not in the United States.”

Webber was a member of the New York Produce Exchange, the Poultry and Game Trade Association, and the American Meat Packers’ Association and maintained affiliations with several local meat trade societies. He was active in the community, serving on the Harlem Board of Commerce and as a trustee of the Harlem Savings Bank. He was also a pioneer educator, giving lectures at New York Teachers College for the opening of their domestic science department, and at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn.

The six-story, brick and stone formal design and high-quality craftsmanship of the Packing House presented a sophisticated public face for Webber’s operations. The façade combines features of the Romanesque Revival and Renaissance Revival styles. The tripartite façade composition, the simple lines and overall flatness of the building, the decorative roundels and repetitive design motifs, and particularly the projecting cornice with its paneled frieze, denticulation and modillions speak to the Renaissance Revival style influences. Characteristic Romanesque Revival style façade elements include the triforium piers and Roman arches with Byzantine and Corinthian capitals, which are repeated at the arcaded windows at the top story. The central bay of the façade includes the building’s date (1895) carved in stone and prominently features terra-cotta cow head reliefs symbolizing the building’s original function.

The complex remained in use by the Webber meat packing company until 1928, after which the building served a variety of functions, including its current use as a building supply showroom. This building retains a high degree of historic integrity; limited alterations including infilled windows and painted masonry at the base do not diminish its strong architectural character or presence.

The landmark site is situated in an R7A zoning district, which allows a maximum base floor area ratio (FAR) of 4.0. The 10,981-square-foot zoning lot could be developed with 43,924 square feet of floor area. The Richard Webber House currently contains 31,848 square feet of floor area (2.9 FAR). The site, therefore, has approximately 12,076 square feet of unused 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 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 that fronts on the same street intersection as the lot occupied by the landmark. All eight of the adjacent sites are eligible to receive the subject landmark's unused developments rights.

Currently, there are two sites for which the New York City Department of Buildings has issued permits for new buildings, both of which are eligible to receive the subject landmark's unused development rights: a 12-story, 58-unit mixed residential/commercial building at 2183 Third Avenue, to the west of the landmark; and an eight-story, 25-unit residential building at 208 East 119th Street, on the south side of East 119th Street. To the east of the subject building, the property at 217-223 East 119th Street has filed for a new building permit for an eight-story, 45-unit residential building.

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 LPC.

The subject landmark does not conflict with the Zoning Resolution. Furthermore, the Commission is not aware of any conflicts between the subject landmark designation and projected public improvements or any plans for development growth, improvement or renewal in the vicinity of the landmark.

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