



IN THE MATTER OF a communication dated April 30, 2018, from the Executive Director of the Landmarks Preservation Commission regarding the landmark designation of Public School 109 (Block 1649, Lot 9), by the Landmarks Preservation Commission on March 27, 2018, (Designation List No. 505/LP-2597), 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 Public School 109 (now El Barrio's Artspace PS 109) as a City landmark. The landmark site, at 215 East 99th Street (Block 1649, Lot 9), fronts on East 99th Street between Second Avenue and Third Avenue in the East Harlem neighborhood of Manhattan, Community District 11.

The building, which was constructed in 1899 and transformed in 2015 into an affordable housing complex for local artists, is architecturally and culturally significant as a Progressive-era school designed by the Superintendent of School Buildings, Charles B.J. Snyder. Combining the eclectic historicism of the Collegiate Gothic style with modern construction methods and a forward-thinking site plan, P.S. 109 embodied the goals of urban educational and social reform at the turn of the 20th century.

Built during a time of burgeoning school enrollments and an increase in immigrant populations in East Harlem, P.S. 109's five stories could accommodate more than 2,000 students. The building is clad in limestone and brick, with a stylistic expression that joins elements of the late Gothic with French Renaissance motifs and the order of Beaux-Arts planning. Its decoration is relatively restrained on the lower levels, with terracotta stringcourses subdividing the spare façade and rounded turrets placed at each interior corner. The former entrance on the right side of the building is topped with terracotta ornament such as ribbons, crests of arms, foliage,

projecting gargoyles, and a pointed Tudor arch, while the roof features elaborate dormer windows with decorative finials and a large copper-clad spire.

At P.S. 109 Snyder used an H-plan layout, which he had recently adopted as the plan of choice for mid-block school sites. This form, characterized by a central block with parallel wings surrounding two street facing courtyard spaces, was intended to create large recreational areas while protecting students' access to light and air from future development. These courtyards were havens on a site sandwiched between tenement housing and two elevated subway stations at Second and Third Avenues. The building's multi-paned double-hung windows are notably large, a feature made possible by the use of steel-frame construction. Other technological innovations included a forced-air cooling system, electric lighting, ventilated wardrobe closets, and easy-to-clean tile-wainscoted playrooms. Snyder embraced these advances as means of improving environmental conditions within his buildings, emblematic of the Progressive-era social reforms to which he subscribed. With ample spaces for recreation and light-filled classrooms, P.S. 109 was designed as an uplifting educational setting that could help overcome the congestion, contagion, and social inequalities of the city street.

By the 1960s, the blocks immediately surrounding P.S. 109 were radically transformed by urban renewal and the construction of a New York City Housing Authority public housing project, the George Washington Houses. P.S. 109 functioned as a school until 1996, when due to its poor condition it was shuttered and threatened with demolition. Through the advocacy of local residents and preservation organizations, the building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2000. A decade later, Artspace began redeveloping the former school, restoring its exterior while renovating its interior into artist housing and studio space that opened in 2015. The former P.S. 109 remains an important symbol of an early 20th century moment in which school architecture called on cosmopolitan historical traditions to enrich the lives of an entire community.

The landmark site is situated in an R7-2 zoning district, which allows a maximum base floor area ratio (FAR) of 6.5. The 30,274-square-foot zoning lot could be developed with 196,781 square feet of floor area pursuant to zoning. P.S. 109 currently contains 94,148 square feet of floor area (3.11 FAR). The site, therefore, has approximately 102,633 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. Both of the adjacent sites are eligible to receive the landmark's unused floor area as transferable developments rights.

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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