



CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

February 19, 2014, Calendar No. 5

N 140216 HKX

IN THE MATTER OF a communication dated December 26, 2013, from the Executive Director of the Landmarks Preservation Commission regarding the interior landmark designation of the Bronx General Post Office first floor lobby, 560 Grand Concourse (Block 2443, Lot 400), by the Landmarks Preservation Commission on December 17, 2013 (Designation List No. 470/LP-2552) Borough of the Bronx, Community District 4.

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 December 17, 2013, the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) designated the lobby of the Bronx General Post Office, 560 Grand Concourse (Block 2443, Lot 400), as a city landmark. The landmark site is located on the northwest corner of East 149th Street in the Mott Haven neighborhood of Bronx Community District 4.

The post office was built between 1934 and 1937, in response to the rapid urbanization and population of Bronx County, and related increases in mail volume. The building occupies an entire block bounded by East 149th Street, the Grand Concourse, East 150th Street, and A. J. Griffin Place. It was designed by Thomas Harlan Ellett, a private architect temporarily employed by the Public Works Administration (PWA), in the Modern Classical style of architecture, a staple of New Deal public works.

The lobby is a double height space running the length of the building. It features floor-to-ceiling

Ionic columns and coffered ceilings with simplified rosette ornamentation. The floor is made of striped white Tennessee and grey Missouri marble, with complimentary terrazzo. The lobby ceiling has pendant globe lighting fixtures decorated with American Eagle figures.

The lobby walls include 13 mural panels completed in 1939. These murals and the interior as a whole create a unified design scheme incorporating elements of the Modern Classical approach. Ben Shahn, noted photographer and graphic artist, designed and executed the interior elements with the assistance of Bernarda Bryson, later Bryson-Shawn. The murals, collectively titled *Resources of America*, all address the theme of American labor, highlighting the roles of textile manufacturers, steelworkers, miners, hydroelectric engineers, and agricultural trades.

The landmark site is located in a C4-4 zoning district. With an allowable floor area ratio (FAR) of 3.44, the 56,654 square foot lot could be developed with approximately 194,890 square feet of floor area. The Bronx General Post Office contains 159,000 square feet of built floor area (2.96 FAR), resulting in 35,890 square feet 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. The Bronx General Post Office occupies the full zoning lot and its full block. There are eleven potential 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, or any plans for development, growth, improvement or renewal in the vicinity of the landmark.

KENNETH J. KNUCKLES, ESQ., Vice Chairman
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