

Landmark Designation Due For 2 Mansions on Fifth Av.

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The Landmarks Preservation Commission is expected to announce today the designation of the Otto Kahn and James A. Burden mansions at 1 and 7 East 91st. The designations come four years after the commission first considered landmark proposals for the two mansions, which house the Convent of the Sacred Heart School.

Representatives of the school four years ago had threatened to challenge any designation in the courts. Today, those representatives are expected to welcome the designation rather than threaten suit.

The change of heart follows four years of community and government efforts to help resolve the financial disaster that confronted the school if it maintained the facilities without outside assistance. The prolonged assistance effort only picked up serious momentum in the past year and is one of the most obvious examples of how the economics of progress threatens this city's architectural treasures.

See Final Solution

Although the details of an actual solution have yet to be worked out, representatives of the school are satisfied that the mechanics are well under way and that in the near future a plan will be made final. The key to that plan is the Landmarks Conservancy, a recently formed group of prominent citizens seeking to raise private funds for the express purpose of saving threatened landmarks.

In this case, the Conservancy would extend an interest free loan to the Convent to help offset the financial losses the school sustains by staying in the two mansions. Such a loan would provide time for the Convent eventually to sell its air development rights when the real estate market improves.

When completed in 1918, Otto Kahn's supposed copy of a Medici palazzo was considered not only the largest private residence in the country but also the finest. The Kahn mansion, the 1902 Burden house next door and other smaller adjacent turn-of-the-century mansions combine to form, undisputedly, one of the finest blocks remaining in the city.

At today's commission meeting, designation is also

expected for the Andrew Carnegie Mansion on the Fifth Av. and 90 St. corner, facing the Kahn and Burden houses. Now the Cooper-Hewitt Museum of decorative arts, the 1901 Carnegie chateau was not in danger of demolition. The Georgian-style home of the late Scottish-born steel magnate—like the Kahn and Burden mansions—had been considered by the landmarks commission for designation several years ago but never designated.

Decisions on 19 other landmark proposals also will be announced by the commission today. The new commission chairman, Beverly Moss Spatt, has expressed a determination to clear up the long standing backlog of

proposals that has never been decided on by the commission. Approximately 100 such proposals remain undecided, some dating back to public hearings of the late 1960s.

Most of the 22 properties on today's commission calendar are on the E. 82d St. block front across from the Metropolitan Museum of Art. They are expected to be turned down for landmarks designation.