

Landmarks Approves Interior Of New Nobu Restaurant At 195 Broadway, Financial District



Proposal for Nobu at 195 Broadway

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YIMBY wouldn't ordinarily cover the design for a restaurant interior, but one coming Financial District eatery is a special case. Last Tuesday, the Landmarks Preservation Commission approved a proposal for Japanese Chef Nobuyuki "Nobu" Matsuhisa's new outpost at 195 Broadway.

The building is located between Dey Street and Fulton Street, in the Financial District. The neo-Classical style structure was designed by William Welles Bosworth and built between 1912 and 1922. It was originally the headquarters of AT&T, back when people actually knew AT&T stood for the American Telephone and Telegraph Company.



Existing interior of 195 Broadway

In 2006, the building's exterior was designated an individual landmark and part of the former lobby was designated an interior landmark. LPC Chair Meenakshi Srinivasan highlighted it as an example of adaptive reuse, in a talk called "Preservation through Transformation." That's why it is receiving attention here.

The plan is for the new Nobu restaurant to occupy space along Fulton Street. The proposal was presented by preservation consultant Cas Stachelberg of Higgins Quasebarth & Partners and by architect and designer David Rockwell, founder of the Rockwell Group.



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Most of the interior plan is pretty standard stuff – chairs, tables, and a bar. That has and will continue to be handled at the LPC’s staff level. However, a couple of other elements required approval from the commissioners.



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They include screens made of hand-dyed rope, separating the restaurant from both the street and other parts of the building interior. Some will be hung from plaster and others from a steel frame. Stachelberg pointed out that the building once had screens, and a previously approved master plan for 195 Broadway also included screens. The other major element is a sculpture made of hand-laminated, carved ash. Rockwell emphasized the “hand craftsmanship.”



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Commissioner Frederick Bland said the proposal is “with the times” and very exciting. Commissioner Michael Goldblum said the design team’s work ended up with a “really special result” that is “meticulous and thoughtful.” Commissioner Wellington Chen, who studied calligraphy, called the proposed sculpture the work of a “master calligrapher.”

The proposal also had the support of Community Board 1. There was no public testimony, and the commissioners approved it, unanimously.