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Glen Cove overhauls statutes for city's revived Landmarks Preservation Commission



The restoration of the Woolworth mansion in Glen Cove tops the agenda for the city's reactivated Landmarks Preservation Commission. Credit: KJW Photography/Kevin J. Wohler

By **Ted Phillips**
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Updated October 23, 2022 4:32 pm

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Five commissioners were appointed to the board in April after what city officials said had been about hve years of inactivity. At its Oct. 11 meeting, the Glen Cove City Council approved an overhaul of its landmark preservation statutes, amending the code to bring it into compliance with the state's historic preservation standards.

“We have a lot of historic buildings and mansions, and we want to ensure that the integrity of them is saved,” Glen Cove Mayor Pamela Panzenbeck said Friday.





The landmarked Woolworth mansion circa the 1920s. The property, now known as Winfield Hall, was purchased in February by retired New York City real estate developer Selim "Sal" Rusi for \$8.25 million. Credit: Paul J. Mateyunas

Retired New York City real estate developer Selim "Sal" Rusi purchased the house, known as Winfield Hall, in February for \$8.25 million, according to county property records.

Rusi spokesman Ian Siegel said Friday the property is being restored as a single-family home for Rusi to live in and will include modern updates like climate control and electrical upgrades as well as roof work.

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"There are very few people locally that are able to embark on a project like this, that have the means, the knowledge and the patience to restore a home like this and make it their primary residence," Siegel said. "This is a blessing for Glen Cove. This building was falling apart for decades."

The house was built in 1915 for discount store magnate F.W. Woolworth. It was damaged in a fire in 2015.





The Woolworth mansion was built in 1915 for discount store magnate F.W. Woolworth, who commissioned a marble staircase. Credit: KJW Photography/Kevin J. Wohler

Siegel declined to put a price tag on the restoration.

Rusi will have to go before the commission to get approval for exterior work on the landmarked building, said Robert LaBaw, an architect and member of the commission.

"On a Gold Coast mansion like that, we'd be looking to make sure that the design intent kind of matches the overall concept of the project," LaBaw said.

Sarah Kautz, preservation director at the Cold Spring Harbor-based nonprofit Preservation Long Island, said bringing Glen Cove's code up to state standards was a positive step for preserving the city's sense of history.

"It's sort of the gold standard in preservation," Kautz said, referring to state guidelines. "The most important work of historic preservation happens at the local level because the only thing that can really protect a property from demolition or intensive redevelopment is a local landmark designation or local historic designation."

City historian David Nieri, who was appointed to the commission, said he wants its members to compile a database of properties that have historic value and could be landmarked.



A spokesman for the buyer of the former Woolworth mansion said the property is being restored as a single-family home and will include modern updates like climate control, electrical upgrades as well as roof work. Credit: KJW Photography/Kevin J. Wohler

"Glen Cove has a very rich history going back over 350 years, but I also realize that you can't save everything," Nieri said. "You really have to look at what is practical to save by landmarking."

Nieri said the commission should consider landmarking structures that "truly contribute to the cultural past of the city."

LaBaw said that while the commission is "interested in preserving the history and uniqueness of this area," it also needs to be flexible.

"We'd rather see something continue to be used than demolished by neglect," LaBaw said.

LANDMARKED IN GLEN COVE

Some of the properties with the designation in the city:

- Mary Chase Clock Tower
- Killenworth mansion
- Robert Coles House
- Glen Cove Post Office
- Corbin Wheeler House
- Woolworth mansion
- Woolsey Cemetery
- Walsh House and Bridge
- J.H. Coles Homestead
- Hempstead Harbor Club

SOURCE: City of Glen Cove

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