July 27, 2017

Hon. Meenakshi Srinivasan, Chair
New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
One Centre Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Dear Chair Srinivasan,

We write to add our voices to the serious concerns raised regarding changes made to 102 Bedford Street, also known as “Twin Peaks.” The building is, as you know, one of the most iconic and beloved buildings within the Greenwich Village Historic District. Both the work which was done and the approvals given by the Commission via a staff-level permit are troubling in several respects.

This building has long exemplified the quirky, exuberant spirit of bohemian Greenwich Village. As shown by the clear documentation provided by the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, when first designed in 1925, the building featured a “rainbow hued” assortment of colors atop a background of black and light colored paint. Sometime prior to 1963, the building was repainted the cream and brown colors which remained until quite recently, which still captured a lightness and fancifulness that reflected the picturesque chalet the building was meant to resemble.

It would have been appropriate for LPC staff to allow the building to be repainted those same colors that had been in place for over fifty years, since before designation, or to allow restoration to the original rainbow-hued design. Anything significantly beyond this should have gone to a full LPC public hearing, which would have allowed the public to offer input and provide both opinions and evidence to weigh as part of any proposal to change the character of this unique and significant building.

Instead, LPC staff approved a repainting of the building grey with cream and beige offsets. Even more disturbingly, the permit referred to this as a “restoration of the historic paint scheme,” which it is not. It is unclear if this was done because the staff mistakenly did not realize that the
original paint scheme was so significantly different, or thought those differences so insignificant as not to warrant noting. In either case, the result was a significant and inappropriate change to the building’s character, which should never have been approved, particularly not at staff level without the opportunity for public input.

Additionally, as you are aware, the paint job was not carried out by the property owner according to the LPC permit, which called for beige and cream colored paint. Only cream colored paint was applied.

However, to be clear, this is the least of the issues here, and adding the beige paint will not resolve the problem.

The owner should only have been given permits to repaint the building in the existing colors, restore the original “rainbow hued” paint scheme, or go through the public Certificate of Appropriateness process to seek permission for any more significant changes.

We ask that the LPC take action to see that the building is restored to an appropriate condition as soon as possible, and that any further consideration of significant changes be directed to a public hearing process for review and input.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this issue.

Sincerely,

Corey Johnson
Council Member

Jerrod Nadler
Member of Congress

Gale A. Brewer
Manhattan Borough President

Brad Hoylman
State Senator

Deborah Glick
Assembly Member

CC: Andrew Berman, Executive Director, Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation