



Greenwich
Village
Society for
Historic
Preservation

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November 26, 2014

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

Re: De-calendar vote by the Commission

Dear Chair Srinivasan,

I write to express the extreme concern of the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation regarding the plan by the Commission to vote to de-calendar, en masse, all buildings calendared for individual landmark designation more than five years ago which the Commission has not acted upon. It is my understanding that this highly consequential action will be taken with no public testimony allowed, and with no discussion or even review by the Commissioners of the merits of each of the approximately one hundred buildings which will be officially removed from the Commission's docket for consideration.

This is deeply disturbing for several reasons. The lack of allowance for public input on such a sweeping decision is disquieting to say the least. Additionally, the lack of consideration of the merits of each property's continued consideration for landmark designation seems to run counter to the entire purpose of calendaring and voting upon landmark designation. Finally, this enormously far-reaching step is being taken with very little public notice; my organization was informed about this from a colleague preservation organization, but thus far there has been no public notification.

To schedule such a vote for barely a week after the Thanksgiving holiday weekend seems almost designed to prevent public awareness of or response to this action. However, even if the date of the vote is delayed, it is wholly inappropriate to take such an action without allowing public testimony and feedback, and without a presentation to the Commissioners of the merits of each property and a discussion of those merits before any action is taken. Such an action would run wholly counter to efforts to increase transparency and public involvement by the Commission, and I strongly urge you to reconsider this plan.

On a related note, it is my understanding that the Commission plans to soon begin posting on its website when it has received Requests for Evaluations, i.e. requests from the public that the Commission review the merits of a property or area to consider it for potential calendaring and landmark designation. While this may serve many functions, as you no doubt know it will notify an owner or developer that there is even an effort on the part of the public that a property or area be considered for calendaring and designation. Under the current system, whereby an owner is notified

even before a property is being calendared, several owners/developers have used this advance notice to secure permits to alter, demolish, or otherwise prevent or preempt designation of their properties. This proposed move would provide even more advance notice for them to do so. If the Commission does in fact provide make this information available to the public in this way, what steps will it take to ensure that it does not simply allow owners or developers who are opposed to designation even more ease and greater advance notice to get around the process?

Finally, it is also my understanding that the Commission will soon begin sharing draft designation reports with property owners in advance of their being adopted, allowing their feedback to be considered and incorporated. Will such drafts also be shared with the public and advocates? Without such opportunities being presented to the public as well, I am concerned that the Commission may in some cases simply receive one-sided feedback seeking to make the designation reports attach as little significance as possible to properties, leaving them open to alteration or demolition in the future.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Andrew Berman
Executive Director

Cc: Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer
City Councilmember Margaret Chin
City Councilmember Corey Johnson
City Councilmember Rosie Mendez
Community Board #2, Manhattan