

Jackson Heights block to get facelift

82nd Street Partnership awarded \$50K for historical preservation



PHOTO BY JOSEY BARTLETT

The owners of the building on the corner of 82nd Street and 37th Avenue have agreed to work to rid the location of Landmarks Preservation Commission violations.

Posted: Thursday, December 20, 2012 10:30 am | Updated: 11:50 am, Thu Dec 27, 2012.

by Josey Bartlett, Editor

In a year's time some of the buildings on 82nd Street between Roosevelt and 37th avenues will be restored to their historical prime, 82nd Street Partnership Executive Director Seth Taylor said this week.

"The block has some best examples of Neo-Tudor style in the city," Taylor said, referring to the street's peaked roofs and grided stone, wood and stucco facades.

According to the Landmarks Preservation Commission, the tenants and business owners on 82nd Street are one of the least compliant in the city with historical district rules. The block has about 52 outstanding violations, LPC spokeswoman Lisi de Bourbon said.

"Fines of up to \$5,000 may be assessed if owners do not address the illegal conditions or ignore the violation," de Bourbon said. "However, this is not the case in Jackson Heights because we are working in partnership with the BID and the owners to ensure the work is legalized."

To incentivize those businesses the 82nd Street Partnership was awarded a \$50,000 Storefront Improvement Program grant by the city's Department of Small Business Services. The money will allow the partnership to work with between five and seven store owners on the block, Taylor said.

Phase one will be to create a design that eliminates their LPC violations, and will be paid for in full by the grant.

Phase two implements the plan, in keeping with the neighborhood's architectural style. Owners will split the cost of construction with the 82nd Street Partnership. Taylor estimates each project will cost about \$5,000 in total and take about two months from start to finish.

The partnership will stretch the grant by targeting businesses with LPC violations as well as those with smaller problems such as changing signs and awnings.

"We are going after low-hanging fruit right now," Taylor said. "Those we believe will have the biggest impact on the appearance of the neighborhood."

Besides appearance the 82nd Street Partnership is concerned about the economic impact the violations have. LPC summonses slow down the process of filling vacant spaces and capital improvement projects, because the city will not issue permits to individuals with violations. More often than not new tenants want to remodel the inside of their shops when moving in.

"The new renter would have a difficult time obtaining a permit and this would delay construction of the new shop," said Judson Ain of Flushing Kent Realty Management LCC, which has managed the building on the corner of 37th Avenue and 82nd Street for close to 50 years.

Ain added that the landlord would not collect rent during the time it takes new renters to fix any problems they inherited.

The owners of the building, Hampton Associates, have agreed to comply with ridding it of violations to avoid such economic costs in the future.

Lens Lab Express owner for 10 years Brad Polan said his business does not have any violations. His neon signs are inside the store and his awning predated the stricter regulations.

"The awning was grandfathered in. I believe Landmarks would have liked me to change it," Polan said, adding that a new awning would be costly. "If they got a grant to improve the building, I think that's great," he said.

Tenants are required to get consent before moving forward on construction, especially in historic districts, Ain said.

Additionally, some owners fail to fill out the correct permits that make sure they follow historical district bylaws because the paperwork is "confusing and cumbersome," Taylor said. "With the grant we will walk them through the process," he added.

The Partnership has been promised the grant, but still needs to finalize the contract with the city. Taylor hopes the paperwork will be signed by the end of year.