



AIA New York Chapter

The Founding Chapter of the American Institute of Architects

5 February 2008

Hon. Robert Tierney, Chair
NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission
1 Centre Street
New York, New York 10007

Dear Chair Tierney:

On behalf of the AIA New York Chapter and its over 4,000 architect and affiliate members based in Manhattan, it is my pleasure to speak about the proposal to restore and add on to the Domino Sugar Refinery Building on the East River in Williamsburg. There are five compelling reasons to support Beyer Blinder Belle Architects and the project team in their efforts to bring this historic building back into active use:

- The Domino Refinery is an icon of the Brooklyn waterfront, and the proposal respects the scale and industrial strength of the existing building.
- Affordable housing is urgently needed in Williamsburg and throughout New York City.
- The additional commercial space at the base of the Refinery building sensitively addresses the scale of the original openings and reinforces the commercial viability of the development of this neighborhood.
- The rooftop addition, linked to the solid masonry base, is simple in detail and modern in material. It does not compete with the original structure.
- The Refinery site plan provides public green space overlooking the East River, and is well-integrated into the commercial base of the Refinery Building.

The AIA New York Chapter agrees with the proponents of the project that the rooftop addition will allow for a significant number of affordable housing units, and is gratified to hear that the percentage of such inclusionary dwelling units is set at 30%. In concert with our colleagues at AIA Brooklyn, we ask that additional study be given, as the design progresses, to the setback of the west-facing façade, so that there is the clearest possible differentiation between new and original building fabric. We also urge the designers and engineers to minimize the visibility of the mechanical bulkheads on top of the structure.

We note that unlike the comparable addition proposed at the Battery Maritime Building, here at Domino there is already an important connecting vertical element, the Refinery's dominating chimney. This helps link the new and old portions of the structure and allows the detailing of the new floors to be simple and elegant, anchored by the mass of the vertical tower.

In conclusion, to quote, somewhat out of context, Walt Whitman from *Crossing Brooklyn Ferry*, this is a "simple, compact, well-join'd scheme" that allows us to see "the similitudes of the past and those of the future."

We urge that a Certificate of Appropriateness be conferred.

Yours,

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