

SEPTEMBER 11, 2012

**STATEMENT OF THE NEW YORK LANDMARKS CONSERVANCY BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY
LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION REGARDING NEW CONSTRUCTION AT 27 EAST 4TH
STREET, MANHATTAN IN THE NOHO HISTORIC DISTRICT EXTENSION**

Good morning Chair Tierney and Commissioners. I am Andrea Goldwyn speaking on behalf of the New York Landmarks Conservancy regarding plans for a new building at 27 East 4th Street, next to the Merchant's House Museum.

The proposal would require demolition of an existing 1945 garage in order to construct a new nine-story building. We do not oppose the loss of the garage, but we share the concerns that preservation engineer Robert Silman, representing the Merchant's House Museum, outlined in his June 6, 2012 letter to the Commission, that this project has the potential to cause severe damage to the Merchant's House. This concern is not theoretical; in 1988, the building to the immediate east was demolished, requiring \$1 million of structural repairs and interior restoration at the Merchant's House, and closing it for over two years.

The Department of Buildings Rule 10/88 was enacted to protect historic buildings by monitoring nearby new construction. We understand that there are new technologies that would better serve that purpose, and we urge the LPC and the Buildings Department revise the standards to incorporate these advances. As an interim measure, we request that before any approvals are given for demolition or new construction at 27 East 4th Street, that the Commission devise a special protection plan that goes beyond the current standards of Rule 10/88, a course of action recommended by Mr. Silman. The plan should be written to the satisfaction of the Merchant's House Museum

The significance of the Old Merchant's House cannot be overstated. The Commission recognized this when it designated the exterior on its own first day of existence in 1965, and then the interior in 1981. The designation report for the interior states that "The Old Merchant's House (is) a unique document of its period which shows with unrivaled authenticity how a prosperous New York City merchant and his family lived in the mid-19th century." It is a National Historic Landmark and a member of the City's Historic House Trust. The building envelope, the foundation, and the invaluable historic interior plaster should not be placed at risk.

Thank you for the opportunity to present the Conservancy's views.