

March 22, 2016

STATEMENT OF THE NEW YORK LANDMARKS CONSERVANCY BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION REGARDING THE DISMANTLING, RELOCATION, AND RECONSTRUCTION OF THE TIN BUILDING, 95 MARGINAL STREET, SOUTH STREET SEAPORT HISTORIC DISTRICT

Good day Chairman Srinivasan and Commissioners. I am Alex Herrera on behalf of the New York Landmarks Conservancy.

This is a complicated project involving a rather simple market building that is crucially important to the history of South Street Seaport. The Tin Building is one of the key surviving links that connect the Seaport with its historic maritime commercial legacy.

The program calls for the complete dismantling and reconstruction of the Tin Buildings. The salvage of some but not all historic components, and the recladding of the facades with metal siding that will reproduce the material, details and appearance of the original. The recreation of the facades will be based on photographic and physical evidence. The Conservancy does not usually endorse this sort of relocation and reconstruction of historic assets, however we are making an exception in this case because we believe that the relocation will help the building survive the next major flood and will also allow it to be less in the shadow of the FDR Drive and thus more visible to the public. What is being preserved is an idea, the memory of how the fish market once served the area and gave it its distinctive character. In a way it is a miracle that the Tin Building has survived at all. This intervention will bring it back to life in the eyes and minds of visitors. The accurate restoration of the exterior is crucial to the success of the project and the Commission should keep a close eye on that. The Conservancy believes that more of the salvageable historic components of the building, especially the columns, should be saved and reused. The presence of the columns would not impede the function of a modern market and would in fact make the space more attractive and distinctive. All the surviving cast iron columns should be incorporated in the new building.

We therefore support the proposal with the proviso that more of the internal columns are kept and that the details of the reconstruction are as in keeping with the original as promised by the developer. If the historic building is restored as promised it will be by far the most interesting structure on the pier. Done properly it can preserve, at least symbolically, the maritime commercial history of the South Street Seaport.

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