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Chair
David Mulkins

February 2, 2014

Vice Chairs
Michele Campo
Jean Standish

Hon. Robert B. Tierney, Chair
NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission
1 Centre Street, 9th floor
New York, N.Y. 10007

Secretary
Sally Young

Treasurer
Jean Standish

Re: Former Good Samaritan/Eastern District Dispensary, 75 Essex Street, Manhattan

Landmarks Chairperson
Mitchell Grubler

Dear Chairman Tierney:

Projects Chairperson
Chris Mansfield

I write on behalf of the Bowery Alliance of Neighbors in support of landmark designation for the former Good Samaritan/Eastern District Dispensary in recognition of its architectural and historical significance.

Co-Founders
Anna L. Sawaryn
David Mulkins

In 1890, distinguished architects Rose & Stone designed the four story, freestanding dispensary in the Italianate-style. Clad in orange and tan brick, laid in Flemish bond with brownstone trim, it features a rhythmic series of five round-arched openings set within the first story of the eastern façade along Essex Street. The building is the only structure of its kind on the Lower East Side and is a contributing building within the National Register Lower East Side Historic District listed in 2001.

Board of Advisors

Doris Diether
Zoning Consultant

As a walk-in community health care facility, the dispensary offered free and low-cost medical services for the impoverished immigrant community of the Lower East Side. Financing for the land and building was raised through private contributions with annual operating expenses funded by the city. The building represents a powerful example of philanthropic concern and municipal responsibility. It survives as an eloquent testimony to social reformers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries whose vision and commitment propelled New York City to pioneer progressive social change.

Simeon Bankoff
Executive Director
Historic Districts Council

Kent Barwick
President Emeritus
Municipal Art Society

After the dispensary closed in the 1950s, the building was converted to store, office and storage space. It is currently owned by a sportswear wholesaler/retailer who has advertised it for sale. Adjacent to the planned new construction of the Essex Crossing development, this remarkably intact, handsome structure is vulnerable to demolition or inappropriate alterations. I urge the Commission to move ahead without delay to calendar this landmark-worthy building. Thank you for your consideration.

Kerri Culhane
Architectural Historian

Eric Ferrara
Director: Lower East
Side History Project

Michael Geyer
Architect

Sincerely,

Margaret Halsey Gardiner
Executive Director
Merchant's House Museum

Bob Holman
Poet & Proprietor
Bowery Poetry Club

Mitchell Grubler, Chair
Landmarks Committee

Keith McNally
Restaurateur
Balthazar/ Minetta Tavern

Joyce Mendelsohn
Educator/Historian
Author

Cc: Hon. Sheldon Silver: silver@assembly.state.ny.us
Councilmember Margaret Chin: mviggiانو@council.nyc.gov
Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer: press@manhattanbp.nyc.gov

Victor Papa
President: Two Bridges
Neighborhood Council

Luc Sante
Author/Historian



FRIENDS OF THE LOWER EAST SIDE

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New York, NY 10002

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<http://www.friendsofthelowereastside.org>

Testimony: CB 3 Parks, Recreation, Cultural Affairs, Landmarks & Waterfront Committee, 2/13/14
In support of landmark designation for 75 Essex Street
The former Good Samaritan/Eastern District Dispensary

Friends of the Lower East Side strongly supports landmark designation for the former Good Samaritan/Eastern District Dispensary in recognition of its historical, and architectural significance. Erected in 1890, as a walk-in community health care facility, the dispensary offered free and low-cost medical services for the impoverished immigrant community of the Lower East Side. The building survives as eloquent testimony to social reformers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries whose vision and commitment propelled New York City to pioneer progressive social change.

In 1890, distinguished architects Rose & Stone designed the four-story, freestanding dispensary in the Italianate-style. The building is the only structure of its kind on the Lower East Side and is listed in the Lower East Side Historic District, placed on the National Register in in 2001. The dispensary closed in the 1950s and is now owned by Eisner Brothers who have advertised it for sale. Adjacent to the planned new construction of Essex Crossing development, unprotected by landmark designation, this remarkably intact, handsome structure is vulnerable to demolition or inappropriate alterations.

In an interview with Allison Siegel for the Tenement Museum blog, later posted on <http://www.boweryboogie.com/2013/07/dispensary-to-sporting-goods-the-eastern-dispensary-at-75-essex/> on February 9, 2010, Shalom Eisner emphasized that whoever purchases 75 Essex Street will have to leave the outside as is, “that will be set forth in the contract.” While we do not doubt Mr. Eisner’s good intentions, at the time, we are concerned about a change of mind and the intentions of a new owner who may decide to demolish or alter the building. Therefore, Friends of the Lower East Side is seeking official NYC landmark designation to preserve the historic structure.

The former dispensary needs to be preserved not just for its architectural excellence, or to solidify a connection between past and present. Saving it will have a positive impact on the environment. It has been said that, “The greenest building is the one already built.” The Lower East Side boasts several examples of economically viable, adaptive re-use of high quality historic structures, like the Forward Building, transformed into upscale condos; Jarmulowsky Bank, a Beaux-Art beauty, now being renovated into a luxury hotel; and Anshe Chesed, an abandoned synagogue converted into the Angel Orensanz Foundation, a magnificent event space. Thank you for your consideration.

Joyce Mendelsohn

Linda C. Jones

Mitchell Grubler

Friends of the Lower East Side is a grassroots organization founded in 2011 dedicated to preserving the architectural and cultural heritage of this historic center of immigrant life.

placeMATTERS

sponsored by city lore and the municipal art society

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February 13, 2014

District Manager Susan Stetzer
Community Board 3, Manhattan
59 East 4th Street
New York, NY 10003

RE: Former Good Samaritan/Eastern District Dispensary, 75 Essex Street, Manhattan

Dear District Manager Stetzer,

City Lore and Place Matters join Friends of the Lower East Side and many others in urging you to designate the historic Former Good Samaritan/Eastern District Dispensary as a New York City landmark. I write to you as an architectural historian and the director of Place Matters, a preservation initiative co-sponsored by City Lore and the Municipal Art Society, which strives to honor and advocate for sites of cultural and historical significance in New York City's landscape. City Lore and Place Matters are located in the same neighborhood as the Eastern District Dispensary – a neighborhood that has experienced intensive, and often inappropriate, real estate development in the last decade. Tourists, newcomers and long-standing New Yorkers alike are all beginning to associate the Lower East Side with trendy eateries, boutique shopping and posh lodgings. The immigrant and working class histories of the historic Lower East Side are in danger of being erased from our collective consciousness. Saving the Former Eastern Dispensary, a building that embodies the city's tradition of caring for the neediest New Yorkers, would be an important step toward honoring the rich and diverse layers of human experience that make the neighborhood so distinctive. The Dispensary building contributes to the historic fabric of the local built environment, but in marking histories of struggle and achievement, is also a culturally and socially significant landmark for the city as a whole.

The Eastern Dispensary is now up for sale and it is threatened by the forthcoming construction related to Site 1 of the Essex Crossing/Seward Park Mixed-Use Development. Although the Eastern Dispensary is included in the National Register's Lower East Side Historic District, this largely honorary listing does not offer the same high level of protection that New York City Landmark designation can provide.

Please designate this building a New York City Landmark as soon as possible. City Lore and Place Matters thank you very much for your consideration, and for your time.

Sincerely,
Molly Garfinkel
Director, Place Matters



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Testimony: CB 3 Parks, Recreation, Cultural Affairs, Landmarks & Waterfront Committee, 2/13/14
In support of restoration plans for the (former) Jarmulowsky Bank, 54 Canal Street

Friends of the Lower East Side is pleased to support restoration plans for the former Jarmulowsky Bank, an outstanding building on the Lower East Side, designated an official NYC landmark in 2009. The multi-purpose 12-story skyscraper, designed by Rouse & Goldstone and opened in 1912, most likely, was inspired by the headquarters of the former J. & W. Seligman & Co., a prestigious investment banking firm on William Street. Both banks announced their importance to passers-by with elaborate corner entrances at street level, while asserting their identity and advertising their presence with eye-catching rooftop towers.

The domed spire – a circular pavilion capping the roof of Jarmulowsky Bank – when viewed from a distance was an instantly recognizable point of reference. It consisted of a screen of columns, rising 50 feet to a dome, ringed by eagles and topped by a pinnacle. No doubt, it was based on the ancient Choragic Monument of Lysicrates in Athens – a structure that served as a design source for classical buildings throughout Europe and America – where the Monument was seen as a symbol of special prestige and commemoration. In New York, it was the model for the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument on Riverside Drive. Replicas, in varying in size, crown St. Paul's Chapel and the Municipal Building, downtown, and the San Remo apartments on the Upper West Side. Sadly, in the early 1990s, during repairs on the bank, the rooftop domed spire was destroyed – depriving the Lower East Side of one of its most cherished sights and compromising the integrity of the building.

The incredibly good news for the community is that owners of the former bank, now being converted into a luxury hotel, have decided, at great cost, to rebuild a new domed spire. Ron Castellano, the immensely talented architect of the restoration, has submitted, for your examination, a series of drawings replicating the original. We urge the committee to approve his plans, which will mend a hole in the historic fabric of the Lower East Side.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Joyce Mendelsohn".

Joyce Mendelsohn

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Linda C. Jones".

Linda C. Jones

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Mitchell Grubler".

Mitchell Grubler

Friends of the Lower East Side is a grassroots organization founded in 2011 dedicated to preserving the architectural and cultural heritage of this historic center of immigrant life.