

Testimony of Susan Pollock, SVP of CPC and CPCR before the City Council Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Siting and Maritime Uses regarding the Domino Sugar Refinery  
December 6, 2007

My name is Susan Pollock and I am a senior vice president at CPC and CPC Resources, and the project manager of the Domino Sugar project in Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

I am happy to be here this morning to voice CPCR's support for the designation of the Refinery buildings as NYC landmarks, and to place that support in the context of our overall vision for the redevelopment of the Domino site which includes a commitment to provide a significant amount of affordable housing.

A brief history: The Community Preservation Corporation has been in the business of financing the preservation and development of affordable housing throughout the City for the past 34 years, and in the process has been involved in the building or rebuilding of over 145,000 housing units. CPC Resources, the development arm of CPC, shares the mission of its parent and seeks to develop and preserve affordable housing opportunities. Two of CPCR's recently completed projects include the preservation and rehabilitation of the 12,271-unit Parkchester complex in the Northeast Bronx, and the 48-unit low income housing tax credit development at 45 Malta Street in East New York.

CPCR is the managing partner of Refinery LLC, which owns the 11 + acre Domino site. Our goals for the project are ambitious and reflect both our own primary mission and the needs and concerns of the surrounding community. We recognize the importance of respecting the existing neighborhood's fabric – both in terms of its physical structures and in terms of the residents who have struggled to make it the vibrant place it is today. And so our vision for the Domino site includes several components, and we have worked hard to design a program that achieves a successful balance among them.

The adaptively reused Refinery will be at the center of an extension to the existing Southside residential community, a new residential neighborhood

which will contain approximately 2,200 apartments – 30 percent of which will be affordable to low and moderate-income families. That level of affordability exceeds what is required on other waterfront sites, and is intended to reach lower income segments of the community than are being served elsewhere. The master plan for the site, designed by Rafael Vinoly Architects, opens up pedestrian and visual corridors along each of the upland blocks to the East River, and provides a waterfront esplanade along the 1300 foot length of the site, as well as a large open space on the river side of the Refinery. Our proposal includes retail and community facility space as well, and we estimate that approximately 550 permanent new jobs will be created.

The components I've described – preservation, affordable housing, open space, access to the water, jobs – all matter to the community and to the City, but the primary focus remains affordable housing. The vast need for affordable housing in the neighborhood cannot be overstated, and the affordable housing proposed will focus on the housing needs of those in the immediate neighborhood, many of whom are the friends and families of those who worked at Domino and elsewhere along Williamsburg's industrial waterfront.

Needless to say, there are costs associated with each part of the whole, and these costs must be factored into the ultimate balancing act. We recognize the significance of the Refinery as a visual and physical link to an important part of Brooklyn's and Williamsburg's past, but we have also come to recognize the cost associated with preserving these structures. Built essentially as a brick skin for a constantly evolving manufacturing process, reuse of the buildings requires a delicate and costly dismantling of the interiors and then a rebuilding of a new structure within the preserved walls.

In order to partially offset these costs, our proposal includes a request for density that keeps the heights of the new buildings to be built around the Refinery within the guidelines of the 2005 Greenpoint-Williamsburg rezoning and permits us to meet our stated commitment to provide a full 30 percent of the units as affordable.

We are tremendously excited about moving forward with our Domino redevelopment proposal, and are delighted to have the support of the Landmarks community for the preservation of its central structure.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

**TESTIMONY OF THE LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION BEFORE THE CITY COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND MARITIME USES ON THE DESIGNATION OF THE DOMINO SUGAR REFINERY, BROOKLYN**

**December 6, 2007**

Good morning Councilmembers. My name is Diane Jackier, Director of External Affairs at the Landmarks Preservation Commission. I am here today to testify on the Commission's designation of the Domino Sugar Refinery in Brooklyn.

On June 26, 2007, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation. Nineteen people spoke in favor, including the owner and representatives of the owner, as well as representatives of City Councilman David Yassky, Churches United, the Historic Districts Council, the Landmarks Conservancy, the Municipal Art Society, the North Brooklyn Alliance, Pratt Center for Community Development, Roebling Chapter of the Society for Industrial Archeology, Society for the Architecture of the City, New York Chapter of the Victorian Society in America, and the Williamsburg Preservation Alliance. Several speakers requested that the site be expanded to include related structures, while other insisted that designation should not interfere with the creation of affordable housing. The Commission also received many letters and petitions supporting designation. On September 25, 2007, the Commission designated the Domino Sugar Refinery a New York City landmark.

Sugar production was Brooklyn's most important industry in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Of the various refinery structures that once lined the East River, the former Havemeyers & Elder Refinery, later known as the Domino Sugar Refinery, is the largest and most significant to survive. The three conjoined buildings which make up the refinery – the Filter House, Pan House, and Finishing House – are located on Kent Avenue in Williamsburg, between South 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and South 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. The Filter House is the tallest building, reaching a height of 155 feet, plus the chimney. At the time of completion in 1884, it was the tallest structure on the Brooklyn waterfront. The buildings were designed by Theodore A. Havemeyer in association with the builder Thomas Winslow and J. E. James.

Frederick C. Havemeyer, Jr., son of the company's founder, began operating a refinery in Williamsburg in 1856. Raw sugar was supplied from America's deep South, mainly Louisiana, and also the Caribbean, where it was primarily harvested by slaves. Though slavery ended in the United States in 1865, it continued in Cuba, the world's largest exporter of raw sugar, until 1886.

Like many industrial buildings constructed during this era, it was designed in the round-arch style, an American variant of the Romanesque Revival style. Rooted in practical needs, the refinery was designed to be as fireproof as possible, with iron columns, beams and girders, as well as four hundred electric lights. A large oval smokestack dominates the west façade of the Filter House. Though the base of the chimney is original, the section that rises above the roof was added following a major expansion during the 1920s. Designed to produce three million pounds of sugar a day, the refinery's capacity gave the company a considerable competitive edge, allowing it to dominate the American market for several decades.

In subsequent years, as the demand for sugar was hurt by the increasing popularity of corn syrup and other sweeteners, the company ceased refining raw sugar at this location and the three buildings became vacant. The plant closed in 2004 and the site was acquired by C.P.C. Resources, the development arm of the Community Preservation Corporation.

The Commission urges you to affirm the designation.