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LANDMARKS

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Jennifer J. Raab, Chairperson
New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
100 Old Slip
New York, NY 10005

Dear Ms. Raab:

We're writing to voice our concerns about the status of 143 Chambers Street, the building in which we are tenants. At its rear, the building borders on a large parking lot that is a prime target for developers. With the recent zoning changes in the western half of Tribeca, the building is even more vulnerable to destruction.

We're sure you know better than we do the historical significance of the building, which is well over a hundred years old and has a very stately cast-iron façade. In addition to its possible destruction, without landmarking the building is subject to alterations which will further compromise its historic value, such as the remodeling of the entrances which took place when a restaurant moved in several years ago.

All of us who are long-time residents of Tribeca were relieved and delighted when the Landmarks Commission declared the Tribeca historic districts a few years back. I hope that the Commission will consider Chambers Street as an integral part of Tribeca's architectural heritage, and not write it off to commercial development.

Thanks for your continued support of Tribeca's history and architecture.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Ehrlich

Susan Delson

143 CHAMBERS STREET BUILDING, Manhattan

This imposing five-story Italianate store and loft building, on the north side of Chambers Street between Hudson and West Streets, was constructed as a speculative investment by the Estate of Ellis Potter in 1860-61. It is characteristic of the store and loft type which flourished in the 1850s and early 1870s as the wholesale textile and drygoods district expanded northward from Cortlandt Street spurred by the development of the Hudson River waterfront and the construction of the Hudson River Railroad terminal at Hudson and Chambers Streets in 1851. These loft buildings provided large, open interior spaces for the storage of goods and well-lit ground-story showrooms for the display of merchandise. Their facades were almost uniformly designed in the Italian Renaissance inspired palazzo style, thought particularly appropriate for commercial buildings because of its associations with Italy's merchant princes.

A distinguished example of the palazzo style, 143 Chambers Street has a richly embellished dark brown sandstone facade set above a cast-iron and glass storefront. Its cast-iron ground story is articulated by Corinthian piers and columns which support a wide entablature with a modillioned cornice. Portions of the old cast-iron, wood, and glass storefronts survive, notably the paneled iron bulkhead beneath the west show window and the lunette transoms. The upper stories are framed by quoins and have round-arched window openings. On the second story, the windows have molded surrounds which are supported by paired pilasters and enriched by console keystones. The windows on the top three stories have keyed surrounds. Inverted bell flowers are set above the third story keystones. The building is crowned by a heavy cornice supported by ornate console brackets.