Abstract

Title: The Domino Effect: An Adaptive Re-Use Proposal for the Havemeyers and Elder / Domino Sugar Refinery

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The Domino Sugar refinery on the East River waterfront in Brooklyn, New York, is a historic site which is worthy of preservation and which is capable of accepting a viable new use which harmonizes with the original use and architecture of the site and also contributes to the local neighborhood and to the city at large. Shut down in January of 2004, the refinery has a questionable future, particularly since the land on which it sits is extremely valuable as a site for new development.

Many problems are attendant in the preserving of a disused industrial site, including such issues as pollution, bad location, stigma, lack of appreciation for the architectural aesthetic, and lack of a viable new program which can be put into the existing structures. However, historic industrial sites possess the same level of historic importance as other historic sites, and the difficulties of their preservation should not lead to their abandonment as sites of historic value.

This thesis proposes that the Domino Sugar refinery be adaptively re-used as a mixed-use facility consisting of a studio complex for film and television productions, a film school and a hotel. This is a preservation solution which will keep the site’s architecture materially intact, take full advantage of the site’s location, maintain the site’s essential use as a place of production, and allow the site to have an engagement with the surrounding neighborhood and the city at large which would be absent if the refinery site were to be demolished and replaced by something entirely new.

Keywords: Domino; sugar; refinery; industrial; Williamsburg; production; studio