

Stated Meeting: Savoring the Brooklyn Sugar Plant

by Courtney Gross

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The sign is iconic, rising above the East River reminding passersby that 3 million pounds of sugar were once produced there on a single day.

To ensure part of the Domino Sugar Refinery's legacy is preserved, the City Council at its meeting Tuesday approved a landmark designation for three of its buildings, dating back to 1884. The sign, which many associate with the sugar refinery, and the building it is attached to [are not part of the designation](#).

The City Council also approved legislation that provides prisoners who were born in New York City with a free birth certificate when released from incarceration as well as a bill that sets standards for the cleanup of crime scenes. **Domino Preserved**

The Domino Sugar Refinery, one of five refineries scattered along Brooklyn's waterfront, once comprised 11 acres and thousands of employees. The thriving refinery, where tons of raw sugar were mixed with water and filtered, helped establish [sugar manufacturing as the most important industry in Brooklyn](#) from the late 1800s to the early 1900s, said city officials.

When the plant closed in 2004 and was bought by CPC Resources, the nonprofit developer of the Community Preservation Corporation, community organizations recommended that it be [designated a landmark](#).

[The Landmarks Preservation Commission](#)

approved the status for three of the buildings, which together make up "The Refinery," in September.

The council unanimously approved the designation by a vote of 46 to 0.

The whole site, which comprises about 11.2 acres, is slated for [mixed-use development](#) with 30 percent affordable housing. The landmarked buildings are slated for residences, commercial and community facility use, and the whole project will comprise 2,400 residential units and approximately 220,000 square feet of retail, commercial and cultural facility space.

The buildings will vary in size, from "The Refinery's" height, at about 13 stories, to larger residential buildings reaching up to [40 stories](#). The developer intends on incorporating the Domino's iconic sign into the project.

"These important buildings are what helped make Brooklyn so sweet," said Council Speaker Christine Quinn.

Describing New York as "a place where residential buildings about what have been manufacturing and where manufacturing buildings can transform into new residential buildings in our city," Quinn said preserving the sugar refinery would contribute to sustaining the city's

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intricate and novel urban landscape.

As Williamsburg continues to change, the face of Domino Sugar will be a constant reminder of where Brooklyn and the borough's industries came from, council members said.

" This building is a landmark building in the technical sense," said Councilmember David Yassky, who represents the neighborhood. "But also in the colloquial sense in the neighborhood. Everyone in Williamsburg knows the building, probably outside of Williamsburg as well." **Birth Certificates**

The City Council approved legislation that would allow a prisoner to request his or her birth certificate upon release within the five boroughs. The council approved [the bill \(Intro 574-A\)](#) by a vote of 39 to 6, with the body's three Republican members dissenting along with council members Peter Vallone, Domenic Recchia and Vincent Gentile.

Birth certificates are already provided for prisoners in New York State facilities.

The bill will allow former inmates to reintegrate into society, said the bill's sponsor, Councilmember Annabel Palma. Often times, prisoners are released without the proper identification needed to obtain employment.

Vallone said he voted against the legislation, because no one, whether a prisoner or not, should be able to receive a city service for free, when the majority of New Yorkers have to pay for it.

" It bothered me to give away something for free that the rest of us have to pay for," he said. "It helps them get a job, but so does a new suit."

Inmates who are born in New York City and were incarcerated for more than 90 days will be eligible for the free birth certificates. Because inmates are already provided with a birth certificate, albeit one stamped "not for government use," there should be minimal cost attached to the legislation, said Quinn.

Normally a birth certificate would cost a New Yorker \$15 — a fee some advocacy groups called an impediment to reintegration into society.

A representative from the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene testified [against the bill this summer](#), stating the cost would be a burden on the department, which oversees birth certificates

About 2,500 city residents who leave city jails and 9,000 city residents who leave state prisons will fall under the bill. The certificates will be made available upon request. **Crime Scenes**

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When Councilmember Michael Nelson stumbled upon a crime scene in his district, he realized that once an investigation was complete there was no requirement that the city clean up the area.

Under [a bill \(Intro 123\)](#) approved by a vote of 45 to 1, with Councilmember Simcha Felder dissenting, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene will be required to draft regulations of crime scene cleanup on city property.

Guidelines for private properties owners will be posted on a Web site and available through 311, but they will be merely advisory. Members said it is important that private citizens, including biohazard contractors, have access to this information.

Felder voted against the bill to ensure that the cleanup and care of remains left at the crime scene would take the victims' religion into account. Nelson said any religious requirements would be included in the guidelines.

City officials said any additional cost for this cleanup would likely be covered by insurance. Â