

May 19, 2023

Watervliet Arsenal Public Affairs Office
1 Buffington Street
Watervliet, NY 12189

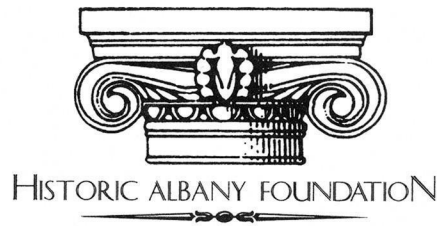
RE: Demolition of 10 structures, historic homes and garages at the Watervliet Arsenal

To Whom This May Concern:

I am writing on behalf of Historic Albany Foundation's staff and board of directors to voice our strong opposition to the proposed demolition of ten buildings, houses and corresponding garages, at the Watervliet Arsenal. These buildings contribute to the Arsenal's status as a National Historic Landmark, which is the creme-de-la-creme of historic status. The proposed demolition is a short sighted response to a problem with many alternate solutions that do not call for irreparable damage to the Arsenal's historic structures.

There is nothing wrong with these buildings, no imminent threat to public safety or national security. These buildings are absolutely viable and in any other situation would simply be reused as they are, fetching reasonable sale prices if sold. There are many ways these historic buildings could be reused in a way that supports the current work taking place at the Watervliet Arsenal. Adaptively reused, they could bring in income, rather than create expenses. Buildings of this typology are ideally suited for a very wide range of reuses that could directly benefit the Arsenal, Benet Laboratories, or other private business, which the Arsenal does house. These buildings can very easily be adapted for use as offices ideal for small or fledgling businesses, or even small departments to have their own space. Small technical uses like server or 3D printer farms can be cleverly situated within the smaller rooms, each climate controlled separately if needed. They are excellent for programs and organizations that support army based work like the USO, dining halls, and guest lodgings for short term visiting military or other professional personnel, businesses that the Arsenal, Benet Laboratories, or other private businesses at the Arsenal may work with. These are only a few of the many, many different ways these buildings can be used and be assets to the Arsenal.

The buildings' historic status opens the door to hundreds of thousands, if not millions of dollars, of funding for any work needed to reuse these buildings. Not only are more grant funds available given their National Historic Landmark status, but the Federal and New York State Rehabilitation Tax Credits provide a way for more public/private partnerships that can advance the work the Arsenal already does. All of these funding sources have been used to rehabilitate historic structures that have been government owned in New York State. Tenant organizations would be eligible for the tax credits, making them more appealing for businesses than modern tech parks and contemporary buildings. We highly encourage the Arsenal to take a more




thoughtful approach to utilizing these buildings as it is a steward of a very historic property. The demolition goes against the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Buildings and as such sets a terrible example that the government cannot or will not follow its own rules. The reuse of these buildings could be a win and money maker as opposed to a fight with the public, the New York State Historic Office, and the National Parks Service.

Historic Albany is happy to provide any technical services connecting Arsenal staff with architects and engineers who have extensive experience rehabilitating National Historic Landmarks and properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places, grant funding opportunities, and other possible partners for redeveloping and reusing these buildings.

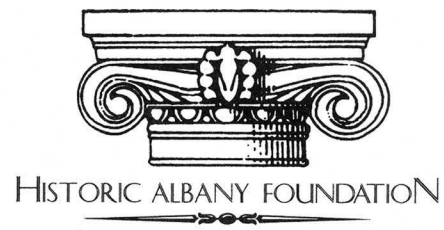
Should the decision be made to remove these buildings, a mitigation measure that should be required is the documentation of all the buildings being demolished with measured drawings and photographs to the standard set by the Historic American Building Survey. The documentation materials should then be made available to the public through an archive such as the New York State Museum or Albany Institute of History and Art, and the Historic American Building Survey's collection. We also ask that Historic Albany's Architectural Parts Warehouse be able to salvage any historic materials from the buildings that can be reused elsewhere to prevent more building material from being landfilled and reducing the carbon footprint of their removal.

These buildings are excellent examples of their style and demonstrate how the Arsenal functioned for most of its lifetime, housing military staff for those toiling on the base. The Arsenal is a big part of the rich heritage in the Capital Region and touted as such in the cultural and tourism sectors. In closing, we ask again that the Arsenal be more thoughtful in their approach to the historic properties that make the Watervliet Arsenal so special nationally, and not destroy over a hundred years of history.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this matter. Should someone wish to discuss any of the assistance offered in this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me at 518-465-0876 x112 or cmacri@historic-albany.org. We hope the Watervliet Arsenal will continue to be an excellent steward of its National Historic Landmark site for many, many years to come.

Sincerely,

Cara R. Macri
Director of Preservation Services

cc: Daniel Mackay, Deputy Commissioner NYS Division for Historic Preservation
Nancy Herter, Director NYS Technical Preservation Services Bureau



Mark Eberle, External Review Coordinator / Resource Planning Specialist National Park Service
Megan Borthwick, Program Analyst/Army Liaison Advisory Council on Historic Preservation