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June 7, 2024

Lucille Roybal Allard
President, Los Angeles Harbor Commission
commissioners@portla.org

Gene Seroka
Executive Director
Port of Los Angeles
gseroka@portla.org

Re: 700-702 & 712-716 Tuna Street

Dear Members of the Los Angeles Harbor Commission and Mr. Seroka:

Since 2006 the Los Angeles Conservancy has been pressing for the preservation and reuse of the remaining historic buildings at Terminal Island, as these illustrate an important part of L.A.'s heritage, from the early fishing industry, tuna production, and Japanese American settlement. We worked closely with Port staff and the Harbor Commission to develop preservation protocols as part of the most recent master plan for Terminal Island. This was accomplished by working collaboratively and in follow-up to the National Trust for Historic Preservation placing Terminal Island on its 2012 list of *America's Eleven Most Endangered Historic Places*. While we have made some progress in policy, we continue to experience losses of historic buildings at Terminal Island.

We are alarmed by reports that the Port of Los Angeles is now seeking to demolish the last two remaining buildings from the Japanese American Fishing Village on Terminal Island as reported in *The Rafu Shimpo*.¹ We believe that these two buildings at 700-702 and 712-716 Tuna Street are eligible for listing in the National Register due to their association with the Japanese American community on Terminal Island. We understand that

¹ Emma Rault, "Save Tāminaru: The Fight to Preserve Terminal Island's JA Heritage," *The Rafu Shimpo*, May 18, 2024.



this project may be in the early development stage, but we ask the Commission and Port leadership to intervene at this early stage not only to prevent demolition but also to preserve and properly interpret these last remaining examples of Terminal Island’s Japanese American heritage.

At the Harbor Commission’s May 23, 2024 meeting, multiple Terminal Islanders addressed the Commission, calling for preservation of the buildings. They shared stories and photographs of life on Terminal Island before the forced displacement and incarceration of the Terminal Islanders as part of the early lead up and throughout World War II. We thank them for sharing these deeply personal and oftentimes painful stories.

We are hopeful that these requests from the community do not fall on deaf ears. At the same Commission meeting, Vice President Middleton suggested a counter-proposal might be brought up at a future date and a committee could be formed to honor the history of the Japanese American Terminal Island community through the preservation of these two buildings. The Los Angeles Conservancy could help convene a group of preservation professionals including the National Trust to help assist in this effort.

An Alternative Approach

The Los Angeles Conservancy believes that the Port of LA can be a nationwide leader in sustainable land use and a leader in the “Blue Economy.” Just last week on May 29, the port reached a major milestone with the ribbon cutting of a \$30 million adaptive reuse project of three historic warehouses.² This begs the question – can a similar adaptive reuse project be contemplated for these two historic structures on Tuna Street? A mix of uses can be considered for the site, which is allowed under the current Port Master Plan, but it is our ultimate goal to see these buildings rehabilitated and occupied in a way that share the history of Terminal Island with future generations. This is exactly the framework that is laid out in the policy we helped craft with the Port in section 3.2.5 of the Port Master Plan, stating:

Further, the Port shall encourage the productive reuse of historic resources in the future by periodically reviewing, as needed, with stakeholder input, whether additional port related land uses in certain areas with identified historic resources would enhance the opportunity to the reuse vacant or underutilized historic resources.³

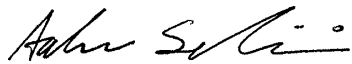
² Roger Vincent, “Ocean technology hub AltaSea blooms on San Pedro waterfront,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 27, 2024, <https://www.latimes.com/business/story/2024-05-27/ocean-technology-hub-altasea-set-to-open-on-san-pedro-waterfront>.

³ Port of Los Angeles, Port Master Plan, 2018, Section 3.2.5.



We hope to work with the Port, the Harbor Commission, the Terminal Islanders and other interested stakeholders on alternative visions that will preserve these last remaining historic buildings, and amplify the history of the Japanese American Fishing Village while enhancing Terminal Island. Please do not hesitate to call me at (213) 430-4203 or email me at asalimian@laconservancy.org.

Sincerely,



Andrew Salimian
Director of Advocacy

cc:

Mr. Ken Bernstein, Office of Historic Resources
Ms. Chris Morris, National Trust for Historic Preservation
Councilmember Tim McOsker
Tim Yamamoto
Derek Nakamura
Donna Reiko Cottrell, Terminal Islander Association
Dillon Clark, Central San Pedro Neighborhood Council
Huy Pham, Asian & Pacific Islander Americans in Historic Preservation

