

Stop the Steam Plant Demolition

We are a group of Roosevelt Island residents in partnership with the [Architectural Community Alliance of Roosevelt Island](#) (ArchRICA) calling for an immediate stop to what we believe is an unsafe and unjustified demolition of the old steam plant at 5 East Main Street.

We are preparing a legal challenge to protect the community from environmental hazards and fight for development that serves the greater need for affordable housing, schools, and public space.

Our campaign is based on three key concerns:

TOXIC EXPOSURE: Our Health Can't Wait

The Steam Plant is an industrial site with a strong likelihood of being contaminated with a long list of toxins. Demolition is happening right now without the environmental transparency required by law. We believe demolition is releasing hazardous substances into the air we breathe with long-term health risks.

- **Real Risks:** Exposure to industrial toxins is linked to cancer, respiratory disease, neurological issues, and childhood developmental delays.
- **The Bottom Line:** Our health must come before a developer's timeline. We demand full disclosure of what's on that site and a total halt until safety is guaranteed.

FALSE EMERGENCY: Power Grab in Plain Sight

The City let the building fall into disrepair, then labeled superficial damage a structural emergency to justify demolition, bypassing the public input and environmental reviews usually required for a project of this scale. This is known as "demolition by neglect" and courts don't allow it. Plus, the facts and timeline undermine claims of a public safety emergency.

- **Policy of Neglect:** Starting in January 2023, after a wave of complaints of unclear origin, the New York City Department of Buildings (DOB) ordered routine facade repairs. The New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), which oversees the building, failed to act for 18 months on these requests with no apparent explanation.
- **No Proof of Collapse:** In July 2024, DOB abruptly ordered full demolition, an extreme action reserved for buildings in danger of imminent collapse. To date, the mandatory structural report justifying this "emergency" has not been disclosed to residents, elected

officials, or the press. The building appears to be structurally sound, with a durable industrial skeleton unlikely to fail absent catastrophic events such as fire or earthquake.

- **The 18-Month “Emergency”:** Even after declaring a life or death emergency, HPD waited another 18 months — until December 2025 — to file for a demolition permit, undermining its own claim of urgency. If the building were truly a life-and-death risk, why did HPD wait 18 months — from July 2024 to December 2025 — to even file for a permit?
- **Undisclosed Development Plans:** Notably, in November 2025, NY Gov. Kathy Hochul and former NYC Mayor Eric Adams [announced plans to redevelop](#) the steam plant site following demolition, suggesting this is about undisclosed redevelopment plans made behind closed doors and not a public emergency.
- **Promises of Community Input:** We want [RIOC and other state and city stakeholders to follow through on pledges to involve the community every step of the way](#).
- **The Bottom Line:** This isn't an emergency; it's an end-run around the law to clear the way for undisclosed redevelopment plans made without necessary public input of environmental cleaning.



WASTED POTENTIAL: Reuse, Don't Destroy

The law requires the City to look at Adaptive Reuse — repurposing the building before deciding to demolish. Industrial structures like the steam plant are routinely turned into vibrant, safe community hubs across the country.

- **A Better Future:** Once cleaned, this historic structure could support the Mamdani administration's plans for affordable housing, universal child care and education, and city-run grocery stores, or desperately needed services and amenities, such as banks and health care offices.
- **Taxpayer Common Sense:** Why spend millions of tax dollars to demolish a sound building just to spend millions more later to build a new one?
- **The Bottom Line:** We should be investing in Roosevelt Island's future, not filling landfills with our history.

What You Can Do To Help

1. Spread the Word

- Attend a town hall on April 15 at 6 p.m. at Good Shepherd Chapel
- Donate to our fundraiser for legal support: <https://gofund.me/48d22cd4d>
- Sign the petition to stop the demolition: <https://c.org/LHjhVhDKjP>

- Read more about the issues at <https://archrica.org/roosevelt-island-steam-plant/>
- Share this document with your neighbors on community boards and social media and ask us questions! info@archrica.org

2. Document Everything: Take photos and videos

- The demolition site (from public areas)
- Any visible dust, debris, or emissions
- Truck traffic through residential streets
- Condition of fencing and safety barriers
- Any contamination or runoff on streets
- The proximity to the daycare, sports center, and residential buildings
- **Date and time-stamp everything.** Save it. Share it with the ArchRI: info@archrica.org

3. File Complaints

- **311:** Report unsafe construction conditions, nuisances, or air quality concerns
- **DEC:** Call 1-844-332-3267 to report concerns of environmental contamination
- **EPA Region 2:** Call (877) 251-4575 to report asbestos concerns at the demolition site

4. Contact Your Elected Officials

- Mayor Zohran Mamdani: <https://www.nyc.gov/mayors-office/contact-the-mayor>
- HPD Demolition Mailbox: ridemolition@hpd.nyc.gov
- HPD Commissioner Dina Levy: Dina.Levy@ag.ny.gov
- City Council Speaker Julie Menin: SpeakerMenin@council.nyc.gov
- Assembly Member Rebecca Seawright: SeawrightR@nyassembly.gov
- Sen. Liz Krueger: tannen@nysenate.gov
- Congressman Jerry Nadler: <https://nadler.house.gov/contact/>
- Gov. Kathy Hochul: <https://www.governor.ny.gov/content/governor-contact-form>

Tell them you support the legal action and ask them to:

- Request a City Council oversight hearing
- Direct HPD to stop demolition
- Demand the structural report from DOB
- Ask if HUD conducted a federal environmental review