

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Preservation New Jersey (PNJ), the statewide, grassroots historic preservation advocacy and education organization, today congratulated the New Jersey Historic Sites Council (HSC) for its vote yesterday to protect from demolition Camden's historic Sears building. The Sears Building is listed in the National and New Jersey Registers of Historic Places.



The HSC found that the applicants - Campbell's Soup Co, the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA) and the Camden Redevelopment Agency - have not adequately explored the economic feasibility of rehabilitation of the 1928 landmark Sears building as part of the 90-acre redevelopment plan that Campbell's and the state are proposing. The Council also noted the applicants' failure to explore possible uses other than Class A office space. The HSC offered its help to the applicants to fully investigate other scenarios that would result in a successful redevelopment for Campbell's and the community while preserving the historic building on Camden's Admiral Wilson Boulevard. The Sears Building was included in PNJ's annual *10 Most Endangered Historic Sites in New Jersey* list in 2000.

PNJ also called on State Historic Preservation Officer and DEP Commissioner Lisa Jackson to uphold the carefully thought out recommendation of the Historic Sites Council. (The New Jersey Register law allows the DEP Commissioner to overrule the HSC's recommendation and approve demolition.)

As part of Campbell's development plan the New Jersey EDA has offered up to \$23 million in subsidies for the \$90 million redevelopment project, which would result in a suburban-style office park that would include the Campbell's corporate headquarters and areas for other office development. Preservation New Jersey has criticized the NJEDA and other parties in the project for describing the Sears building as "an impediment to development" and calling for its demolition long before any efforts were made to explore the feasibility of its preservation and its incorporation into the larger redevelopment. The present Campbell's plan calls for the landmark to be replaced with a paved parking lot for the office park.

In testimony before the Historic Sites Council yesterday, Ron Emrich, PNJ Executive Director, pointed to the application's failure to explore historic preservation easements, New Market Tax Credits and other financial incentives available to designated historic buildings like the Camden landmark. Also noted by the PNJ Director is the failure of the State of New Jersey to enact a state historic preservation tax credit - already available

in 29 states - that would assist in financing the preservation and rehabilitation of historic commercial and residential buildings, including the Sears edifice.

The Historic Sites Council's resolution recommending denial of the demolition noted that there is an alternative proposal for rehabilitation and re-use of the Sears structure from an



international clothing design company that currently employs at-risk youth in Camden and is seeking to expand its operations to the historic Sears building.

Preservation New Jersey, founded in 1978, has more than 1,000 organizational and individual members across the state. The organization advocates for and promotes

historic preservation to protect and enhance the vitality and heritage of New Jersey's richly diverse communities. It is the only statewide, membership-based organization that works to protect unique, historic "someplaces" from becoming "anyplace."

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Preservation New Jersey is your lifeline to those special places you want to live in today and remember tomorrow. Preservation NJ is the only statewide, membership-based organization that works to protect unique, historic "someplaces" from becoming "anyplace." We rely on our membership to help us carry on our programs and assistance and we would value YOU as a member. Please go to our website at www.preservationnj.org for membership information.