



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Sean M. Ryan

## Senator Sean Ryan, Assemblymember Jon Rivera, Councilmember Mitch Nowakowski Urge CEO Of Archer Daniels Midland To Visit Buffalo

SEAN M. RYAN February 16, 2022

| ISSUE: **NYS SENATOR SEAN RYAN, NYS SENATE DISTRICT 60, HISTORIC PRESERVATION**



**SENATOR SEAN RYAN, ASSEMBLYMEMBER JON RIVERA, COUNCILMEMBER MITCH NOWAKOWSKI URGE CEO OF ARCHER DANIELS MIDLAND TO VISIT BUFFALO**

*Legislators, Preservationists, and Developers Team Up to Urge Owner of Great Northern Grain Elevator to Consider Its Historical Significance*

**BUFFALO** – Today, February 16, 2022, New York State Senator Sean Ryan, Assemblymember Jon Rivera, Buffalo Common Councilmember Mitch Nowakowski, and a collection of local stakeholders sent a letter to Juan R. Luciano, CEO of Archer Daniels Midland (ADM), urging him to come to Buffalo and engage in discussions regarding the Great Northern Grain Elevator on Ganson Street.

A December windstorm damaged the Great Northern's outer brick wall, leaving a hole in the northern end of the building. Citing safety concerns, building owner ADM applied for an emergency demolition permit, which was later granted by the City of Buffalo. The city did not consult an independent structural engineer before granting ADM the demolition permit, instead relying on the assessment made by the building owner's own engineer. The legislators, preservationists, and developers contend that the damage does not pose any immediate danger, as evidenced by the fact that the building has not sustained further damage during the intervening months.

Built in 1897, the Great Northern is believed to be the last grain elevator of its kind in the United States. ADM purchased the building in 1993, three years after it was designated a local landmark. ADM has previously received conditional approval for demolition from Buffalo's Preservation Board on multiple occasions, but in each case eventually declined to comply with the conditions. The emergency demolition permit granted after the recent damage has allowed ADM to bypass the Preservation Board.

**Senator Sean Ryan** said, "Time and time again, Buffalo has lost elements of our city's cultural history to demolition by outsiders who did not recognize the historical significance of the buildings they had purchased. As the steward of the last remaining grain elevator of its kind anywhere in the United States, the least ADM could do is make a genuine effort to understand the case for its preservation."

**Assemblymember Jon D. Rivera** said, “The Great Northern represents an era of Buffalo in which the city stood at the forefront of the East Coast’s progress and economic vitality. Buffalo’s industrial architectural heritage now sets Western New York apart from other cities of comparable size. As stakeholders and elected leaders, we need to be more adamant in conserving Buffalo’s unique history, and we welcome the opportunity to discuss with ADM and all other involved parties the significance of the structure and the importance of its preservation.”

**Buffalo Common Councilmember Mitch Nowakowski** said, “ADM has a responsibility to come to the table to discuss options for the future of the Great Northern Grain Elevator. This structure is more than just another building in Buffalo - and it was built to last. While it represents the greatness of Buffalo’s past, I believe it can also be a monument to the greatness of Buffalo’s future.”

**Jessie Fisher, Executive Director of Preservation Buffalo Niagara**, said, “Grain Elevators were invented in Buffalo as the most utilitarian of buildings, and went on to influence the European Modernists and thus the entire architectural avant garde. Our collection of grain elevators symbolizes Buffalo every bit as much as the Sears Tower symbolizes Chicago or the Empire State Building symbolizes New York City or Notre Dame symbolizes Paris. Great cities understand the value of their heritage, and Buffalo deserves to keep its place on the world stage of architecture.”

**Jay DiLorenzo, President of Preservation League of NYS**, said, “For the sake of our climate and our history, we cannot continue to demolish buildings and cart them off to the landfill if there is an opportunity to reuse them. The wasted energy that would be expended removing a building of this size should not be acceptable. We stand ready with our colleagues to work with ADM on a more forward-looking solution.”

**A copy of the letter appears below:**

February 16, 2022

Juan R. Luciano  
Chairman, President & Chief Executive Officer  
Archer Daniels Midland  
77 West Wacker Drive, Suite 4600  
Chicago, Illinois 60601

Dear Mr. Luciano:

We write today regarding ADM's attempts to demolish the Great Northern Grain Elevator in Buffalo, New York. We are confident that the recent wind damage to the Great Northern's exterior brick wall does not portend the building's imminent collapse. Additionally, despite your company's assertions, we do not believe that the damage poses any immediate danger. We therefore are strongly opposed to destroying this historic building. As such, we would like to formally invite you to join us in Buffalo to discuss the prospect of preserving this important part of Buffalo's history.

Grain elevators were invented in Buffalo in the 1840s and the grain industry helped Buffalo grow into one of the preeminent cities in the United States at the turn of the century. Their role in our city's rise to prominence make them an indelible part of Buffalo's heritage. The Great Northern, built in 1897, is the last grain elevator of its kind still standing in North America and the oldest remaining elevator in Buffalo's Grain Silo District. Given its place in Buffalo's history, the demolition of the Great Northern would represent the destruction of an important part of who we are as a community.

When ADM purchased the Great Northern in 1993, it had already been designated a local landmark in Buffalo. In three decades of stewardship of this integral piece of Buffalo's history, ADM has allowed the building to fall into disrepair. Coupled with the company's repeated requests to demolish the structure, this fact seems to suggest that ADM has been waiting for an opportunity to make a case for emergency demolition in order to bypass the city's Preservation Board. It is critical that the Great Northern does not become the latest piece of our city's cultural history lost to demolition because an owner does not recognize – or does not care about – the significance of the building they purchased. We know that the Great Northern can be repaired and rehabilitated. Now, we urge you to consider its history and what it represents to our community, and explore the options that would keep it standing, whether or not ADM considers the building part of its future. Surely, a solution exists that would be amenable to both ADM and those who seek to prevent the building's destruction.

We are eager to help you better understand the case for preserving this local landmark, and hope that you will consider our request for a meeting here in Buffalo. Thank you for your attention to this important matter; we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Sean M. Ryan

New York State Senator, District 60

Jonathan D. Rivera

New York State Assemblymember, District 149

Mitch Nowakowski

Buffalo City Council - Fillmore District

Jessie Fisher

Executive Director, Preservation Buffalo Niagara

Jay DiLorenzo

President, Preservation League of NYS

Douglas Jemal

President, Douglas Development

Rocco Termini

President, Signature Development

Paul Ciminelli

President and CEO, Ciminelli Real Estate Corporation

Beth Tauke

Associate Professor – Architecture

School of Architecture and Planning, University at Buffalo

Lynda Schneekloth

Professor Emerita

School of Architecture and Planning, University at Buffalo

Kerry L. Traynor

Clinical Assistant Professor

School of Architecture and Planning, University at Buffalo

Gregory Delaney

Clinical Assistant Professor

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