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Fiscal Crisis Saves City Landmark

By ROBERTA J. GRATZ

A Lower Manhattan landmark is no longer in immediate danger of demolition — saved, in effect, by the city's fiscal crisis.

Pier A, the 1886 fireboat station at the foot of Manhattan's West Side, had been scheduled since 1970 for demolition by Battery Park City and a new fireboat facility was to be built in the Red Hook section of Brooklyn. But now there are no funds for the new structure and the Fire Dept. has agreed that the move is not critical — at least for a couple of years.

"We are abandoning for now our plans to relocate and will study interim and long term improvements of Pier A," says Thomas J. Rush Jr., chief of the department's Marine Division. "The new site," he added, "would have been better because it's in the midst of the heavy Brooklyn port activity but this site is still workable."

The simple two-story gray structure with its green roof and arched windows rests at the northwest corner of Battery Park, a visual gateway to the city.

For many years it was a police station from which boats departed to welcome distinguished visitors from Charles Lindbergh to Queen Marie of Romania. It remains the headquarters of the Fire Dept.'s Marine Division and other fire services.

The decision to continue this function was made recently following a meeting called by the Office of Lower Manhattan Planning with representatives of the Fire Dept., the Budget Bureau and Ports and Terminals. Although it is no guarantee of permanence, the decision all but assures the pier's future.

The Landmarks Commission is scheduled to consider designating the structure the city's oldest functioning covered pier a municipal landmark in January.