

This is the second in a series of updates about the Star of Hope Foundation, which was established by the artist Robert Indiana prior to his death. The purpose of the Foundation is to support arts education and working artists in Maine.

Real Estate Holdings, Part One

Last week, we provided you with an overview of the updates we will be providing in coming weeks. This week we want to let you know the fate of the “Sail Loft” at 3 Clamshell Alley.

It is by far in the worst condition of any of the Foundation’s buildings. It is unsafe, perilously close to the harbor and prone to flooding; in the recent major storm, there were two feet of water inside the building.

Professional engineers that have thoroughly assessed the building have determined that sill beams are rotten and some of the first-floor framing members are broken, the stone foundations are vulnerable to shifting or failure, water infiltration has caused severe deterioration of structural members, and the entire building is significantly out of plumb.

All of these conditions will only worsen over time. As our contractor, Casey Leonard of Rockport Building Partners, who has worked on lots of old buildings, recently told us: *Sometimes they’re just too far gone. Unfortunately, that’s the situation with the Sail Loft, and it needs to come down.*

Apparently, Vinalhaven’s code enforcement officer agrees; she recently issued a letter condemning the building. Therefore, we have made the difficult decision to raze it in the near future.

We recognize that the Sail Loft has been part of Vinalhaven for a long time and that island residents have a strong attachment to it. We don’t take this decision lightly but given the condition of the building and the reality of rising sea levels, we have no choice.

The sign on the building will be preserved and the Foundation is committed to ensuring that the land upon which the Sail Loft now sits will continue to be part of Vinalhaven’s working waterfront and will remain accessible as a public green space.

With community input, we will work collaboratively on the design of the green space, including salvaging portions of the foundation to ensure the history of the Sail Loft remains ever-present, and we will continue to honor leases with those who use the property to access their boats and gear.

We appreciate your understanding of this difficult decision, and we look forward to sharing the Foundation’s plans for the site in the months ahead.