Re EPC meeting g, 17 February 2021
List of Historical Resources – Nomination of Monarch Life Building, 333 Broadway
Main Floor Lobby / Interior Design -Potential Heritage Designation

The Winnipeg Architecture Foundation wishes to state strong support for the recommendation of the Historic Building Committee concerning the heritage designation of the exterior and main floor lobby of 333 Broadway. Designed by the prominent architectural firm Smith Carter Searle (now Architecture 49), the building was both highly innovative and luxurious when it opened.

Based on our research and familiarity with mid-century modern buildings in Manitoba, it is our opinion that 333 Broadway (the former Monarch Life Insurance building) is the best example of mid-century modern office design remaining in Manitoba and likely Western Canada.

Its exterior, the plaza and the interior public spaces are largely unaltered. When constructed, the highest quality of materials available were used and there was a stated intent to create a modern showcase for design and functionality.

The 18 feet high continuous luminous ceiling over a single large open area was once a common characteristic of large and important commercial and public spaces across Canada. The only other significant example in Winnipeg

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was at the now-demolished Winnipeg International Airport terminal.

333 Broadway's design is based upon a 5'-8" x 5'-8" planning module which was determined by the designers, Smith Carter Searle (now Architecture 49) to be the most suitable for Monarch Life's office needs. This planning module informs the entire design of the building from exterior to interior.

At the ground floor level, the 5'-8" module extends completely across the site and through the building. Major design elements that align to this grid include:

- the exterior exposed aggregate concrete plaza 'pavers', planters and steps;
- the granite columns;
- the ground floor window wall;
- the interior elevator / stair core and partitioning;
- the terrazzo floor 'panels'; and
- the continuous luminous ceiling.

The result is a transparent design which allows passers-by to see into the building and recognise the repeating grid in the windows, doors, floors and lighting.

The planning grid also extends through all upper office floors including the exterior walls and windows, interior partitions, and ceiling layout.

The uniform white of the ground floor luminous ceiling is consistent with the building's simple colour palette of neutral colours - stainless steel, granite, off-white vinyl and plaster wall coverings, black terrazzo floor, black leather and chrome furnishings.

To our knowledge, the ground floor contains the only remaining luminous ceiling installation in Winnipeg and one of the few remaining in Canada. The luminous ceiling's single uniform plane is a significant unifying element in the continuous open expanse of space that is the ground floor lobby.

In 2013, 333 Broadway was the first winner of the Ecclesiastical Insurance/National Trust of Canada national award for Adaptive Reuse, recognizing its importance as a modernist landmark.

I would encourage the Committee to also recognize the architectural and historical importance of the building through designation of the exterior and main floor, as recommended. It is important that we commemorate and protect buildings from a range of time periods. Modernist heritage is as important as Victorian in contributing to our understanding of the city's history. The City of Winnipeg opened the door to modernist heritage with the designation of the St. Vital Library and the Civic Complex. We would ask that you continue with the designation of this very significant commercial building.

Thank you.

Submitted by Susan Algie, Executive Director,
Winnipeg Architecture Foundation
14 February 2021

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Former Monarch Life, now WCB, designed by Smith Carter Searle Architects (now Architecture 49)



Winnipeg International Airport (demolished) designed by GBR And Associates