11 February, 2022

Members of the Executive Policy Committee

This brief note is to encourage you to grant Historical Designation to 227 Provencher boulevard, the old St. Boniface Police/Law Courts building part of the Civic Complex designed by Étienne Gaboury.

227 & 233 Provencher form a unified complex
Historical designation has already been given to 233 Provencher boulevard, the old Health Centre now the offices of the Festival du Voyageur.
These two buildings have the same architectural design, but are not stand alone, they form a complex. Preserving one does not mean the other is expendable. It would be an amputation.

Private vs Public buildings
Granted, 233 Provencher is a City property, while 227 is in private hands. However, many private buildings in Winnipeg have been awarded a historical designation nonetheless. In this case, it would be absurd that historical designation would not be extended to 227 Provencher which is actually the showcase component of the complex.

Dr. Fréchette's commitment to preservation
The historical consideration should seriously be entertained in light of the fact that the present owner reiterated that he loved the building and did not want to modify its exterior structure in any way. He has said so as far back as 2012 when he acquired the building, as per a Winnipeg Services Administrative report provided to EPC on 5 December 2012: "*Drs. Marc and Sharon Frechette intend to preserve the building without modifying the historic architecture that is the land and building at 227 Provencher Boulevard for the benefit and appreciation of the local residents of St. Boniface.*"

In light of his high regard for the building, Dr. Fréchette believes the historical designation to be redundant, but only the designation would protect the building from a change of heart, a change of plan, sale or transfer to another party whose historical and architectural appreciation would not be as noteworthy as the good doctor's.

Real costs

One of the main arguments brought forward against designation is the added cost of retrofitting and the time delays occasioned by the necessary permits.

It should be noted that most of the costs of retrofitting would be incurred regardless of wether or not the building receives historical designation. The St.Boniface community and Les ami.e.s du carré civique have indicated they will assist the owner, Dr. Fréchette, in every manner possible to fast track the opening of his clinic.

Urgency
One should be reminded however that the present urgency is entirely of the doctor's making, the building has, under his ownership, remained vacant for 10 years.

Future development
Neither should future hypothetical development by Manitoba Possible, as worthy as it is, be a ghost looming over the decision before you. There is not yet a shovel in the ground or a feasible plan for the development of the available property acquired by Manitoba Possible.

Pact between the City of St. Boniface and the City of Winnipeg
A positive decision regarding historical designation for 227 Provencher boulevard would effectively render the whole complex (the old city hall and fire station, the two part Gaboury designed Civic complex, and sculpture garden) what it was and should be : a historical, civic and cultural complex representing the City of Saint-Boniface and its community, and a symbolical statement of its joining the City of Winnipeg.

I appreciate your attention in this matter.



With respect,

J. Roger Léveillé, O.C.