Delegation presentation by Alex Keim, Director of La Maison des artistes and Les Amis des arts visuels de Manitoba—*the Friends of the Sculpture Garden*

Agenda – Council – February 24, 2022

Report 'A' – Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development, Heritage and Downtown Development – January 17, 2022

Item No. 1 List of Historical Resources – Nomination of St. Boniface Police Station/Jail/County Courthouse, 227 Provencher Boulevard

We are submitting the following documents *in support of the Historical Nomination of St. Boniface Police Station/Jail/County Courthouse, 227 Provencher Boulevard.*

As Executive Director of La Maison Art Gallery as well as Les Amis des arts visuels de Manitoba (the Foundation which oversees the Sculpture Garden) I manage the funding activities and the installations of 'Le Jardin de Sculptures'—the Sculpture Garden. Both legal entities are longstanding and reputable tenants of Winnipeg Property Management and call the St. Boniface Civic Square: HOME.

Exactly one year ago we were in front of this same council expressing our concerns vis-à-vis the proposed schematics for the sale and development of land around the garden and the impact that would have on the Sculpture Garden and Historical Town Hall. The Projects as (then) presented posed a real danger to the existing buildings, sculpture installations and public green space with the suggestion of multiple high density high-rise buildings that could dwarf the historical St. Boniface Town Hall and encroach onto the existing mature landscape.

Today, we are back again representing the interests of the community and the question of historical protection of the Police Station/Jail/County Courthouse presently owned by Dr. Frechette. This is clearly a heritage site that is dear to not only St. Boniface, but emblematic of La Francophonie in Manitoba.

Attached to today's Council Meeting Agenda is a Synopsis document compiled by Researcher: M. Peterson for the City of Winnipeg Historical Buildings Committee, Peterson states *"This building embodies the following heritage values as described in the Historical Resources By-law, 55/2014 (consolidated update July 13, 2016)"*, Peterson goes on to say that the building in question is representative of the community and associated with the growth of Saint Boniface, an excellent example of brutalist architecture designed by internationally-renowned modernist architect Étienne Gaboury. Peterson continues by highlighting the small amount of exterior and interior

alterations that make this building a rare gem, ***one of only a handful architectural examples of this type of architecture left in Winnipeg***. Étienne Gaboury has been described by the *Winnipeg Architecture Foundation* as the "father of landmarks," "an architect as an artist," and "Manitoba's greatest architect."

The entire Civic Square is a location that speaks to the deep roots of Franco Manitoban and the Metis history of this territory, as well as to the progress that has been made socially, culturally, and artistically in our great City of Winnipeg. *—COMMUNITIES* that add immeasurable value both culturally and economically to the fabric of Winnipeg and the Province of Manitoba. Keeping in mind that the site of the Civic Square including the Sculpture Garden is in the heart of a unique Winnipeg French Quarter, in a highly visible and heavy traffic area on Provencher Boulevard, and on well-known historical and cultural corridors. The location of the Sculpture Garden pulls in a substantial number of tourists and visitors every year (2431 visitors passed through Riel Tourism offices pre pandemic in 2019-2020; these visitors would have also visited the garden. This number does not include gallery visitors and public events held in the garden).

The vision of the Sculpture Garden—started 25 years ago—is a strong and very visible example of a successful private and public partnership between the ***Les Amis Foundation which has invested over 1.2M$ and is Custodian of the grounds***, and the City of Winnipeg (as Landlord) and with the support of Provincial and Federal governments.

Discussions between La Maison and the Frechette family, before Realtors or Developers were involved at the beginning of 2020, proved to be positive with many integrated and community minded designs presented by Nicolas Frechette to develop the old police station into a francophone business center and health facility all the while respecting the envelope of the building. We have always been willing and open to working with our neighbours and the City of Winnipeg.

There remain many issues to address, which I have included in the information attached to today's presentation and which were a part of Alain Laurencelle's presentation to the EPC on February 17th. (ANNEX A-1)

Briefly among them are:

-Garden access;

-Property lines that are to date vague and unclear, the Historical Nomination itself does not state clearly where property lines are located on the South side of the Police Station between the building and Garden, defining the limitation as the 'South side that faces onto the adjacent property with an open courtyard site';

-access to utilities and accessibility ramps and parking to the historical City Hall adjacent to the Police Station and Fire Hall;
-existing garden structures and current plans for future sculpture installations.

The prospect of significant changes should the buildings surrounding the Gardens not be protected will have serious impact on an established mature green space that is unique to the prairies and to Winnipeg. Finally, in his September 2021 letter to the Standing Policy Committee of Property and Development, University of Manitoba Art History, ***Professor Oliver Botar, made the following observations: "the Sculpture Garden matches, and successfully repurposes, the historical and architectural quality of the civic square facing Provencher Boulevard. Removing or altering any part of it (the complex) would irrevocably damage the urban fabric of its surroundings".***

With respect to all parties with skin in the game, we strongly believe that a historical designation and the protection of all buildings surrounding the Sculpture Garden, protecting external elevations and interior architectural references will not impede positive changes and future goals for all involved. ***Together, the Saint Boniface Civic Square could be a shining example of industry and not-for profits working together to create something extraordinary and dynamic with community interests at the forefront.***

We support the January 17th, 2022, Nomination of St. Boniface Police Station/Jail/County Courthouse, 227 Provencher Boulevard be added to the List of Historical Resources.

Thank you again / Merci/ Miigwetch.
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