



P.O. Box 3336, Vancouver, BC, V6B 3Y3, (604) 254-9411

Gerry McGeough, Senior Heritage Planner
Heritage Group, Community Services
City of Vancouver
453 West 12th Avenue
Vancouver, BC V5Y 1V4

August 30, 2004

Dear Mr. McGeough

Re: DE 408504; 2851 Heather St. – former VGH Nurses Residence

We wish to express our concern regarding this proposed development. The Nurse's Residence was designed by Townley & Matheson, pioneers of modern architecture in Vancouver, and the architects of City Hall (1936). This building is ranked in the 'B' evaluation category on the City's Recent Landmarks List, and is therefore eligible for inclusion on the Vancouver Heritage Register. This is a prime candidate for Register status, which would enable it to qualify for incentives offered other listed sites. As a further incentive, the VGH (CD-1) rezoning permits greater floor space in a development retaining the existing building.

Overall Design

Built in phases between 1949 and 1951, this landmark building is one of the City's most significant examples of Streamline Moderne, a key transitional style linking Art Deco and Modernism. Emphasizing the streamlined forms of twentieth century technology, the building features curvilinear surfaces and horizontal shadow-banding suggesting speed and movement. The main elevation features an undulating, butterfly-shaped podium flanking the principal entry.

The Nurse's Residence was conceived in its entirety as a 'U'-shaped complex formed by a central block flanking Heather, with north and south wings flanking 12th and 13th Avenues respectively. This composition frames a landscaped courtyard and pavilion lounge. We believe that token retention of the central block façade does not nearly recognize the heritage significance of this landmark modern building, would result in the loss of an important modern interior (see below), and should not benefit from additional floor space. However, given the possible application of heritage incentives, including floor space, we urge City staff to work with the developer toward solutions for adaptive re-use of the entire complex.

Interior Design

The interior ground floor common areas are among the most fully realized and well-preserved examples of early modern interior design in this city and must be retained as a condition of development approval. If necessary, the significant interiors should be protected through formal designation. The entrance foyer ceiling is finished in gold leaf, and the lobby areas are detailed in wood paneling, chrome ribbon fascia, and rippled glass. Ground floor interior doorways are richly embellished with projecting geometric shapes, and period indirect lighting is used throughout. We suggest that the interior ground floor spaces, including the pavilion lounge, would be an asset, not detriment, to a residential conversion.

Modern architecture is now recognized as a valuable and threatened heritage resource. Because the treatment of this important Recent Landmark will set the standard of conservation for modern architecture throughout the City, all efforts must be made to save this significant early example in its entirety.

Sincerely,

Board of Directors, Heritage Vancouver

cc. Richard Keate, Vancouver Heritage Commission
Director of Planning, c/o Rick Michaels, Development Services