



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

March 22, 2005

Mayor Larry Campbell and Council
Vancouver City Hall
453 W. 12th Avenue
Vancouver, BC V5Y 1V4

Dear Mayor Campbell,

Re: Evergreen Building, 1285 W. Pender Street

Heritage Vancouver is deeply concerned about the future of the above-noted landmark. We feel this building has cultural and architectural value to the city of Vancouver, and represents an outstanding example of the work of pre-eminent local architect Arthur Erickson. It was added to our Top Ten Endangered List this year based on the heightened risk it has been put under this past year.

Erickson designed the Evergreen Building as a mixed-use project for owner John Laxton. Primarily an office building, the Evergreen also has a residential component. In 2004, Laxton decided to convert the entire building to residential. As the economics of conversion required adding four storeys, Laxton retained Erickson to address compatibility with the original design. Erickson designed a light, 4-storey, glass and steel box — intended to resemble a lantern — on the roof of the existing building. This proposal was supported by the Heritage Commission, City staff and Council, but denied by the Development Permit Board, leaving Laxton with the impression that demolition is an easier solution than preservation. We understand that a development proposal for a new high-rise tower is forthcoming. This would, of course, involve demolition of the existing structure.

Completed in 1980, the building did not meet the 20-year age requirement of the 1990 Recent Landmarks Inventory, but it does now, which demands a re-examination of this outdated document. Current development pressures should not overshadow the legacy that this building will have for future generations. City of Vancouver staff stated in September 2004 that the building "has heritage merit as a very good example of contemporary architecture and as an early example of Arthur Erickson's terrace building typology."

City Council must act now to overturn the decision of the Development Board, to prevent demolition of this valuable piece of our architectural and cultural heritage. Following this, the City should negotiate with Mr. Laxton inclusion of the Evergreen Building in Vancouver's Heritage Register in recognition of its heritage value. Inclusion in the Register would provide some future protection and eligibility for heritage incentives.

While Heritage Vancouver would have preferred that the building to be left in its original state, we can support the addition of compatible storeys, if it means the preservation of this remarkable landmark. As the building was originally intended for partial residential use, we are not concerned about the current residential conversion, as the existing outdoor patio space would allow for minimal exterior alteration.

The Evergreen Building is a valuable part of Vancouver's modernist heritage. Buildings such as this explain a valuable aspect of Vancouver's history — a history no less important than a hundred years previous. Heritage Vancouver looks forward to a positive resolution to the adaptive reuse of this site, and to further discussion on updating the Heritage Register to include post-1970 sites.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "don luxton". The signature is fluid and cursive, ending with a long, sweeping flourish.

Donald Luxton, President
Heritage Vancouver

cc. Gerry McGeough, Senior Planner, Heritage Group
Richard Keate, Chair, Vancouver Heritage Commission
Larry Beasley, Director of Current Planning