

July 2, 2011

Mr. Rafael Leon, Chairman
Commission on Chicago Landmarks
Chicago Department of Housing and Economic Development
33 N. LaSalle St., Suite 1600
Chicago, IL 60602

Dear Chairman Leon:

I am writing in strong support of designating the former Prentice Women's Hospital as a Chicago landmark.

Without question this significant building deserves designation. It is not only of significance in the history of Chicago architecture, but is also of national and international importance.

Its architect, Bertrand Goldberg, is easily one of the most important Chicago architects of the twentieth century and is widely recognized as such. His work epitomizes an expressive modernism also seen in the late work of Frank Lloyd Wright and Eero Saarinen, and in the work of John Lautner and Bruce Goff, among others. His work is distinguished from theirs, however, by its structural daring and rational shaping of form. Together with these leading designers, Goldberg helped change the course of modern architecture, linking early modernism with the more complicated forms that characterize leading work of today. To lose this building would deal a very dark blow to the reputation of Chicago and to the history of American architecture.

Goldberg's pioneering exploration of reinforced concrete is of particular importance. The history of such structures cannot be fully understood without this example before us.

And make no mistake: even well-endowed universities claim financial hardship in efforts to defeat historic designation before it is awarded and the debate more fairly framed. I know this from having served more than ten years on the design review committee of Philadelphia's Landmark Preservation Commission, as a preservation consultant for some of those very universities, as former chair of graduate programs in historic preservation at both Columbia University and the University of Pennsylvania, and as an architectural historian.

Quite clearly the building fully meets criteria 4, 5, and 7: architectural style, work by a significant architect, and distinctive appearance. Much is at stake in protecting the future of this ground-breaking structure and in Chicago's maintaining its position as a leading repository of landmarked buildings.

Sincerely,

David G. De Long

Copies to: Mayor Rahm Emanuel
Ald. Brendan Reilly