

May 3, 2011

Alderman Brendan Reilly
Office of the 42nd Ward
325 W. Huron, Suite 510
Chicago IL, 60654



RE: Prentice Hospital

Dear Alderman Reilly:

The *International Scientific Committee on the Analysis and Restoration of Structures of Architectural Heritage (ISCARSAH)* was founded by the Paris-based International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) in 1996 as a forum and network for engineers involved in the restoration and care of the World's built heritage. Members of the ISCARSAH are internationally renowned engineers, architects, scientists, specialists, and educators with representation from Europe, Asia, Australia, North and South America. ISCARSAH has authored the *ICOMOS Charter - Principles for the Analysis, Conservation and Structural Restoration of Architectural Heritage* which was ratified in 2003.

It has come to our attention that Northwestern University in Chicago, USA recently announced plans to raze Prentice Hospital designed by Bertrand Goldberg and completed in 1975. The building has stood vacant since 2007, and Northwestern plans to develop a new research facility - the design of which has yet to be realized. In consequence, the building will be destroyed even though a replacement building has not yet been envisioned.

The 36-year-old concrete-and-glass building, which was designed by influential architect Bertrand Goldberg, is considered to be one of Chicago's most distinctive architectural designs from the 1970s. Although Goldberg's organic architectural designs – such as this one – were widely influential, sadly none of his major Chicago works are protected by Chicago landmark designation.

A recent reuse study commissioned by the Chicago-based preservation advocacy group, Landmarks Illinois, clearly demonstrates that the building is “viable ... for several types of new uses.” The study also reveals that reusing the Prentice Hospital structure rather than razing it for redevelopment would be the more sustainable approach.

Bertrand Goldberg was an architect and licensed engineer, and this made him a strong advocate of the alliance of architecture and technology. One touchstone of his work was innovation in the use of structure and materials, which is clearly exhibited in the design of Prentice Hospital.

Bertrand Goldberg was born in 1913 in Chicago and received his training in architecture and engineering from 1930 through 1936 at several institutions including Harvard University, the Bauhaus, and the Armour Institute of Technology (now Illinois Institute of Technology) in Chicago. He organized his own firm in Chicago in 1937.

He studied under Ludwig Mies van der Rohe who had made his way to Chicago from Germany in the late 1930s. Though Mies was a respected mentor for whom he provided translation in the famous meeting with Frank Lloyd Wright in Taliesin in 1937, Goldberg's later work rebelled against that of his former Professor with the adoption of curved forms in concrete rather than the stark right angles rendered in steel.

He collaborated with friend and fellow “design scientist” Buckminster Fuller, and eventually adopted the use of curved shell forms of reinforced concrete. His best-known commission which revealed

these forms was the double tower, 60-story, Marina City completed in 1964 which exhibited a remarkable use of curved concrete shell forms for residential structures - a first for that era. After the success of Marina City, Goldberg received large commissions for hospitals and other public institutional buildings.

Prentice hospital is a prominent design by Goldberg, completed in 1975, which reveals a maturation by him of the concrete shell form. The exterior quatrefoil shell at Prentice was sprung from the square interior core making it the first cantilevered high rise shell. This in itself is a significant characteristic of the building. The 50 foot cantilever of each side eliminated the need for support columns thus allowing greater flexibility at the three-story building base. This complex structural form was made possible using the finite element method, an early use of the computer analytical techniques that is ubiquitous in today's offices.

The history of the development and technical achievements described above are just some of the many reasons that Prentice Hospital deserves to be landmarked, saved from the wrecking ball, and reused in a sustainable fashion that fits within today's paradigm. However, it is said that "no man is a prophet in his own land." Tragically Chicago has shown this aphorism to be spot-on with the stewardship of built heritage within its own borders. Today one must travel to St. Louis, Missouri or Buffalo, New York to experience the sublime skyscrapers of the great Louis Sullivan.

It is time for us to cherish this master work of one of Chicago's very own architect/engineers before all that is left are drawings and photographs while the real "manuscript" has been erased in the name of increased square footage.

Respectfully submitted,

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