



December 12, 2010

Ald. Brendan Reilly
42nd Ward Office
325 West Huron Street, Suite 150
Chicago, IL 60654

Re: Former Prentice Women's Hospital Landmark Designation

Dear Ald. Reilly:

The City of Chicago is home to an unrivaled collection of buildings representing the full spectrum of our country's nineteenth and twentieth century architectural heritage. These resources exist as significant elements of Chicago's rich and varied cultural legacy, and attract visitors to the city from throughout the world. The preservation and use of these resources is essential to ensuring Chicago's legacy as a stronghold of architectural design and history. To such an end, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks is instilled with the power to recommend buildings, structures, sites, and districts for legal protection as official Chicago landmarks. Unfortunately, one of Chicago's most iconic structures - the former Prentice Women's Hospital - has yet to be afforded such protection, leaving its fate uncertain. It is our understanding that Northwestern University intends to demolish the building when it takes ownership in the near future.

Designed by modernist architect Bertrand Goldberg (1913-1997), the former Prentice Women's Hospital is a highly visible structure that has influenced design not just in Chicago but also throughout the country. This organic, sculptural work represents a significant and distinct school of design and is an excellent example of Goldberg's architectural style. Born and raised in Chicago, Goldberg established his practice in 1937 and maintained a working office in the city for the next sixty years. While national and international firms designed many of Chicago's landmark buildings, Goldberg's work in the city gains additional significance for being the work of a native son.

As such, it is alarming to hear that the former Prentice Women's Hospital may be torn down. Not yet protected by local landmark status, the building is open to a number of adverse effects – the most likely being demolition, since Northwestern University has proposed constructing a new research and laboratory facility on the site. To lose such a building would leave a hole in Chicago's architectural fabric.

The significance of this work in relation to Chicago's architectural legacy is reflected in its inclusion on Landmark Illinois' *Ten Most Endangered Historic Places* list in 2009 and 2010. The Chicago Architecture Foundation offers tours dedicated to Goldberg's buildings throughout the city. The National Trust for Historic Preservation, DoCoMoMo/US, and the Society of Architectural Historians are all in favor of saving the building, and the enormous amount of public interest and concern about the building's future is indicative of the former Prentice Women's Hospital's contribution to Chicago's distinct and varied architectural legacy.

Architects today are often tasked with designing buildings that serve as recognizable symbols for their clients. In this instance, the iconic building already exists. If not granted landmark status, the former Prentice Women's Hospital may be demolished. If granted landmark status, the owner of the building will be encouraged to explore adaptive reuse of the existing structure. Such reuse serves three purposes:

1. It will ensure the preservation and continued use of this important building as part of Chicago's architectural heritage;
2. It will extend the building's useful life as an iconic symbol for a new enterprise,
3. It will promote the city's "green practice" of adaptive reuse, which saves both the embodied energy in the existing building and the additional energy required to produce materials for a new building.

The significance of the former Prentice Women's Hospital is unquestionable. As such, the building merits consideration for designation as an official Chicago landmark, to be protected under regulations set forth by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks. On behalf of the Recent Past Preservation Network, I urge you to move forward the recommendation that the former Prentice Women's Hospital be given consideration as a locally protected landmark, which will ensure its continued existence and promote responsible adaptive reuse of this significant and distinctive structure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D. Colman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Devin A. Colman, President
Recent Past Preservation Network

Cc: Brian Goeken, Deputy Commissioner, Historic Preservation Division, City of
Chicago
Rafael Leon, Chair, Commission on Chicago Landmarks
James Peters, Landmarks Illinois