



POSTWAR ARCHITECTURE TASK FORCE OF GREATER PHOENIX

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Dear Brian,

Thank you for the opportunity to meet and discuss your client's proposed plans for the Stewart Motor Company building (aka Circles building). We are all eager to see Phoenix grow into its next stage of urban density. We do believe there are ways for development to flourish in socially responsible models that do not involve such substantial alteration of the historic Stewart Motor Company building.

Many professionals versed in the language of historic preservation, including all of the undersigned, can agree that the Stewart Motor Company building qualifies as a historic property. As early as 1984, nearly 40 years after the building's construction, it was deemed significant to be included in the Phoenix Junior League's survey of Phoenix commercial properties. Its inclusion in the recent City of Phoenix published book, "Midcentury Marvels," is testament to the lasting impression that the Stewart Motor Company building remains relevant not only architecturally, but also as a symbol of early automotive history development in the urban core. In 2012 it was again identified by the Postwar Architecture Task Force of Greater Phoenix as one of the "Top 25 Commercial Properties" in all of Phoenix that not only deserved but also heartily qualified for protection.

As discussed on-site and around the table on January 26, it bears repeating to state that the proposed midrise structure renderings shared with us would permanently alter the building in a manner that would most likely disqualify it from a listing on both the National Register of Historic Places as well as the City of Phoenix Historic Register. It is our preference that the original footprint not be altered at all, and urge you and your client to consider alternatives which keep the building intact.

Once the original walls have been altered and absorbed by the new structure, a significant percentage of the original Stewart Motor Company footprint will be occupied by non-contributing, non-historic architecture that not only contrasts in construction and design but also contrasts dramatically in height. It is also quite possible that the Arizona Preservation Foundation would add the Stewart Motor Company building on its "Most Endangered Historic Places List" should the design plan continue to gut much of its physical presence and character.

While the offer to explore historic designation and therefore protection of the original rotunda after removal of the surrounding warehouse area and northern volume is well-meant, we do not foresee that it will be met with acceptance by historic preservation reviews at the local or state level due to substantial alteration of the existing structure and its context.

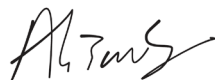
Next among our concerns is the potential use of GPLET benefits to destroy historic buildings. GPLET tax breaks are meant to encourage development that contributes to smart growth in Phoenix, including the protection of important historical and cultural places. Phoenix residents have voted to tax themselves (via a bond referendum) in order to encourage and support the preservation of historic places. To grant a tax break and facilitate the destruction of one of our most distinctive historic structures would be a betrayal to Phoenix voters and a blow to the historic preservation community.

It has been recently discussed as a matter of policy that destruction of properties that contribute to maintaining the original urban fabric and story of Phoenix not receive tax breaks, but in fact be subject to higher taxation or fines. While this policy has yet to become a reality, it reflects the consensus of several major preservation, planning, and development professionals eager for Phoenix to retain its character in this exciting time of growth in the post-recession era.

Lastly, if you do proceed with development of the property without GPLET assistance, we believe it would be wise to create a substantial visual break in the form of an architectural reveal (aka discernible negative space) between the new structure and historic structure. Similarly, setbacks on both Central Avenue and McKinley Street should be sufficient to allow pedestrians at street level to see and enjoy the remaining defining features of the Stewart Motor Company building without encroachment from the new construction. The building has always existed in absence of encroaching towers, and increased setbacks and the gesture of negative space will likely help getting your non-preservation design concept supported by the community.

Again, thank you for your kind offer of input. You could have easily proceeded without so much as an acknowledgment of the property's historic significance, and joining us at the table was an important gesture of your commitment to historic preservation. Let us continue this conversation to advise you in creating a design concept that supports your public image as an organization that cares about historic Phoenix and works with the community.

Sincerely yours,



Alison King
Postwar Architecture Task Force of Greater Phoenix

Bill Scheel, Chair
Phoenix Historic Preservation Commission

Jim McPherson
Arizona Preservation Foundation

cc:

The Honorable Greg Stanton, Mayor
The Honorable Michael Nowakowski, Councilmember
Michelle Dodds, City of Phoenix Historic Preservation Office
Kevin Weight, City of Phoenix Historic Preservation Office
Members, City of Phoenix Historic Preservation Commission
Members, Central City Village Planning Committee
James Garrison, State Historic Preservation Office
Matthew King, Modern Phoenix LLC
Sherry Rampy, Roosevelt Action Association
Donna Reiner, Postwar Architecture Task Force of Greater Phoenix
Jennifer Boucek, Preserve Phoenix