

ICOMOS

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON MONUMENTS AND SITES
CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES MONUMENTS ET DES SITES
CONSEJO INTERNACIONAL DE MONUMENTOS Y SITIOS
МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ СОВЕТ ПО ВОПРОСАМ ПАМЯТНИКОВ И ДОСТОПРИМЕЧАТЕЛЬНЫХ МЕСТ

Our Ref.: TP/GJ/8

Paris, 26 January 2023

Honorable James Kenney, Mayor
City of Philadelphia
City Hall, Office 215
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Subject: ICOMOS Heritage Alert – Philadelphia Police Headquarters (Roundhouse), Philadelphia, USA

Dear Sir,

The undersigned national and international historic preservation and conservation organizations express our serious concern for the uncertain future of the Philadelphia Police Administration Building (aka Roundhouse). The Roundhouse is of national and international significance as well as important to the architectural and social history of Philadelphia.

The design of the Roundhouse was shaped by the international experience of its architects, engineers, and contractors as well as their deep knowledge of and commitment to a positive future for Philadelphia's physical and social environment. Geddes, Brecher, Qualls and Cunningham's (GBQC) were awarded second place finish in the international Sydney Opera House competition and were recognized as the American Institute of Architect's national firm of the year. The Roundhouse is one of the most important works of the internationally recognized "Philadelphia School" of architects for its embrace of the school's three principles: engagement with its context, influence of social analysis and urban planning and treatment of the building as a complex machine.

The Roundhouse is a unique custom kit of parts, virtually all architectural precast concrete. Estonian engineer, August Komendant's daring structural design was state of the art in precast concrete internationally. Warren Cunningham's experience with concrete buildings and airbases in the UK and US, including the National Landmark Wright Brother's Visitor Center, and the use of the Dutch precasting system, Schokbeton, were essential to realizing the unique form and features of the Roundhouse. On its completion, the Roundhouse was publicized and celebrated nationally and internationally.

The Roundhouse retains its significant character defining features and is in sound structural and architectural condition based on cursory observations. Its open plan design is eminently adaptable for a variety of new uses.

The social history of the Roundhouse is internationally important as well. The unrealized intent for the Roundhouse was to improve Philadelphia's police/community relations by placing a visitor friendly and aesthetically welcoming police headquarters in the community and moving the police out of City Hall. Currently, international heritage organizations are focused on the preservation and interpretation of places of prejudice, abuse, conflict, and oppression that will inform current and future generations of past acts against equality, equity, and freedom. Acknowledging and presenting the too often brutal and biased policing history associated with the Roundhouse should be a meaningful component of the Roundhouse's preservation and reuse.

It is understood that the City intends to sell the Roundhouse building and site. Currently, the Roundhouse is not listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places or National Register of Historic Places. Further, there is currently no protection for its preservation, proper treatment, and long-term maintenance.

We, the undersigned, respectfully implore the City of Philadelphia to:

1. properly list the Roundhouse on the local and national register of historic places, not only an essential recognition of its importance but also a prerequisite for access to the state and national historic preservation tax credit programs that can meaningfully support private sector investment in its proper treatment;
2. place an easement and/or deed restrictions on the sale of the property that would protect the exterior character and significant interior features of the building; and
3. develop substantive criteria for the selection of a purchaser that will give meaningful credit to the purchaser's demonstrated intent, experience and creative approach to preserving and sensitively reusing the Roundhouse and to the creative and respectful development of the rear of the site.

Thank you for your consideration of the concerns and recommendations presented here. The undersigned organisations stand ready to assist in any way possible in the preservation and sensitive adaptive use of the Roundhouse for the benefit of future generations of Philadelphians and for the benefit of the heritage of the world.

Yours sincerely,



Teresa Patricio, President,
International Council on
Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)



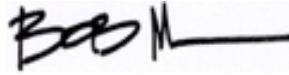
Jack Pyburn, FAIA, President,
ICOMOS International Scientific
Committee on 20th Century Heritage



Uta Pottgiesser, Chair,
Docomomo International



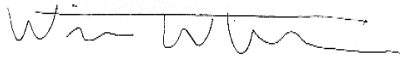
Douglas Comer, President,
US ICOMOS



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The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) is a non-governmental, not for profit international organisation, committed to furthering the conservation, protection, use and enhancement of the world's cultural heritage. With over 11,000 members, 100+ National Committees (including in the USA and Estonia), 30 International Scientific Committees (including its International Scientific Committee on 20th Century Heritage) and several Working Groups, ICOMOS has built a solid philosophical, doctrinal and managerial framework for the sustainable conservation of heritage around the world. As an official advisory body to the World Heritage Committee for the implementation of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, ICOMOS evaluates nominations and advises on the state of conservation of properties inscribed on the World Heritage List.

www.icomos.org

DOCOMOMO International is a non-profit organization dedicated to documentation and conservation of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the Modern Movement.

It aims to:

- Bring the significance of the architecture of the Modern Movement to the attention of the public, the authorities, the professionals and the educational community.
- Identify and promote the surveying of the works of the Modern Movement.
- Promote the conservation and (re)use of buildings and sites of the Modern Movement.
- Oppose destruction and disfigurement of significant works.
- Foster and disseminate the development of appropriate techniques and methods of conservation and adaptive (re)use.
- Attract funding for documentation conservation and (re)use.
- Explore and develop new ideas for the future of a sustainable built environment based on the past experiences of the Modern Movement.

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