

**Isfeld, Lori**

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**From:** s.22(1) Personal and Confidential  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 14, 2016 1:51 PM  
**To:** Public Hearing  
**Subject:** 4976-5010 Cambie St  
**Attachments:** herrington wong letter.docx

could you distribute this to mayor and council, for this eve hearing thanks \_\_\_\_\_ varouj gumuchian M.Arch  
s.22(1) Personal and Confidential

## Isfeld, Lori

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**From:** s.22(1) Personal and Confidential  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 14, 2016 2:41 PM  
**To:** Public Hearing  
**Subject:** Fwd: Milton Wong residence

this is Susan confirmation

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varouj gumuchian  
M.Arch

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----- Forwarded Message -----

**From:** s.22(1) Personal and Confidential  
**To:** s.22(1) Personal and Confidential  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 14, 2016 2:36:26 PM  
**Subject:** Re: Milton Wong residence

I'm about to leave for a meeting, thats fine with me please send it to them, thanks,susan

> On Jun 14, 2016, at 2:35 PM, s.22(1) Personal and Confidential wrote:  
>  
> the city needs your ok  
> one more can you forward to mayor and counsel, attached email so they  
> can distribute with your permission address 4976-5010 Cambie  
>  
> [publichearing@vancouver.ca](mailto:publichearing@vancouver.ca)  
>  
> \_\_\_\_\_  
> varouj gumuchian  
> M Arch  
> s.22(1) Personal and Confidential  
> Confidential  
>  
>

s.22(1) Personal and Confidential



14 June 2016

Dear Varouj Gumuchian and the Riley Park South Cambie visioning group,

I am a professor in UBC's School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture and the author of *Cornelia Hahn Oberlander: Making the Modern Landscape* (University of Virginia Press, 2013). I write to explain the significance of the Wong family house and garden at 5010 Cambie Street in Vancouver, which is featured in my book. The architecture was designed by the Chinese-Canadian architect, Harry Lee who worked at Duncan McNab's architecture firm. The landscape architecture was designed by Cornelia Hahn Oberlander, who has won numerous awards, including the Order of Canada and most recently the 2015 Margolese National Design for Living Prize.

Oberlander's involvement with the Wong family landscape commenced in 1954, and it represents one of her earliest designs for a private residence in Vancouver. The house and garden style is exemplary of the West Coast Modern Style, which involves the adaptation of modern design principles to the West Coast setting. The Wong family residence not only represents the West Coast Modern Style, but also aspects of Chinese culture in the design of the house and garden. The original Wong owners, Wong Kung Lai and Chu Man Wong, emigrated from China to Vancouver in 1908 and opened 'Modernize Tailors' in 1913. Their Chinese heritage factored in two significant ways in this design: the preservation of the rock and the layout of the house and garden in reference to Chinese hutongs (U-shaped courtyards).

For several years the lot at 5010 Cambie Street lay vacant as the rest of the area was developed for single-family housing. The main impediment to construction on the site was a huge rock outcrop, created by an upwelling of magma from nearby Little Mountain (now Queen Elizabeth Park) thousands of years ago. Since this geologic fragment intruded into the sidewalk by a meter, the city required that any development of the site required blasting the rock. The Wongs, however, embraced the long-standing Chinese tradition that revered naturalized rock formations. According to their second youngest of the Wong's nine children, Milton Wong, "people didn't like the rock outcrop, but their family loved it" and they asked Cornelia Hahn Oberlander to save it as they planned their new house.

Oberlander explained to the city that saving the rock and situating the house behind it would reduce traffic noise from Cambie Street and also create a visual barrier. Keeping the rock would also avoid added costs for the Wongs and loud disruptions to the adjacent neighbors. She prevailed; the rock was saved and she began the design work for the Wong's new garden, largely extant today.

Once the rock was saved, the Wongs requested a house and garden that reflected traditional Chinese values, which centered on family and food, but also resonated with modern art and design. They suggested that Lee and Oberlander borrow from the pattern of hutongs, alleys and courtyard residences that were the hallmark of time-honored neighborhoods in China. In response, Oberlander designed a main walkway paralleling the side yard property line to connect Cambie Street to the rear alley. Off of this passage, a hutong, or U-shaped courtyard, with a traditional south-facing orientation served as the main outdoor family space. Lee's floor-to-ceiling glass doors and windows enhanced the visual connection between inside and outside. The dining area, the most important room for the Wongs, opened onto this courtyard. Milton Wong and his wife, Fei, were the last family members to live in the house, and the house and garden have remained largely intact. Still today, the courtyard captures the light and heat of the sun and blocks the wind, a quality of the traditional hutongs.

In conclusion, I believe that the Wong family house and garden represent a unique instance of West Coast Modern Style that embraces Chinese traditions. Together, they are exceptional and certainly worthy of saving for generations to come.

Sincerely,

s.22(1) Personal and Confidential

Susan Herrington  
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