

Wong, Tamarra

From: Carole Goldsmith s. 22(1) Personal and Confidential
Sent: Monday, May 25, 2020 10:36 PM
To: Public Hearing
Subject: [EXT] Rezoning Application - 619-685 West Hastings Street - May 25, 2020

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Dear Mayor Stewart and Council,

I am not generally comfortable with public speaking so I hope you will have a chance to consider this letter.

I have long admired the banking hall of the heritage Royal Bank at Hastings and Granville. That is why I'm writing you today to share my concerns, as I happened to see the notice of the Public Hearing in the Vancouver Sun. The notice refers to the designation and restoration of the Royal Bank tower exterior, but there is no mention about preserving the interior banking hall. In my view, this is a terribly unfortunate omission.

I don't mean to disparage the importance of the exterior of this Class A heritage building, but I must impress on Council the following: by far the most important feature of this building is the spectacular Italian Renaissance banking hall. Vancouver has a number of neo-classical 'temple' banks but there is no other interior space in Vancouver that comes close to this space. In my view, if our city had a cathedral interior such as this, there would be no question about its preservation.

In the 1993 architectural guide 'Exploring Vancouver', the authors state, '*One is tempted to open an account just to be able to regularly visit this stunning Florentine arcaded banking hall*'. Vancouver doesn't have very many stunning architectural examples, let alone interiors. That is why I believe it would be a tragic loss to permit its demolition -- as tragic as the loss of the Birks Building or the old Hotel Vancouver in decades past. I wonder if Council is fully aware of what I being proposed here, which is why I feel it was my duty to speak up.

I must say I am puzzled by the apparent intention to sacrifice something so unique and special in order to facilitate development of a new office tower. The application states that the heritage building will be restored and upgraded. What would be the additional project cost to retain the banking hall, which could be a signature feature of the restored tower?

I imagine that this current application already includes allowances for the new tower to compensate for heritage restoration. Is there no way that the cost of interior preservation could not be funded by additional allowances? The proposed new tower is only 28 storeys in the heart of the Downtown financial district. Vancouver has long had office towers in the 35 storey range, and we now have other towers that are much taller. I urge Council to pause and consider by what means this very special architectural gem might be preserved for future generations.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

