

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION  
OF THE HEARING EXAMINER FOR THE CITY OF SEATTLE

In the Matter of the Recommendation of  
the Landmarks Preservation Board for

THE GREAT NORTHERN BUILDING

FILE NO. LP-88-004

Introduction

The Landmarks Preservation Board filed its Recommendation on Controls and Incentives with the Hearing Examiner pursuant to Chapter 25.12, Seattle Municipal Code, for the Great Northern Building at 1404 Fourth Avenue.

A hearing was held on November 3, 1988. Parties to the proceeding were the Landmarks Preservation Board represented by Elizabeth Chave, landmarks coordinator, and the owners, Pringle Investment Co. and Pacific First Federal Savings Bank, represented by Glenn J. Amster, Hillis, Clark, Martin & Peterson.

After due consideration of the evidence elicited during the public hearing, the following shall constitute the findings of fact, conclusions and recommendation of the Hearing Examiner on this matter.

Findings of Fact

1. The Landmarks Preservation Board designated the Great Northern Building at 1404 Fourth Avenue as a Seattle Landmark on July 6, 1988. The designation was based on satisfaction of the following criteria:

Section 3.01(4): It embodies the distinctive visible characteristics of an architectural style, or period, of a method of construction;

and

Section 3.01(5): It is an outstanding work of a designer or builder;...

Report on Designation, Exhibit 1.

2. After notice from the owners that they were not willing to negotiate controls and incentives on the building, the Landmarks Preservation Board adopted the following control "...to assure the preservation of the specified features and characteristics of the landmark":

A Certificate of Approval, issued by the City of Seattle's Landmarks Preservation Board pursuant to City Ordinance 106348, must be obtained, or the time for denying a Certificate of Approval application must have expired, before the owner may make alterations or significant changes to:  
the exterior of the building including the roof.

Proposed Controls and Incentive Agreement, Exhibit 1.

3. The Landmarks Preservation Board noted that the following economic incentives are potentially available:

1) Section 24.74.020, of the Seattle Municipal Code entitled Special Exceptions; and Seattle Municipal Code Sections 23.44.26; or 23.45.124 Administrative Conditional Uses, certain incentives are available, on an application basis, authorized, under certain circumstances, uses in a designated Landmark that are not otherwise permitted in the zone the Landmark is located.

2) Building and Energy Code exceptions on an

application basis.

3) The availability of the Historic Preservation Special Tax Valuation (Chapter 84.26 RCW) to all Seattle landmarks subject to controls imposed by a designation ordinance on an application basis.

Proposed Controls and Incentive Agreement, Exhibit 1.

4. The distinctive visible characteristics of the architectural style noted in the Report on Designation include incised Art Deco period ornamentation, modernistic, sheer, unadorned surfaces and a box-like form and the absence of the traditional cornice which elements were prototypical in 1928, the year of its construction. It was the first modernistic, medium-rise building in Seattle. The scale of the building was regarded as significant by the Landmarks Preservation Board, both in that it is similar in design to the Exchange Building and Northern Life Tower but at a smaller scale, and in its relationship to larger, taller and Beaux Arts Classical-inspired neighbors (the Cobb, White Henry Stewart, Stimson and Skinner Buildings).

5. The design for the building was from the firm of R.C. Reamer, well known nationally for his design of the Old Faithful Inn and locally for a number of distinctive buildings, among them the Skinner Building, the 1411 Fourth Avenue Building, the Seattle Times Building and the Meany Hotel.

6. The Landmark Preservation Board's intention for the proposed control of the roof is to require a certificate of approval for any addition to the height of the building since such addition could alter the scale, one of the distinctive features.

7. The owners object to the designation of the building as a landmark and their attorney stated for the record on their behalf that the controls will cause a significant economic impact to the designated property as well as to adjacent small properties which have economic potential only in combination with the designated property.

#### Conclusions


1. The control proposed by the Landmarks Preservation Board to require that a certificate of approval be required before any alteration or significant changes be made to the exterior of the building and roof is necessary since it is the scale, form and exterior ornamentation that makes the building distinctive and qualifies it as a landmark, along with the identity of the designer. No evidence was adduced to show that the control would operate to prevent the owners from realizing a reasonable return on the property. The control, in itself, does not preclude redevelopment of the property under standards in effect at that future time but requires that a certificate of approval be obtained.

2. Since the proposed control is adequately specific, is not inconsistent with any provision in Chapter 25.12, Seattle Municipal Code, and is needed to preserve the distinctive characteristics of this landmark, it should be imposed.

#### Recommendation

The Hearing Examiner recommends that the proposed control be imposed and the noted economic incentives be recognized by the City Council.

Entered this 22nd day of November, 1988.

  
M. Margaret Klockars  
Deputy Hearing Examiner

NOTICE OF RIGHT TO PETITION  
FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

Pursuant to 25.12.620, Seattle Municipal Code, any party of record may file a written notice of appeal with the City Council within 30 days after the date of mailing the recommendation of the Hearing Examiner. Copies must be served on all parties of record.