

September 4, 2007

Peter Brink  
Vice President, Programs  
National Trust for Historic Preservation  
1785 Massachusetts Ave, NW  
Washington, DC 20036-2117

Peter,

As you know, an entire era of modern architecture represented by the Bauhaus School stands on the verge of being wiped out in the United States. In Cleveland, we're currently fighting on the front lines to preserve the Ameritrust Tower, the only living example of a skyscraper designed by Marcel Breuer, completed in 1971. Earlier this year, Cuyahoga County Commissioners voted 2-1 in favor of pulling down the 29-story tower to make way for a new county administrative complex at East Ninth Street and Euclid Avenue. Outvoted Commissioner Peter Lawson Jones thinks the county could save \$35 million or more by renovating rather than building anew.

Yet, a full analysis of the savings to the county through historic preservation of the tower has not been completed nor considered in the county's proposed \$240 new build option. While our story made national headlines, and compelled respected authorities such as Susan Piedmont-Palladino, director of the National Building Museum in Washington, D.C., to write letters to the commission saying she fears the loss of a landmark, we need the immediate help of National Trust for Historic Preservation.

I'm writing on behalf of a group of citizens concerned with the historic and cultural fabric of older, industrial cities like Cleveland. We are environmentalists who have calculated the value in the tower's embodied energy, architects who see the iconic value of preserving an important chapter in our built environment, citizens concerned about government waste, and preservationists who have offered ideas for adaptive reuse. Among our ranks are those who have committed countless hours advocating and researching options for preservation. Others are willing to invest some of their personal wealth in order to make a strong case to the county that an adaptive reuse plan is a possibility worth exploring. We're currently seeking firms to conduct a feasibility study that will satisfy all of the needs for the county's administrative program, and creatively solve the issues such as asbestos abatement and the size of the floor plates. In addition, we are investigating our legal options because, as we learned this week, the county's contractors have begun asbestos abatement which includes tearing out interior walls. But, we need more time.

With a partner in the National Trust for Historic Preservation, we hope to tell our story with a clarity and purpose that will rise above local politics and conflicts of interest in the preservation community here. We are acutely aware of the sensitive position of the Trust's local partner, the Cleveland Restoration Society, and ask with all due respect that their official position of neutrality impel them to step aside so that we can work with the Trust and the county toward a mutually beneficial solution.

We seek the Trust's immediate help in building a campaign to save the Breuer Tower which includes advocacy and education both in the general public and with key community leaders. We seek technical assistance in navigating the preservation landscape including staff time for analyzing feasibility plans and the potential of using Historic Tax Credits. In addition, we seek legal assistance in building a case to forestall demolition of this invaluable cultural asset.

Sincerely,

Marc Lefkowitz  
Cleveland, OH

cc Royce Yeater and Jennifer Sandy

For more background information on the issue, please refer to these online sources:

- <http://blog.cleveland.com/pdextra/architecture/>
- [http://www.nationaltrust.org/magazine/archives/arc\\_news\\_2007/070307.htm](http://www.nationaltrust.org/magazine/archives/arc_news_2007/070307.htm)
- <http://www.gcbl.org/blog/marc-lefkowitz/breuer-thats-a-wrap>
- <http://www.gcbl.org/building/rebuilding-cities/historic-preservation/raze-or-reno-vate-breuer-tower/faqs-on-saving-the-breuer>
- <http://www.realneo.us/blog/johnmcgovern/taxpayers-protest-county-commissioners-spending-32-million-to-create-empty-lot>