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# Famed architect urges city to preserve his building

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*Étienne Gaboury designed this police station. (WAYNE GLOWACKI / WINNIPEG FREE PRESS ARCHIVES)*

A renowned architect says it's sad city officials want to demolish a former St. Boniface police station instead of finding a way to preserve the modernist structure.

The City of Winnipeg has listed the former police station at 227 Provencher Blvd., at the southwest corner of Dumoulin and Langevin streets in St. Boniface, for sale for \$470,000. Online documents show the purchaser must demolish it and submit plans for a multi-family residential development.

The former District 5 station closed after city council approved a plan to reduce the number of districts across Winnipeg.

Étienne Gaboury designed the building in 1963 and said the structure is a significant piece of architecture that became the prototype for his future projects designed to reflect the Winnipeg region.

He later designed the Esplanade Riel pedestrian bridge, the Royal Canadian Mint and the St. Boniface Cathedral, and was inducted into the Order of Canada for his work.

The 82-year-old architect said Winnipeg is at the forefront of a collection of modern architecture in Canada, and the city seems unconcerned with its conservation. He said Winnipeg has already demolished its former city hall, an urban park he designed, and now plans to flatten its old airport terminal, one of the last modernist structures of its kind in the country.

Winnipeg should try to recycle its old buildings rather than tear them down for financial reasons, Gaboury said.

"They seem to be lackadaisical. They don't seem to be concerned about our historical heritage, which is extremely rich here," he said. "I think it's sort of sad and unfortunate the city doesn't have a greater vision."

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City of Winnipeg spokeswoman Michelle Bailey said in an email statement the building was declared surplus in 2007, and the city subsequently put out an expression of interest for the sale, lease or redevelopment of the property. No submissions were received by the February 2010 closing date, the statement said, and last year, city administration recommended it be put up for sale to the general public.

The provincial court currently occupies a small space in the building, and the province is looking for a new space.

Serena Keshavjee, an associate professor of history at the University of Winnipeg, said Gaboury is Manitoba's most famous architect and the police station is a very good example of a certain style of brutalist architecture. The style was meant to connect to the working class, she said.

"In my opinion, this should be designated and saved. We'd be hard-pressed to find an equivalent example in Canada," she said.

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