



DoCoMoMo U.S./Oregon Chapter
Portland, OR
www.docomomo-oregon.org

February 17th, 2016

Hillary Adam
Bureau of Development Services
1900 SW 4th Ave, Suite 5000
Portland, OR 97201

Comments on PacWest Alterations - EA 15-273235 DA

Dear Ms. Adam and members of the Portland Design Commission,

The PacWest Center is one of the iconic examples of 20th century architecture in Portland. The 1984 building was designed by Hugh Stubbins & Associates of Cambridge and the Portland office of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. Both firms have an important place in the history of American architecture, and the PacWest Center is fine example of their work. The building was the recipient of an AIA Portland 'Honor' award in 1985. As reported in *The Oregonian* at the time, 'the jury called Stubbins' Pacwest design "well-conceived, well planned," and said the architects' attention to detail "is so thorough and finely executed as to be uncanny.'" The PacWest Center is the last of a series of skyscrapers built in the south end of Downtown from the 1960s-80s, and helps tell the story of the economic expansion of Portland in the last century.

DoCoMoMo Oregon has strong concerns about the effect some of the proposed alterations will have to this significant and thoughtfully designed building. In its exterior articulation the PacWest Center has a rigorous language, defined by the ribbon windows and softly curving corners. The loss of the character defining curves at the main entry, for the purpose of gaining a very small amount of additional floor area, is undesirable. Creating a stronger connection between the interior and exterior at the proposed marketplace has a lot of potential to better activate the exterior space, but it should not come at the expense of the curved glass storefront which would be difficult to replicate with a folding system. If new entrances are to be created we would suggest that they happen at the straight walls, and that care be taken to integrate the new system into the existing storefront glazing.

The building skin has a restrained palette of glass and aluminum, and any new materials introduced should complement these. Wood and green walls are materials that have very

different qualities to the precise skin of the building. Additionally, despite the rainy climate in Portland, there are few if any examples here of green walls that have performed well over time. It would be regrettable if original canopies were removed to create a feature unlikely to last far into the future.

DoCoMoMo Oregon is not opposed to sympathetic alterations to the building, and welcome the concept of improving the ground floor retail experience. We would encourage the applicants to carefully study the building, and to work towards a scheme that meets the goals of the project while being respectful of the original building.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Iain MacKenzie', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Iain MacKenzie, AIA
DoCoMoMo Oregon Vice President

About DoCoMoMo:

DoCoMoMo stands for the *DO*ocumentation and *CO*nservation of buildings, sites and neighborhoods of the *MO*dern *MO*vement. DoCoMoMo U.S./Oregon Chapter is a regional chapter of an international organization called DoCoMoMo International, which promotes the study, interpretation and protection of the architecture, landscape and urban design of the Modern Movement.