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George I. Atta, Director

Department of Planning and Permitting
City and County of Honolulu
650 S. King Street, 7th Floor
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February 10, 2015

Subject: Blaisdell Center Redevelopment

Dear Mr. Atta,

Honolulu is on the verge of something special. The last ten years have seen a rediscovery of mid-century modern architecture, particularly among people under 40. Nationally, architectural tourism is on the rise and cities like Columbus, Indiana, and Palm Springs, California, bring in millions of dollars based on their beautiful modern design heritage. Honolulu is blessed with dozens of its own modern icons including the Board of Water Supply, the Liljestrand house and even our State Capitol building. This letter is in reference to two of these important pieces of Honolulu's modernist heritage—the Blaisdell Arena and Concert Hall.

As you know, the City and County of Honolulu has begun discussions about how to revitalize the Blaisdell Center campus and create a thriving arts district around it. Docomomo US/Hawai'i Chapter applauds this effort and the attention it will bring to two of the city's most important and iconic works of architecture. There is no question that the Blaisdell Center Arena and Concert Hall are historically significant, which is why the Historic Hawai'i Foundation placed them on its Hawai'i's Most Endangered Places list, and why the State Historic Preservation Division (SHPD) determined that both buildings are eligible for the State and National Register of Historic Places. This historic status requires that any future development plans receive SHPD concurrence in accordance with Section 6E-8, HRS.

Thankfully, there are many options to achieve the city's goals that do not include affecting the significant qualities of the Blaisdell Arena and Concert Hall. Some are simple, such as placemaking signage and wayfinding improvements that take into account the modern design legacy of the campus. Others are more involved; like redeveloping the less significant exhibition hall site in a way that is sympathetic to the two historic buildings on the campus. Whichever option is chosen, we hope that it is a plan that preserves the architecturally significant Arena and Concert Hall buildings. They are, after all, two of the arts district's biggest and most iconic works of art.

Blaisdell Center was built in 1964 to be a world-class arts and entertainment campus. We support the City's interest in reviving that vision and would like to be included in future dialogue about the site. We look forward to a new arts district brimming with great art, theater, music, history and architecture that draws residents and tourists for generations to come. With the spruced up Blaisdell Center Arena and Concert Hall serving as architectural anchors for this proposed cultural zone, Honolulu would join other well-planned cities that move forward to an enriched future by strategically preserving the past.

Docomomo US/Hawai'i Chapter

Docomomo stands for the documentation and conservation of buildings, sites and neighborhoods of the Modern Movement. Docomomo US/Hawai'i Chapter promotes the study, interpretation and protection of the architecture, landscapes and urban design of the Modern Movement and aims to encourage a sense of regional and national pride for the rich legacy of the Modern Movement within the Pacific Islands. Docomomo US/Hawai'i Chapter is a regional chapter of the international organization Docomomo International.

Mahalo for your time,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alison Chiu', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Alison Chiu

Docomomo US/Hawai'i Chapter President

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