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August 31, 2020

Femi Adegeye  
Senior City Planner  
Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department  
City Planning and Community Development Division,  
City of Regina

Dear Femi,

Re: Darke Block – Municipal Heritage Designation

Heritage Regina fully supports a Municipal Heritage Designation for the Darke Block (now the Cornwall Professional Building) at 2125 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue. We see the designation of this property as a significant element in sustaining our city's heritage for present and future generations.

The five-storey Darke Block, built in 1907, introduced the use of reinforced concrete in local office building construction, becoming "the first known building in Saskatchewan to employ the 'mushroom-head' reinforced columns and flat-slab concrete design." (source: Statement of Significance, page 2) The interior of the building was also noteworthy. According to an article in the local newspaper at the time, the Darke Block was to feature quartersawn oak woodwork, marble in the corridors, ultra modern office suites, a large "lodge room" on the top floor, and an electric elevator. As the article noted, "no expense is being spared to make it not only a credit in every way to the city, but a building which is not likely to be outclassed for many years to come." (source: *The Morning Leader*, March 9, 1907, page 3)

The Darke Block is a good representation of the Chicago architectural style and retains a number of the structure's original design elements (e.g., Bedford stone at the base, windows with keystones, a repeating pattern of brick and stone at the corners, the fifth-floor capital). The building aligns with the "Arts: Architecture and Design" theme of the Thematic Framework and Historical Context document (page 23), providing evidence of a style of architecture popular during the early years of the last century and illustrating the impact of Regina's growing economy on the design and development of its downtown business district.

The architects of the Darke Block, Frank Darling and John Pearson, also designed a number of buildings that still maintain a presence in the downtown core, including the Land Titles Building, the Metropolitan Methodist Church (now Knox-Met United Church) and the Assiniboia Club. The façade of their Canadian Bank of Commerce Building is featured inside the Cornwall Centre.

The Darke Block owes its historical value to its association with original owner Francis Darke. A resident of the city for nearly 50 years, Mr. Darke's contributions to the development of Regina are considerable. He was a successful business owner and property developer. He helped establish Regina College, serving as a member of its Board of Governors for a number of years. He took an active role in government at the municipal level (member of town council and mayor) and federal level (Member of Parliament).

Many of Darke's philanthropic endeavours continue to enrich the cultural life of our community. The Darke Memorial Chimes, for example, were gifted in 1927 to the Metropolitan Methodist Church (now Knox-Met United Church) by Mr. and Mrs. Darke in memory of their son. The twelve bells, weighing a total of fifteen tonnes, continue to be rung by hand in the church's bell tower. Darke's donation of more than \$124,000 assured the construction of a music and art building for Regina College. Known as Darke Hall, the 1928 building remains a highly regarded performing arts venue at the College Avenue Campus.

Without question, protecting the Darke Block through a heritage designation provides a tangible way for members of the public to learn about and connect with the stories of the building and of Francis Darke, and to develop an appreciation for the rich cultural heritage of Regina's downtown.

On behalf of the Heritage Regina Board of Directors, I am pleased to support a Municipal Heritage Designation for the Darke Block.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Jackie Schmidt', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jackie Schmidt  
President