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"documentation and conservation of buildings sites and neighbourhoods of the modern movement"

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Michael Reese Hospital complex in Chicago

Dear Sirs,

The Michael Reese Hospital complex in Chicago is known for its over 120 years of lasting traditions as well as for its very significant expansions in the 1950s that was largely guided by Walter Gropius.

Walter Gropius was the founder of the German Bauhaus school and together with other famous architects of the early 20th century such as Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier, he belonged to the group of the main founders of the Modern Movement in architecture. Unfortunately for political reasons he had to leave Germany in the 1930s, when the Third Reich not only closed down the famous Bauhaus school in Dessau, but forced a large number of famous architects to leave the country. Luckily a couple of them gathered again in Chicago, which through this became the center of the second wave of the Modern Movement in the 1950s. Today the importance of their genius architectural work is appreciated all over the world. Already a number of Modern Movement Sites have been included into the World Heritage list, such as the Bauhaus Sites in Weimar and Dessau (Germany, 1996). We still hope that Chicago will push some proposals of the famous postwar Modern Movement Sites over there for implementation into the World Heritage List.

Recently we learned that the City of Chicago has put out a request for proposals from contractors to demolish all the buildings on the site of the Michael Reese hospital. As there are only a very few sites left anywhere in the world that were constructed under the guidance of Walter Gropius, we think it would be an enormous loss. If the plans now being discussed by the City of Chicago to tear down some of his last witnesses would come true, these buildings will be lost forever. The City should be proud to inheritate Walter Gropius works that add to its unparalleled collection of modern architecture!

We would rather propose to preserve and redevelop the site as cultural heritage of this great period and the important role the City of Chicago played as the Center of the architectural Modern Movement, especially so close to the epicenter - the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago. Please let us know, if we can be of any assistance to achieve this goal, we would appreciate your answer very much.

Best Regards
Docomomo Germany