

## Riley, Kate

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**From:** Gianetti, Lee  
**Sent:** Sunday, February 2, 2020 11:17 AM  
**To:** DePasquale, Louie; Peterson, Lisa  
**Cc:** Carvello, Maryellen; Cooper, Stacey; Riley, Kate  
**Subject:** FW: A Plea to Respect History: A Comment on the Tobin Montessori School Project

**From:** Karl Aspelund <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Sunday, February 2, 2020 11:15 AM  
**To:** City Manager <CityManager@CambridgeMA.GOV>  
**Subject:** A Plea to Respect History: A Comment on the Tobin Montessori School Project

Dear Manager DePasquale,

I am writing to voice my concerns with the lack of respect for architectural and historical legacies in the design process for the Tobin Montessori and Vassal Lane Upper School project.

The school's designer was Pietro Belluschi, an Italian modernist architect who served as dean of the MIT School of Architecture and received both the American Institute of Architects' Gold Medal and the National Medal of Arts from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Belluschi played a role in the design of prominent buildings you may recognize, including the Juilliard Building in Lincoln Square housing the school of the same name, the Pan Am Building (aka the MetLife Building) in Midtown Manhattan, the Rohm and Haas Corporate Headquarters on the Independence Mall in Philadelphia (now listed on the National Register of Historic Places), and One Financial Center next to South Station in Boston.

Personally, I have enjoyed the building's accordance with its siting and shifting angles as I walk down Vassal Lane, particularly after a deep snowfall and around dusk.

The school here in West Cambridge is of deep historical and architectural significance, a point that I worry is lost to project planners in the many media reports I have read.

Frankly, I was shocked that they seem to have decided to tear down the existing building, with only minimal consideration to a renovation/extension option that is no longer part of the discussion.

Tastes change of course, but Brutalist architecture is a part of the history of our city and nation. Current attitudes towards the style alarm me. Do not forget that, for example, the buildings that we now believe bring charm and a deep sense of place to the North End and Charlestown were also once considered an eyesore.

At the very least, the City of Cambridge and the School Committee should honor the architectural legacy of Belluschi's creation in the design of the new school.

To do otherwise is an affront to the admiration and respect for history that I know characterizes the residents of Cambridge.

Sincerely,  
Karl Aspelund