

*By Stella Pristupa, The StarPhoenix March 27, 2012*

I must defend the Mendel Art Gallery for what it means to Saskatoon. It is not broken and doesn't need fixing.

It is the dream of a man who chose Saskatoon to reconstitute an old auto factory into a meat packing plant that became the city's largest employer. Fred Mendel brought art and culture to Saskatoon, made a place for artists worldwide to show their work, for young people to learn the arts, and for school students to display their work.

His first gallery was above the packing plant, and then expanded to his home and that of his daughter, Eva Mendel Miller. It was their dream to create a gallery for Saskatoon - a way of thanking Saskatoon for making the Mendel family so welcome. If the city sees fit to destroy the dreams of a wonderful, passionate man, I am ashamed.

There must be a way to preserve the existing gallery and construct an adjoining structure with all the necessities for displaying and storing artwork. The Mendel is a much more pleasing building with a beautiful river view than the proposed monstrosity, which looks like poorly placed Lego blocks.

I worked for the Mendel family for many years and was there when his dream came true, when he entertained renowned artists, and when Bill Perehudoff painted the murals on the walls in the suite. Powers-that-be should think again. Can we not have something left in its original form instead of going to River Landing and being renamed because they have money? Give some heart back to those who helped create Saskatoon.

Stella Pristupa, Saskatoon