

Forsaking the Mendel Art Gallery, Fred Mendel's extraordinary gift to the city of Saskatoon, for a new art gallery at River Landing is an act of cultural vandalism. How can city officials and the Mendel board have made this kind of shocking decision without consultation with residents and community groups, the Mendel Art Gallery's many stakeholders, and the Mendel/Mitchell family?

How could they advance this project with no plan or vision for the future of cultural development in Saskatoon? And most importantly, how could they not have a profound appreciation and respect for the significant meaning of Fred Mendel's most generous and widely cherished gift to the city of Saskatoon?

Having barely escaped Nazi Germany with his wife and two daughters in the 1930's, Fred Mendel understood first-hand how one's culture can be easily taken away. His sister and her family (husband and daughter) and other relatives and friends were not so fortunate; they were victims of the Holocaust.

Because of what Fred Mendel had experienced in Europe, the creation of the Mendel Art Gallery had a very personal meaning for him: it was a public expression of his gratitude for the privilege of Canadian citizenship, and for the friendship and goodwill he and his family experienced in Saskatoon. Fred Mendel wanted to give something back to the community that had accepted him and his family and that had supported him.

Do today's civic leaders in Saskatoon have the right to dishonour Fred Mendel by erasing his extraordinary gift of culture to the community? Do they have the right to destroy a very important piece of Saskatoon's artistic heritage?

Shouldn't Saskatoon's civic leaders know that the Mendel Art Gallery is much more than bricks and mortar, that it is truly a great Saskatchewan and Canadian story, part of our national cultural heritage as a people? Shouldn't we expect them to appreciate the value of their community's own history and culture when they are making decisions about its future growth and development?

~ A Mendel Supporter