

ORDINANCE

Central YMCA Headquarters

19 S. LaSalle Street

WHEREAS, pursuant to the procedures set forth in the Municipal Code of Chicago (the "Municipal Code"), Sections 2 - 120 - 620 through - 690, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks (the "Commission") has determined that the Central YMCA Headquarters (the "Building"), located at 19 S. LaSalle Street, Chicago, Illinois, as more fully described in Exhibit A, attached hereto and incorporated herein, satisfies three criteria for landmark designation as set forth in Section 2-120-620 (1), (4) and (5) of the Municipal Code; and

WHEREAS, the Building reflects the YMCA's growing presence and popularity in Chicago in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The design of the Building, which included a combination of recreational, educational, and administrative spaces for the association, represents the evolution of the Chicago Chapter of the YMCA away from the evangelical mission promoted by early leaders Dwight H. Moody and John L. Farwell toward the "fourfold program" developed by East Coast YMCAs in the late 19th century and widely adopted by chapters nationwide, which emphasized athletics and recreational activities as a means to mold the character of young men; and,

WHEREAS, the Building is a rare example of a YMCA facility that housed association programming within a high-rise commercial office building. While other YMCA chapters often included a small number of rental offices and dormitories to provide income, Chicago's Central YMCA boasted nearly 40,000 square feet of modern office space, which was needed to offset construction and operation costs in Chicago's expensive central business district; and,

WHEREAS, from the 1920s through the 1950s, the Building served as the center for the Chicago association's educational programming, which included an accredited evening high school, a secretarial school, a junior college and a four-year college. The Building's central location and abundance of classroom space made it the ideal facility for these programs; and,

WHEREAS, the Building is an early example of a fireproof, steel-frame skyscraper in Chicago, and combines the exuberant historicism of late-19th century architecture with the growing influence of the Chicago School, which emphasized expression of structure and restrained ornamentation. The west tower of the Building, both in its original form with Romanesque "campanile" and as redesigned in the Classical Revival style in 1913, presented a traditional face to LaSalle Street, while the stripped-down south elevation reflected Jenney's functional design philosophy; and,

WHEREAS, in her definitive study on the architecture of the YMCA, published in 2010, architectural historian Paula Lupkin cites the Building as an important interpretation of the "modern" YMCA facility in the late 19th century, which "presented the YMCA as a fusion of commercial and public interests."; and,

WHEREAS, the Building was designed by Chicago architectural firm Jenney & Mundie, with the 1913 addition designed by their successor firm Jenney, Mundie & Jensen. Founded by William Le Baron Jenney (1832-1907) and William Bryce Mundie (1864-1939), Jenney & Mundie designed some of Chicago's best-known early skyscrapers including the Manhattan

Building (1891), Second Leiter Building (1891), Ludington Building (1892), and New York Life Insurance Building (1894), all extant and designated Chicago Landmarks; and,

WHEREAS, together with the New York Life Building at 37-43 S. LaSalle, the Building represents the only remaining extant examples of the work of William Le Baron Jenney in the Loop; and,

WHEREAS, widely recognized as the “father of the skyscraper,” senior partner William Le Baron Jenney developed the concept of skeleton-frame construction (also known as “Chicago construction”), whereby the weight of a building rests on an internal framework of iron or steel rather than its exterior walls. This technological advance revolutionized building construction throughout the world; and,

WHEREAS, the prominent west tower on the original 1893 design of the Building reflected Mundie’s preference for historical styles and his growing influence in the firm, while the Classical Revival design of the Building’s 1913 addition illustrates the increasing popularity of Classical design in the years following the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893; and,

WHEREAS, the Building meets three criteria for landmark designation set forth in Section 2-120-620 (1), (4) and (5) of the Municipal Code; and

WHEREAS, consistent with Section 2-120-630 of the Municipal Code, the Building has significant historic, community, architectural, or aesthetic interest or value, the integrity of which is preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and ability to express such historic, community, architectural, or aesthetic interest or value; and,

WHEREAS, on November 6, 2025, the Commission adopted a resolution recommending to the City Council of the City of Chicago (the “City Council”) that the Building be designated a Chicago Landmark; now, therefore,

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CHICAGO:

SECTION 1. The above recitals are hereby adopted as the findings of the City Council.

SECTION 2. The Building is hereby designated a Chicago Landmark in accordance with Section 2-120-700 of the Municipal Code.

SECTION 3. For purposes of Sections 2-120-740 and 2-120-770 of the Municipal Code governing permit review, the significant historical and architectural features of the Building are identified as:

- All exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the Building.

SECTION 4. The Commission is hereby directed to create a suitable plaque appropriately identifying the Building as a Chicago Landmark.

SECTION 5. If any provision of this ordinance shall be held to be invalid or unenforceable for any reason, the invalidity or unenforceability of such provision shall not affect any of the other provisions of this ordinance.

SECTION 6. All ordinances, resolutions, motions or orders in conflict with this ordinance are hereby repealed to the extent of such conflict.

SECTION 7. This ordinance shall take effect upon its passage and approval.