

**CITY OF CHICAGO
COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS**

November 6, 2025

**RECOMMENDATION TO THE CITY COUNCIL OF CHICAGO THAT
CHICAGO LANDMARK DESIGNATION BE ADOPTED FOR THE**

CENTRAL YMCA HEADQUARTERS

19 S. LASALLE STREET

Docket No. 2025-11

To the Mayor and Members of the City Council of the City of Chicago:

Pursuant to Section 2-120-690 of the Municipal Code of the City of Chicago (the “Municipal Code”), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks (the “Commission”) has determined that the Central YMCA Headquarters (the “Building”), is worthy of designation as a Chicago Landmark. On the basis of careful consideration of the history and architecture of the Building, the Commission has found that it satisfies the following three (3) criteria set forth in Section 2-120-620 of the Municipal Code:

1. *Its value as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the heritage of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, or the United States.*
4. *Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.*
5. *Its identification as the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose individual work is significant in the history or development of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois, or the United States.*

I. BACKGROUND

The formal landmark designation process for the Building began on October 9, 2025, when the Commission approved a preliminary landmark recommendation (the "Preliminary Recommendation") for the Building as a Chicago Landmark. The Commission found that the Building meets three of the seven criteria for designation, as well as the integrity criterion, identified in the Chicago Landmarks Ordinance (Municipal Code, Section 2-120-580 et seq.). As part of the Preliminary Recommendation, the Commission preliminarily identified the “significant historical and architectural features” of the Building as:

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

Also, as part of the Preliminary Recommendation, the Commission adopted a Designation Report, dated October 9, 2025, the most current iteration of which is dated November 6, 2025, incorporated herein and attached hereto as **Exhibit A** (the “Designation Report”).

At its regular meeting of November 6, 2025, the Commission received a report incorporated herein and attached hereto as **Exhibit B** (the "Department of Planning and Development Report") from Ciere Boatright, Commissioner of the Department of Planning and Development, stating that the proposed landmark designation of the Building supports the City's overall planning goals and is consistent with the City's governing policies and plans.

On October 16, 2025, the Commission received written consent to landmark designation of the Building in a form dated October 16, 2025, and signed by J. Cory Faulkner, representing Nineteen South LLC, the owner of the Building.

II. FINDINGS OF THE COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS

WHEREAS, pursuant to Section 2-120-690 of the Municipal Code, the Commission has reviewed the entire record of proceedings on the proposed Chicago Landmark designation, including the Designation Report and all of the information on the proposed landmark designation of the Building; 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; now, therefore,

THE COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS HEREBY:

1. Adopts the recitals, findings and statements of fact set forth in the preamble and Sections I and II hereof as the findings of the Commission; and
2. Adopts the Designation Report, as revised, and dated this November 6, 2025; and

3. Finds, based on the Designation Report and the entire record before the Commission, that the Building meets three criteria for landmark designation as set forth in Section 2-120-620 (1), (4) and (5) of the Municipal Code; and
4. Finds that the Building satisfies the "integrity" requirement set forth in Section 2-120-630 of the Municipal Code; and
5. Finds that the significant historical and architectural features of the Building are identified as follows:
 - All exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the Building.
6. Recommends the designation of the Building as a Chicago Landmark.

This recommendation was adopted unanimously (8-0).


Ernest C. Wong, Chair
Commission on Chicago Landmarks

Dated: November 6, 2025