

**CITY OF CHICAGO
COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS**

January 9, 2025

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

RECTOR BUILDING

79 W. MONROE ST.

Docket No. 2025-02

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 Rector Building (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 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.*
3. *Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the development of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, or the United States.*
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, State of Illinois, or the United States*

I. BACKGROUND

The formal landmark designation process for the Building began on December 5, 2024, 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 December 5, 2024, the most current iteration of which is dated January 9, 2025, incorporated herein and attached hereto as **Exhibit A** (the “Designation Report”).

On January 2, 2025, the Commission received written consent to landmark designation of the Building in a form dated January 2, 2025, and signed by Paul Xuereb, representing Brown Derby LLC, the owner of the Building.

At its regular meeting of January 9, 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.

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 was built in 1905 for Charles E. Rector, a renowned restaurateur who operated popular restaurants in Chicago, New York, and Washington DC in the late 19th and early 20th centuries; and

WHEREAS, Rector’s Restaurant opened to great fanfare in the basement of the Building in 1905, and Charles Rector continued to operate the restaurant until 1910; and

WHEREAS, Charles E. Rector was a pioneer in Chicago’s early restaurant industry and became a nationally recognized restaurateur and entrepreneur during the late-19th and early-20th centuries. Rector’s original oyster bar in downtown Chicago, which opened in 1884, was an immediate success, and Rector quickly gained a reputation as a master of service and seafood. This reputation was further cemented in 1893, when Rector opened the *Café’ de la Marine* at the World’s Columbian Exposition in Jackson Park; and

WHEREAS, by 1900, Charles Rector had opened a second oyster bar in Chicago on Adams Street and, partnered with his son, George W. Rector, to establish a branch of Rector’s in New York City at Broadway and Forty-fourth Street. All three restaurants were wildly successful in the decades before prohibition, and were memorialized in popular culture through reference in songs, books, and plays; and

WHEREAS, Charles E. Rector’s success in the restaurant business spurred him to expand into real estate development in both Chicago and New York City, allowing him to

customize his high-end restaurants while earning income from the buildings' upper floor tenants; and

WHEREAS, the Building was also home to several financial institutions through much of the 20th century, including the Hibernian Bank, Chicago Trust Company, and the Bell Savings & Loan Association; and

WHEREAS, the Building was part of a concentrated group of buildings within a two-block area along West Monroe Street that contained nearly a dozen banks and trust companies and was part of a larger financial district that coalesced around La Salle Street in the early 20th century as the city's financial services industry grew; and

WHEREAS, the Bell Savings & Loan Association, founded in 1925 by 13 employees of the Illinois Bell Telephone Company, occupied the lower banking floors of the Rector Building from 1951 to 1997. At the time of its purchase of the building, Bell Savings & Loan was the largest savings & loan association in Illinois, with over 30,000 members and \$60 million in assets; and

WHEREAS, the Building is the oldest surviving example of a commercial high-rise building in the Loop designed by Jarvis Hunt, a prominent Chicago architect who designed a variety of commercial, residential, and civic buildings throughout the country in the early 20th century; and

WHEREAS, Hunt also served as sole architect for the Great Lakes Naval Training Station in Lake County, Illinois, which was constructed between 1905 and 1911; and

WHEREAS, the Building is one of the earliest of Hunt's designs to combine classical design details with 20th century modernist elements from the Chicago School and Prairie School, and marks the beginning of Hunt's development of an eclectic design philosophy that would later be expressed in his designs for the Auditorium Building at the Chicago Municipal Tuberculosis Sanitarium (1919) and the Southern Pacific Building in Houston (1911); and

WHEREAS, Hunt was actively involved in the City Beautiful Movement in Chicago in the early 20th century. Hunt proposed expanding Michigan Avenue into "a grand shore drive along Grant Park" to the South Park Commission in 1904, an idea that was later included in Daniel H. Burnham and Edward H. Bennett's 1909 *Plan of Chicago*; and

WHEREAS, the Building meets three criteria for landmark designation set forth in Section 2-120-620 (1), (3) 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 January 9, 2025; and
3. Finds, based on the Designation Report and the entire record before the Commission, that the Building meets the three criteria for landmark designation set forth in Section 2-120-620 (1), (3) 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 a Chicago Landmark.

This recommendation was adopted unanimously (8-0).


Ernest C. Wong, Chair
Commission on Chicago Landmarks

Dated: January 9, 2025