

ORDINANCE

WAX TRAX!

2449 North Lincoln Avenue

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 WAX TRAX! (the "Building"), located at 2449 North Lincoln Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, and legally described in **Exhibit 1**, attached hereto, satisfies two(2) criteria for landmark designation as set forth in Sections 2-120-620 (1) and (4) of the Municipal Code; and

WHEREAS, life and business partners Jim Nash and Dannie Flesher opened the WAX TRAX! records store at the Building in 1978. From its opening through its closure in 1993, the store invigorated Chicago's music scene. With bootlegs, imports, and hard-to-find records, cassettes, CDs, and videos, the Building became an extraordinary retail destination. It carried music not readily available elsewhere including punk, post-punk, rockabilly, glam, English R&B, power pop, psychedelic/psych pop, mod, European synth-pop, new wave, avant-garde, select rock 'n roll, and other eclectic selections. The stock included rare, out-of-print, and collectible records as well as independent label releases. The Building was also Chicago's best source for fanzines (a type of fan-based journalism focused primarily on non-mainstream music genres and bands) and imported, punk-inspired clothing lines; and

WHEREAS, the store at the Building helped to shape the world's perceptions of Chicago music. As the home base of the WAX TRAX! record label, the Building helped to launch industrial-dance music, which came to be known as industrial music, in the United States. This early electronic-based dance music which employed tape loops, sound effects, and drum patterns to create a machine-made sound over rock instrumentation was a new genre that would influence the direction of future music across the globe; and

WHEREAS, using the Building as their center of operations, owners Jim Nash and Dannie Flesher helped to bring the world to Chicago by producing and promoting shows for cutting-edge bands like Bauhaus, The Cramps, New Order, and the Jam, bringing many of them to the city for the first time; and

WHEREAS, the record store at the Building opened at a time when society's pendulum was swinging away from earlier decades' idealism and freedom-focused liberation toward the New Right and nostalgic conservatism of the Reagan years. The Building provided a rare refuge to outsiders and outcasts as a mecca and a meeting place for those most comfortable or desiring to be separate from the mainstream. It welcomed a diverse collection of communities, people of all races and ethnicities, that otherwise may not have intersected. This embrace included the LGBTQ+ community at a time in America when being labeled homosexual was generally considered, at best, an insult or a joke, if not justification for physical abuse or worse; and

WHEREAS, the arrival of the record store at the Building was monumental in terms of shaping Chicago's music scene. Owners Jim Nash and Dannie Flesher's musical tastes, creative

generosity, and willingness to take risks provided the collaborative space, support, and inspiration for musicians to experiment with new technology to create a new style of music and led the way for other music-lovers to open their own venues and start their own labels; and

WHEREAS, the store at the Building was a favorite of director John Hughes in whose films music played a key role. Hughes featured the bands he discovered at the store in soundtracks for some of the most successful films of the 1980s including *Sixteen Candles*, *The Breakfast Club*, *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, and *Pretty in Pink*, which featured a re-created set version of the Building; and

WHEREAS, the Building is a neighborhood store and flat building with an unusually high degree of ornamentation. It is a rare, early example of the use of glazed-brick cladding applied to a small-scale structure; and

WHEREAS, the Building maintains an original Renaissance Revival cornice with large, curved brackets, decorative swags, vertically projecting palmettes, and a finial atop a volute-framed panel; and

WHEREAS, carved Bedford limestone elements on the Building's façade include prominent window hoods and sills, and a first-floor cornice with *mascarons* (human faces) which are rarely found on a store and flat building; and

WHEREAS, the Building was built circa 1880s and re-fronted circa 1900 in white-glazed brick. White-glazed brick and terra cotta had become fashionable after Chicago held the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, nicknamed the "White City" for its City Beautiful-inspired, white-colored architecture. The popularity of the fair's gleaming white Neoclassical structures, combined with advances in the manufacturing and availability of terra cotta and enameled brick, led to its utilization in commercial structures throughout the city. Nowhere was this more prominent than the city's most vital commercial corridor, State Street, where it was the preferred cladding for dozens of skyscrapers through World War I; and

WHEREAS, consistent with Section 2-120-630 of the Municipal Code, the Building has a 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 February 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 the date of its passage and approval.