

## ORDINANCE

### Chicago Daily News Building 2 North Riverside Plaza / 400 West Madison 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 Chicago Daily News Building (the "Building"), located at 2 North Riverside Plaza / 400 West Madison Street, Chicago, Illinois, and legally described in **Exhibit 1**, attached hereto, satisfies five (5) criteria for landmark designation as set forth in Sections 2-120-620 (1), (3), (4), (5), and (7) of the Municipal Code; and

**WHEREAS**, from its completion in 1929 until 1960, the Building was owned and occupied by one of the United States' most prominent and innovative daily newspapers, Chicago Daily News. This paper was the first mass-circulating, daily newspaper in Chicago, and was widely recognized for the quality of its writers and cartoonists, and for its pioneering foreign news service, which served as a model for other American newspapers; and

**WHEREAS**, the Building is one of the first that was designed with its primary orientation to the Chicago River, in fulfillment of one of the goals of the widely influential 1909 Plan of Chicago, which was developed by Daniel H. Burnham and Edward Bennett; and

**WHEREAS**, widely recognized as a "newspaperman's newspaper," Chicago Daily News employed a host of notable writers and cartoonists, including Eugene Field, Vaughn Shoemaker, Finley Peter Dunne, Paul Scott Mowrer, Edward Ansel Mowrer, John T. McCutcheon, George Ade, Edward Price Bell, Carl Sandburg, Ben Hecht, Peter Lisagor, Robert Joseph Casey, Edwin A. Lahey, John Gunther, Lois Wille, and Mike Royko. Thirteen Pulitzer Prizes were awarded to the paper between 1925 and 1972, including the first Pulitzer Prize awarded to a Chicago newspaper and the first Pulitzer awarded for foreign correspondence; and

**WHEREAS**, Melville Elijah Stone and Victor Fremont Lawson, founders of the Chicago Daily News, are two of the most remarkable figures in journalistic history whose principles of independence and integrity, innovative management, and insistence on concise, appealing writing made the Chicago Daily News one of the most respected newspapers in the United States and helped to shape journalism in the twentieth century; and

**WHEREAS**, during his over two decades at the Chicago Daily News, legendary editor Henry Justin Smith nurtured writers who would go on to literary fame, including Ben Hecht, who became a successful playwright and an influential, Academy Award-winning screenwriter and whose play-turned-movie *The Front Page* captured the zeitgeist of Chicago's cut-throat newspaper competition at the turn of the twentieth century; and Carl Sandburg, who reported on societal causes of the 1919 Chicago Race Riots for the paper while working on the poem "Chicago" and who would go on to become one of America's most cherished poets; and

**WHEREAS**, the Chicago Daily News' pioneering foreign news service, established in 1898, became a model for other American newspapers and had an international reputation for

employing some of the best correspondents in the world. Among the standouts were the newspaper's first correspondent, Edward Price Bell, who oversaw the European bureaus from London and whose work led him to be nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize; Paul Scott Mowrer and his brother Edgar Ansel Mowrer, both of whom won Pulitzer Prizes for their foreign correspondence; and John Gunther, who reported from dozens of world capitols before writing the successful Inside book series; and

**WHEREAS**, the Chicago Daily News had a series of well-respected, syndicated columnists and cartoonists who used humor to comment on Chicago and larger social and political issues, including Eugene Field, John T. McCutcheon, George Ade, and Pulitzer Prize winners Vaughn Shoemaker and Mike Royko;

**WHEREAS**, the Building is a significant Art Deco skyscraper that epitomizes the style with its bold geometric form, use of setbacks (influenced by the 1923 Chicago zoning ordinance), and modern stylized ornament. The Building exhibits fine craftsmanship and detailing in its use of materials, including limestone, granite, marble, and bronze- and silver-finished metal; and

**WHEREAS**, the Building's bas-relief panels and sculptural ornament by noted Illinois artist Alvin W. Meyer are excellent examples of Art Deco design using symbolic and figurative references to the history of writing, printing, and American newspaper publishing; and

**WHEREAS**, the Building is significant as the first major office building in Chicago to be constructed using air rights over railroad tracks and for its innovative engineering solutions to the difficulties of such sites, including its truss and cantilevered framing system over railroad tracks and its novel venting system for railroad engine exhaust. Additionally, its pedestrian concourse was an inventive solution to the separation of pedestrian and vehicular traffic which linked to a commuter railroad station; and

**WHEREAS**, the Building's riverfront plaza was the first public plaza for a private office building in Chicago and ranks as one of the earliest in the United States, predating New York's Rockefeller Center by several years; and

**WHEREAS**, the Building has been noted by critics for its architectural excellence and innovation since its completion in 1929. The design and construction of the Building was covered in numerous architectural journals, newspapers, and magazines, and has been cited by architectural historians as a significant example of Art Deco architecture. The Building was also awarded gold medals from the Chicago chapter of the American Institute of Architects and the Architectural League of New York; and

**WHEREAS**, the Building is the work of Holabird & Root, one of the most significant early twentieth-century Chicago architectural firms and the successor firm to Holabird & Roche, whose "Chicago School" buildings influenced the development of modern steel-and-glass skyscrapers; and

**WHEREAS**, the firm, led by partners John A. Holabird (1886-1945) and John Wellborn Root, Jr. (1887-1963), was preeminent in the United States for its innovative, stepped-back commercial skyscrapers, with their crisp geometric forms, recessed vertical bands, and modern ornament; and

**WHEREAS**, Gilbert Hall (1884-1971), one of the firm's chief designers and a nationally important draftsman and architectural renderer, was an important contributor to the Building's distinctive appearance; and

**WHEREAS**, with its riverfront plaza and dramatic setback design, the Building is one of most prominent historic buildings along the South Branch of the Chicago River; and

**WHEREAS**, in combination with the neighboring Civic Opera Building, the Building creates a distinctive cross-river urban ensemble, second only to the grouping formed around the Michigan Avenue Bridge by the Tribune Tower and the Wrigley, London Guarantee, and 333 North Michigan buildings; 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 May 7, 2026, 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.
- The riverfront plaza spanning from Madison Street to Washington Street, including but not limited to the fountain, balustrades, obelisks, and light fixtures overlooking the river.
- The basement 1 dock arcade (river wall) facing the Chicago River. The dock interior is not considered significant.
- The first-floor, southwest (Madison Street) Building vestibule, corridor/lobby, two elevator lobbies, and stair up to the second-floor lobby. The existing non-historic ADA lift in the vestibule and non-historic lighting throughout are not considered significant historical and architectural features for the purposes of this Chicago landmark designation, as depicted in Exhibit 2.

- The second-floor, southwest Building lobby and the stair down to the first-floor lobby, and the two elevator lobbies, including the north corridor. Existing non-historic turnstiles, security desk, screen walls, bench seating, and overhead lighting are not considered significant historical and architectural features for the purposes of this Chicago landmark designation, as depicted in Exhibit 3.
- The double-height, second-floor concourse spanning from the east riverfront entrance to the west bridge to the Ogilvie Transportation Center, as depicted in Exhibits 2 and 3, including but not limited to the following:
  - Overall spatial volume of the double-height concourse and upper-level arcade;
  - Stone wall finishes, revealed finished returns on the columns and detailing, historic display cases, and grilles;
  - Ornamental exterior east entrance surround and two side entrance vestibules flanking the main east entrance to the concourse;
  - Outer lobby connecting the concourse to the second-floor lobby;
  - The non-historic digital screen on the west wall of the concourse is not a significant historical or architectural feature for the purposes of this Chicago landmark designation. In-kind replacement of this screen shall be allowed by the Commission.

For the purposes of Section 2-120-740 of the Municipal Code, the following “Additional Guidelines – General” shall apply to the Building:

To the extent the significant historical and architectural features are specifically identified in the designation ordinance, the Commission’s review of work proposed for these spaces should ensure that the historic features and character of the interior and exterior of the Building and the riverfront plaza are preserved long-term while allowing reasonable flexibility to meet continuing and new needs, whether related to the continued current uses of the riverfront plaza and the interior and exterior of the Building or in accommodating future uses and to the extent such consideration is not otherwise inconsistent with the intent of the Chicago Landmarks Ordinance.

**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.