



City of Chicago



R2021-938

Office of the City Clerk

Document Tracking Sheet

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| Meeting Date: | 9/14/2021 |
| Sponsor(s): | La Spata (1) Smith (43) |
| Type: | Resolution |
| Title: | Call for hearing(s) on landmark and historic preservation policy |
| Committee(s) Assignment: | Committee on Zoning, Landmarks and Building Standards |

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the City of Chicago has a lengthy history of advisory bodies and ordinances pertaining to the protection of landmarks, to ensure that certain landmarked buildings and buildings within historic districts are protected by law; and,

WHEREAS, the City of Chicago conducted a Chicago Historic Resources Survey, which was a decade-long research effort to analyze the historic and architectural importance of all buildings constructed in the city prior to 1940; and,

WHEREAS, the City of Chicago maintains these planning structures through the Historic Preservation Division within the Department of Planning and Development, to promote the preservation of Chicago historic resources; and the Chicago Commission on Landmarks, to recommend buildings, structures, sites, and districts for legal protection, as well as reviewing proposed alterations and demolitions; and,

WHEREAS, numerous historic districts and landmarks across the City have experienced unsanctioned demolitions and purposeful neglect by building owners, which have been difficult for the City to enforce via fines and other legal actions; and,

WHEREAS, professional best practices in urban planning and architectural fields, as well as cultural attitudes and aesthetics, have evolved over time to appreciate a wider range of vernacular and modern architectural styles, which would benefit from an updated Chicago Historic Resources survey; and,

WHEREAS, there are numerous development practices within historic districts, with landmarks, and with vernacular forms of architecture, including two- and four-flats, that reduce the density of neighborhoods, which could adversely impact the benefits these historic districts provide to the City, as well as impacting the affordability of housing in these areas; and,

WHEREAS, the Corporation Counsel of the City of Chicago can provide legal guidance for updating the Municipal Code to enforce unsanctioned demolition and construction practices related to landmarks and historic districts, including, but not limited to, designing a specific rubric for assessing the significance of buildings and the magnitude of certain unsanctioned demolition and construction practices so that the Department of Law may effectively prosecute offenders; and,

WHEREAS, the Commissioner of the Department of Planning and Development, as well as leadership within the Historic Preservation Division, can provide planning best practices and speak to budgetary needs for updating a Chicago Historic Resources survey, to ensure that architectural surveys that guide City development policy reflect updated professional practices and shifts in cultural attitudes and aesthetics; therefore

NOW BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CHICAGO, a hearing is called to discuss landmark and historic preservation policy, including (but not limited to) the following topics:

- (1) Addressing and categorizing the severity of unsanctioned demolition and construction practices involving landmarks or protected buildings within historic districts;
- (2) Addressing landmark and historic district properties that are under willful neglect by their property owners, and assessing the effectiveness of recent policy proposals and changes in the Municipal Code to discourage these practices;
- (3) Reporting on the number of building permits that have reduced the density (ex., number of dwelling units) of landmarks and historic district buildings;
- (4) Addressing the Chicago Historic Resources Survey, and discussing the cost of implementing a new survey;
- (5) Discussing contemporary urban planning and architectural best practices in order to recognize the significance of certain vernacular buildings and modern forms of design.

NOW BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, following the hearing, any policy-related action steps shall be taken into consideration for potential planning reports; shaping internal legal guidance within the Department of Law, Department of Planning and Development, and Department of Buildings; and determining budgeting needs to expand Historic Preservation division staff, or properly fund consultancies, in order to conduct an updated Chicago Historic Resources Survey.



Daniel La Spata
Alderman, 1st Ward

This Resolution is Co-Sponsored by:

Alderson Michelle Smith, 43rd Ward