



City of Chicago



O2018-88

Office of the City Clerk

Document Tracking Sheet

Meeting Date: 1/17/2018

Sponsor(s): Misc. Transmittal

Type: Ordinance

Title: Historical Landmark designation for Old Chicago Main Post Office Building at 401-439 Van Buren St, 401-535 S. Canal St and 400-436 W Harrison St

Committee(s) Assignment: Committee on Zoning, Landmarks and Building Standards



DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
CITY OF CHICAGO

January 11, 2018

The Honorable Anna Valencia
City Clerk
City of Chicago
Room 107, City Hall
121 North LaSalle Street
Chicago, IL 60602

RE: Recommendation for the designation of the Old Chicago Main Post Office Building be designated as a Chicago Landmark, 401-439 W. Van Buren Street, 401-535 S. Canal Street, and 400-436 W. Harrison Street

Dear Clerk Valencia:

We are filing with your office for introduction at the January 17, 2018, City Council meeting as a transmittal to the Mayor and City Council of Chicago the recommendation of the Commission on Chicago Landmarks that the Old Chicago Main Post Office Building be designated as a Chicago Landmark.

The material being submitted to you for this proposal includes the:

1. Recommendation of the Commission on Chicago Landmarks; and
2. Proposed Ordinance.

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

Eleanor Esser Gorski, AIA
Deputy Commissioner
Planning, Design and Historic Preservation Division
Department of Planning and Development

encls.

cc: Alderman Daniel Solis, 25th Ward (*via email without enclosure*)

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CITY CLERK

ORDINANCE

Old Chicago Main Post Office Building 404 West Harrison Street (also known as 433 West Van Buren Street)

WHEREAS, pursuant to Section 2-120-650 of the Municipal Code, the Commission shall notify the owner of its determination with respect to the proposed Chicago Landmark designation within 45 days after receipt of the owner's consent; and

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 meets the four (4) criteria for landmark designation set forth in Sections 2-120-620 (1), (4), (5), and (7) of the Municipal Code; and

WHEREAS, the Building is unique in the historic context of Chicago as the only surviving historic main post office building in Chicago. It is both locally and nationally significant for its role in mail delivery, a primary function of the United States federal government, and it exemplifies locally the significance of the United States Post Office Department to the city, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, as the main postal facility for Chicago between 1934 and 1996, the Building made possible efficient and comprehensive mail service for the city and its larger metropolitan area; and

WHEREAS, the Building was the nexus of activity for the transport of mail throughout the United States and was critical to communications in the United States in the age before the internet; and

WHEREAS, the Building began as a smaller, more modestly-designed United States Mail Building built to facilitate the delivery of parcel post in and through Chicago. Its location over railroad tracks along the west bank of the Chicago River's South Branch allowed ease of integration between postal service activities and the railroads that served this federal department, which continued with the construction of the Building; and

WHEREAS, the Building, through its location above Near West Side rail tracks and adjacent to Union Station, is one of the most significant buildings that resulted directly from the 1909 Plan of Chicago. As such, it exemplifies the historic importance of this seminal planning document in the economic and architectural history of Chicago; and

WHEREAS, the Building is subject to a Preservation Covenant which binds owners of the property to restore, maintain and preserve the property in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings; and

WHEREAS, the Building is a grandly-scaled building designed in a modernized Classical variation of the Art Deco architectural style. Federal government buildings had a long tradition of construction in Classical styles. The Building combines modernized Classical ornamentation with sleek, modern forms and detailing to create a building that is a prominent example of modernized Classical / Art Deco-style architecture in Chicago; and

WHEREAS, the Building has excellent craftsmanship in stone, glass mosaic and decorative metal, both in its exterior and in its main lobby off Van Buren Street; and

WHEREAS, the Building, through its architecture, exemplifies the elaborate mail delivery, sorting and storage processes that made possible mail delivery on the giant scale necessary for twentieth-century Chicago; and

WHEREAS, Graham, Anderson, Probst and White, the architect of the Building, was one of the most significant architectural firms working in Chicago in the 1910s and early 1930s. A successor firm to D. H. Burnham & Co., Graham, Anderson, Probst & White was a major designer of large-scale commercial, transportation, institutional and governmental buildings in the city; and

WHEREAS, Graham, Anderson, Probst and White designed many architecturally significant buildings, including the Merchandise Mart, the Civic Opera House Building, the Field Building, the Pittsfield Building, the Shedd Aquarium, and the Chicago Historical Society; and

WHEREAS, the close integration of below-grade railroad tracks with the Building owed much to Graham, Anderson, Probst and White's experience with railway facilities, having designed major rail stations in Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and Cleveland, as well as Union Station here in Chicago; and

WHEREAS, the Building is a visual "landmark" on the western edge of downtown Chicago due to its great scale and its location on the western bank of the South Branch of the Chicago River, easily visible from many directions; and

WHEREAS, the Building is also visually unique with its historic vehicular passage built into the base of the building in 1934 and intended eventually to accommodate a large-scale extension of Congress Street. Built twenty years later, the Eisenhower Expressway now passes through the building, making the building the de-facto "gateway" to Chicago's Loop for motorists from Chicago's West Side and the western suburbs; 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 December 7, 2017, 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:

(a.) all exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the building; and

(b.) the interior of the Van Buren Street lobby, as depicted and identified in the attached Exhibit B.

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 its passage and approval.

EXHIBIT A

Building Address

Commonly known as: 404 West Harrison Street, Chicago, Illinois 60607 (also known as 433 West Van Buren Street, Chicago, Illinois 60607)

Permanent Index Number

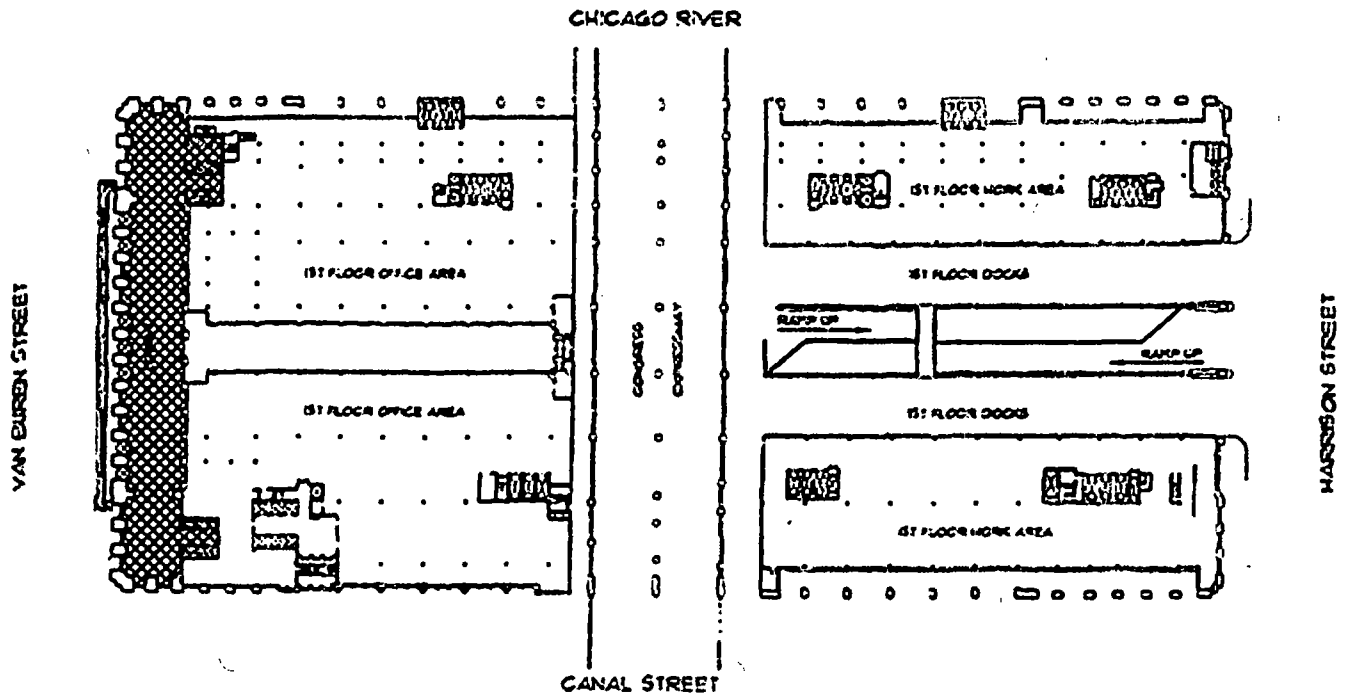
17-16-130-001-0000

Legal Description

LOT 11 (EXCEPT THE WEST 20 FEET THEREOF) IN RAILROAD COMPANIES' RESUBDIVISION OF BLOCKS 62 TO 76, INCLUSIVE, 78, PARTS OF 61 AND 67 AND CERTAIN VACATED STREETS AND ALLEYS IN SCHOOL SECTION ADDITION TO CHICAGO, BEING A SUBDIVISION OF SECTION 16, TOWNSHIP 39 NORTH, RANGE 14, EAST OF THE THIRD PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, IN COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS.

EXHIBIT B

Van Buren Street Lobby



**CITY OF CHICAGO
COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS**

December 7, 2017

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

**OLD CHICAGO MAIN POST OFFICE BUILDING
433 W. Van Buren Street**

**Including the Following Address Ranges:
401-439 W. Van Buren Street, 401-535 S. Canal Street, and 400-436 W. Harrison Street**

Docket No. 2017-05

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 Old Chicago Main Post Office 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 four (4) 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.*
7. *Its unique location or distinctive physical appearance or presence representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community, or the City of Chicago.*

I. BACKGROUND

The formal landmark designation process for the Building began on October 5, 2017 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 four (4) of the seven (7) criteria for designation, as well as the integrity criterion, identified in the Chicago Landmarks Ordinance (Municipal Code, Section 2-120-580 *et seq.*). The Preliminary Recommendation, incorporated herein and attached hereto as **Exhibit A**, initiated the process for further study and analysis of the proposed designation of the Building as a Chicago Landmark. As part of the Preliminary Recommendation, the Commission identified the “significant historical and architectural features” of the Building as:

- All exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the building; and
- The interior of the Van Buren Street lobby, as depicted and identified in the attached exhibit.

Also, as part of the Preliminary Recommendation, the Commission adopted a Designation Report, dated October 5, 2017, incorporated herein and attached hereto as **Exhibit B**.

At its regular meeting of November 2, 2017, the Commission received a statement from David Reifman, Commissioner of the Department of Planning and Development, supporting the proposed landmark designation of the Building.

In a letter dated November 3, 2017, the Commission officially requested the consent to the proposed landmark designation from the owner of the Building. On November 3, 2017, the Commission received a consent form, November 3, 2017, and signed by Mark Karasick, Manager of Managing Member, SL Chicago Member, the owner of the Building, consenting to the proposed landmark designation of the Building.

II. FINDINGS OF THE COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS

WHEREAS, pursuant to Section 2-120-650 of the Municipal Code, the Commission shall notify the owner of its determination with respect to the proposed Chicago Landmark designation within 45 days after receipt of the owner’s consent; and

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 meets the four (4) criteria for landmark designation set forth in Sections 2-120-620 (1), (4), (5), and (7) of the Municipal Code; and

WHEREAS, the Building is unique in the historic context of Chicago as the only surviving historic main post office building in Chicago. It is both locally and nationally significant for its role in mail delivery, a primary function of the United States federal government, and it exemplifies locally the significance of the United States Post Office Department to the city, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, as the main postal facility for Chicago between 1934 and 1996, the Building made possible efficient and comprehensive mail service for the city and its larger metropolitan area; and

WHEREAS, the Building was the nexus of activity for the transport of mail throughout the United States and was critical to communications in the United States in the age before the internet; and

WHEREAS, the Building began as a smaller, more modestly-designed United States Mail Building built to facilitate the delivery of parcel post in and through Chicago. Its location over railroad tracks along the west bank of the Chicago River's South Branch allowed ease of integration between postal service activities and the railroads that served this federal department, which continued with the construction of the Building; and

WHEREAS, the Building, through its location above Near West Side rail tracks and adjacent to Union Station, is one of the most significant buildings that resulted directly from the 1909 Plan of Chicago. As such, it exemplifies the historic importance of this seminal planning document in the economic and architectural history of Chicago; and

WHEREAS, the Building is subject to a Preservation Covenant which binds owners of the property to restore, maintain and preserve the property in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings; and

WHEREAS, the Building is a grandly-scaled building designed in a modernized Classical variation of the Art Deco architectural style. Federal government buildings had a long tradition of construction in Classical styles. The Building combines modernized Classical ornamentation with sleek, modern forms and detailing to create a building that is a prominent example of modernized Classical / Art Deco-style architecture in Chicago; and

WHEREAS, the Building has excellent craftsmanship in stone, glass mosaic and decorative metal, both in its exterior and in its main lobby off Van Buren Street; and

WHEREAS, the Building, through its architecture, exemplifies the elaborate mail delivery, sorting and storage processes that made possible mail delivery on the giant scale necessary for twentieth-century Chicago; and

WHEREAS, Graham, Anderson, Probst and White, the architect of the Building, was one of the most significant architectural firms working in Chicago in the 1910s and early 1930s. A successor firm to D. H. Burnham & Co., Graham, Anderson, Probst & White was a major designer of large-scale commercial, transportation, institutional and governmental buildings in the city; and

WHEREAS, Graham, Anderson, Probst and White designed many architecturally significant buildings, including the Merchandise Mart, the Civic Opera House Building, the Field Building, the Pittsfield Building, the Shedd Aquarium, and the Chicago Historical Society; and

WHEREAS, the close integration of below-grade railroad tracks with the Building owed much to Graham, Anderson, Probst and White's experience with railway facilities, having designed major rail stations in Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and Cleveland, as well as Union Station here in Chicago; and

WHEREAS, the Building is a visual "landmark" on the western edge of downtown Chicago due to its great scale and its location on the western bank of the South Branch of the Chicago River, easily visible from many directions; and


WHEREAS, the Building is also visually unique with its historic vehicular passage built into the base of the building in 1934 and intended eventually to accommodate a large-scale extension of Congress Street. Built twenty years later, the Eisenhower Expressway now passes through the building, making the building the de-facto "gateway" to Chicago's Loop for motorists from Chicago's West Side and the western suburbs; 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; 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 7th day of December 2017; and
3. Finds, based on the Designation Report and the entire record before the Commission, that the Building meets the four (4) criteria for landmark designation set forth in Section 2-120-620 (1), (4), (5), and (7) 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:
 - (a.) All exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the building; and
 - (b.) The interior of the Van Buren Street lobby, as depicted and identified in the attached exhibit.
6. Recommends the designation of the Old Main Post Office Building as a Chicago Landmark.

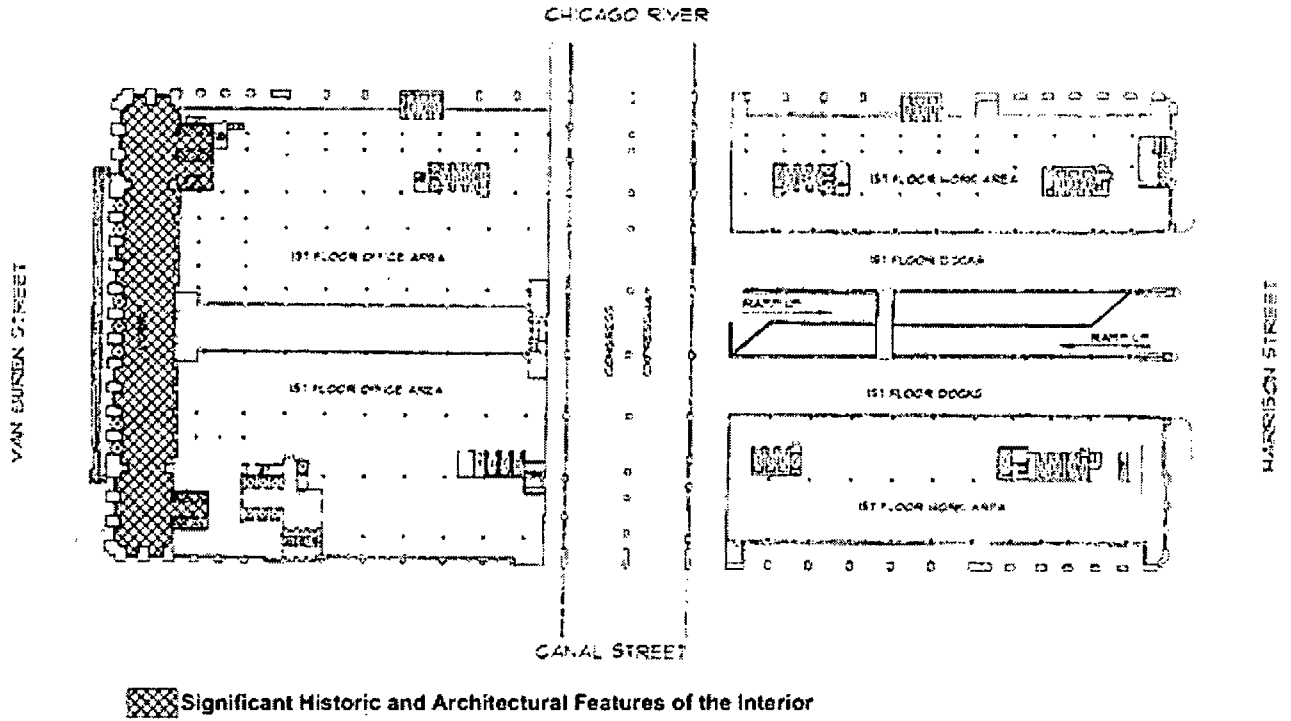
This recommendation was adopted unanimously (8-0)



Rafael M. Leon, Chairman
Commission on Chicago Landmarks

Dated: December 7, 2017

Exhibit A:
Old Chicago Main Post Office Building



Resolution
by the
Commission on Chicago Landmarks
on the
Preliminary Landmark Recommendation
for the

OLD CHICAGO MAIN POST OFFICE BUILDING
433 W. Van Buren Street

October 5, 2017

Whereas, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks (the "Commission") preliminarily finds that:

- the Old Chicago Main Post Office Building (the "Building"), located at the address noted above, meets four (4) criteria for landmark designation as set forth in Section 2-120-620 (1), (4), (5) and (7) of the Municipal Code of Chicago (the "Municipal Code"), as specifically described in the Preliminary Summary of Information submitted to the Commission on this 5th day of October, 2017, by the Department of Planning and Development (the "Preliminary Summary"); and
- the Building satisfies the historic integrity requirement set forth in Section 2-120-630 of the Municipal Code as described in the Preliminary Summary; now, therefore

Be it resolved by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks:

Section 1. The above recitals are expressly incorporated in and made part of this resolution as though fully set forth herein.

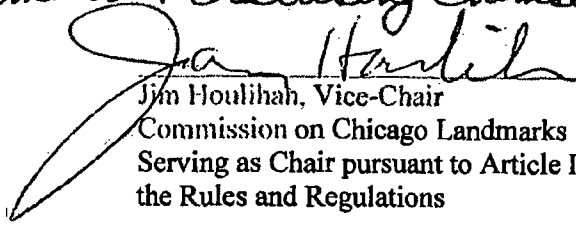
Section 2. The Commission hereby adopts the Preliminary Summary and makes a preliminary landmark recommendation concerning the Building in accordance with Section 2-120-630 of the Municipal Code.

Section 3. For purposes of Section 2-120-740 of the Municipal Code governing permit review, the significant historical and architectural features of the Building are preliminarily identified as:

- All exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the Building; and
- the interior of the Van Buren Street lobby, as depicted and identified **Exhibit A**, attached hereto and incorporated herein.

Section 4. The Commission hereby requests a report from the Commissioner of the Department of Planning and Development which evaluates the relationship of the proposed designation to the City's governing plans and policies and the effect of the proposed designation on the surrounding neighborhood in accordance with Section 2-120-640 of the Municipal Code.

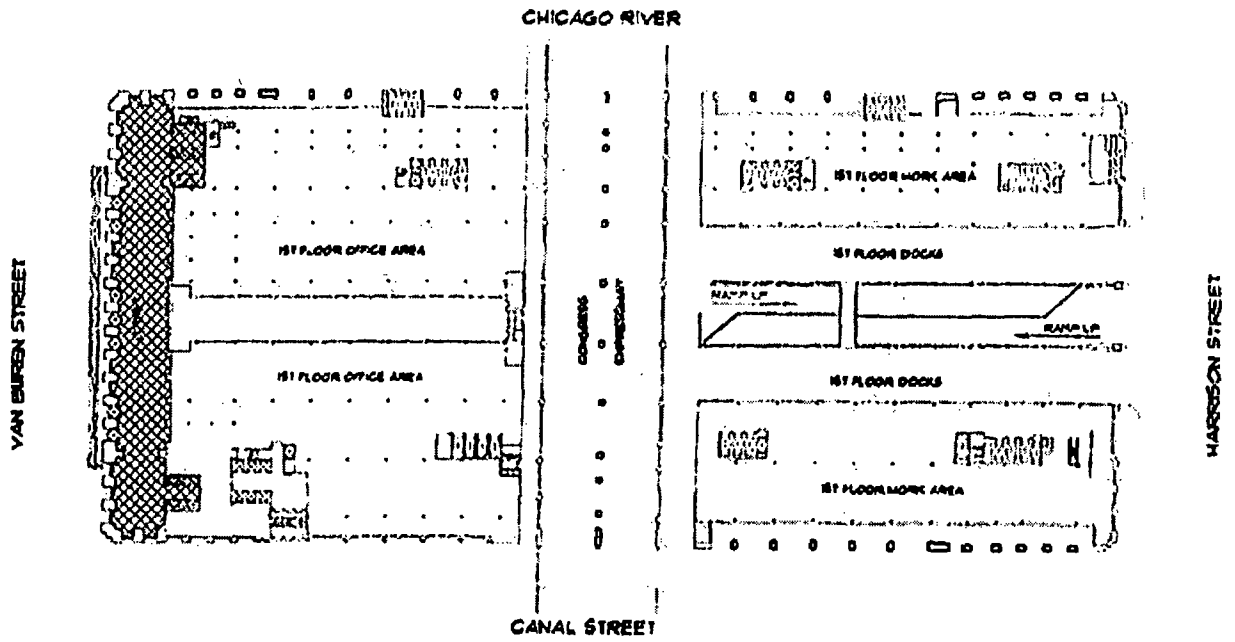
This recommendation was adopted 5-0 with one Commission member recusing himself.



Jim Houlihah, Vice-Chair
Commission on Chicago Landmarks
Serving as Chair pursuant to Article I.A.2.b. of
the Rules and Regulations

Dated: October 5, 2017

Exhibit A:
Old Chicago Main Post Office Building



 Significant Historic and Architectural Features of the Interior



"Exhibit B"

**DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
CITY OF CHICAGO**

November 2, 2017

Report to the Commission on Chicago Landmarks

on the


**Old Main Post Office Building
433 West Van Buren Street**

The Department of Planning and Development finds that the proposed designation of the Old Main Post Office Building as a Chicago Landmark supports the City's overall planning goals for the Loop and Near West Side and is consistent with the City's governing policies and plans.

The Old Main Post Office Building closed 1996 and the 2.5 million-square-foot building remained vacant for years. In 2016 the Department issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) which resulted in a developer purchasing the historic building and planning a comprehensive rehabilitation. Landmark designation allows the developer to take advantage of the Cook County Class-L Property Tax Incentive in addition to the 20% Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit, both of which support the massive rehabilitation effort.

The renovation is underway and will convert the former mail facility to offices, primarily targeting commercial users attracted to the structure's 18-foot ceilings and 250,000-square-foot open floor spaces. Amenities will include a three-acre rooftop park, a landscaped public riverwalk, as well as a grand plaza for outdoor dining and leisure. The five-year, \$600 million rehabilitation project is projected to generate more than 1,500 construction jobs. An estimated 12,000 people could work in the building when fully-leased.

In conclusion, landmark designation of the Old Main Post Office Building supports the City's overall planning and economic development goals for Chicago's Loop and Near West Side community areas and is consistent with the City's governing policies and plans.



David L. Reifman
Commissioner