



## Cook County Hospital

**Addresses:** 1825 West Harrison Street

**Date:** 1913 (additions 1914, 1916, 1926)

**Architect:** Paul Gerhardt  
Richard E. Schmidt (addition 1)  
Eric E. Hall (additions 2 and 3)

**Style:** Classical Revival, with French Renaissance Revival Details

**CHRS Rating:** Orange

### Threat:

In 1994, the Illinois Medical District, an agency designated by the State of Illinois, decided that the old Cook County Hospital required demolition. No report or study was made public that showed the reasons for the agency to opt for demolition. Construction of a new Cook County Hospital followed, with the new facility scheduled to open by the end of 2002.

On August 1, 2002, the Cook County Board of Commissioners voted to grant a \$2.9 Million Dollar contract to a consulting firm that would plan the demolition of the old Cook County Hospital. Demolition is expected to cost between \$11 and \$25 Million Dollars. The land under the Main Building is planned to be converted to park space, while nearby, non-descript buildings from the 1950's are being retained. An existing park across the street is slated for new medical development.

Responding to the public's overwhelming disapproval of these activities, as well as phenomenal support in favor of reusing the existing structure, the Cook County Board voted in 2003 to allow developers to suggest possible options for reuse. However, it has become clear that the County is not acting in good faith: The County missed its own deadline for the release of project specifications, and has indicated that no such specifications are pending. Meanwhile, bids for demolition are being solicited presently.

### Fulfillment of Landmark Criteria:

Cook County Hospital meets a required number of the criteria established by the Chicago Landmarks Commission for preliminary landmark status.

**Integrity:** The north façade of the Main Building is almost completely intact, and the building looks much as it did in 1913. The building was constructed well, with solid and high quality materials, making it incredibly durable from an engineering standpoint, and allowing the building to age gracefully. The only loss to the façade was the removal of two mansard roof projections several decades ago, but these features could certainly be replaced.

- 1. Significant Architect:** Paul Gerhardt served as Cook County Architect, and also was the designer of a host of other municipal and educational buildings throughout Chicago. Most prominent among these is Lane Technical High School, at Addison Street and Western Avenue.
- 2. Significant Architecture:** The classical appearance of Cook County Hospital was intended to set the massive hospital apart from all other hospital buildings in the nation, and to suggest a "government" building.

The heavily ornamented façades of the Main Building are composed in a Classical Revival style with French Renaissance features, and their materials are of the highest quality. The base is composed of Maine granite with several courses of glazed terra cotta following, in imitation of polished granite. The remainder of the façade is cream-colored impervious brick, trimmed with white, glazed terra cotta. The spandrels between the huge columns are made of gold-hued, glazed terra cotta.

- 3. Critical Part of City's Heritage:** Cook County Hospital, at one time the largest hospital in the nation, is the material of legends. The façade of the building is world-famous, having appeared in movies, including *The Fugitive*, and having served as the basis for hit television shows, including *ER*. Numerous medical advances have also occurred at Cook County Hospital.

Most important of all, countless early immigrants and low-income residents, of all backgrounds, have viewed Cook County Hospital as a place for medical care. The hospital has even been referred to as "Chicago's Statue of Liberty." Preserving Cook County Hospital is about making the Illinois Medical District the best that it can be, for generations to come.

- 4. Site of Significant Event:** Historic events too numerous to mention have occurred at Cook County Hospital. Standouts include the first Blood Bank (1937) and the nation's first Trauma Unit (1966).