

Daily News Building



Overview:

The former home of the Chicago Daily News is an architectural gem that features an elegant art deco design. The site also includes an impressive pedestrian plaza that allows downtown workers to enjoy the riverfront against the backdrop of the historic Lyric Opera building. Without any local protections, the historic structure is vulnerable to alterations that deface its elegance, destroy its human-scale, and erode the quality of life for downtown workers and visitors

History:

The Chicago Daily News was an afternoon newspaper for Chicago's masses. Founded by Melville Stone in 1875, the daily paper thrived under the guidance of the longtime editor and owner Victor Lawson. The Pulitzer-award winning newspaper moved into a new 26-story headquarters building designed by architects Holabird and Root in 1929. Their work has shaped the Loop and many commercial districts throughout Chicago and other large cities. The Chicago Daily News building is notable not only for its rich art deco design and detailing but also because it was the first significant commercial building to embrace its riverfront location. Prior to this building, most businesses turned their backside to the river,

**Address: 400 W. Madison Street
or 2 N. Riverside Plaza**

PIN: 17-09-343-004-0000

Architect: Holabird and Root

Date: July 1929

CHRS Rating: Orange

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seeing it merely as a conduit for freight transportation and waste disposal. The Chicago Daily News building opened up to the river by creating a lively pedestrian plaza fronting the river. This plaza remains actively used today and serves as a gathering place for countless downtown workers and visitors. The building is also notable for its pioneering use of air rights above an active railroad right-of-way.

The building also featured a renowned mural by John W. Norton. Previously located on the ceiling of the lobby used by commuters, the mural is currently in storage awaiting conservation and restoration. While located in this headquarters building, the Chicago Daily News was a leader in nationally syndicated news columns and featured a top-notch foreign news service. During the hey-day period from 1929 to 1959, the paper was awarded the Pulitzer Prize eight times. Prominent writers such as Carl Sandburg and Mike Royko wrote for the newspaper.

Threat:

Despite its ideal location on the western edge of the Loop and immediately adjacent to the Union Station and Ogilvie commuter train stations, the building is considered a Class C office building and today is only 70% occupied. The owner of the building is investigating ways to

alter the site to create more leasable space especially in the pedestrian plaza that fronts the river. The owner previously proposed that the plaza be removed and replaced with a high-rise condominium tower. This proposal was not well-received by the City of Chicago when submitted in 2000. In recent months, the owner has re-initiated studies to consider ways to build upon the plaza to improve the financial performance of the site.

Recommendation:

The former Chicago Daily News building and its pedestrian plaza is one of several iconic structures that define Chicago's Loop. This and several other historical gems remain vulnerable to destruction due to the lack of local protections. We recommend that the City Council and Department of Planning & Development proceed with declaring the structure and its plaza a historic landmark. In the densely populated western Loop, the need for open space where people can meet friends and colleagues for lunch, dinner, or a cup of coffee is vast. We challenge the owner to find creative ways of improving the building while retaining the character of the original structure and the integrity of the pedestrian plaza.



Photos of Daily News Building: William Neuendorf