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Wrigley Rooftops

Address: Waveland and Sheffield Avenues, beyond the bleachers of Wrigley Field, 1060 W. Addison Street

Date: 1894 - 1919
(20 contributing buildings)

CHRS Rating: Four orange rated buildings
One green rated building
Remainder non-rated

National Register: Not listed

Threat:

Rooftop clubs overlooking Wrigley Field may soon receive approval to build higher—to a new height of 65 feet—to preserve their bird's-eye view of the ballpark. These additions are being granted, in part, because of a partial loss of the view of the park's interior that will result from the impending 1,790-seat expansion of the Wrigley Field bleachers. The Wrigley Rooftop additions would be built under the rules of a proposed "rooftop district" being drafted by Alderman Tom Tunney (44th) and officials of the Department of Planning and Development. Also, there are two new-construction buildings being planned for sites at 3615-19 N. Sheffield that would raise the total number of rooftop clubs from 13 to 15. The City of Chicago does not have sufficient design control over these two new buildings or control over the design of any additions. There is a risk of creating visual clutter where there is currently a classic Chicago-style brick and stone streetscape.

Preservation Chicago does not oppose rooftop additions. We do, however, feel that they should be executed with great care. We should not cheapen the rooftops with sterile glass and steel boxes. Requirements for "elevator towers" create a risk of ruining the historic profile of the rooftops. We should also avoid frontyard metal stairways to the rooftops. The city should ensure that any rooftop additions complement the solid buildings along Waveland and Sheffield avenues. Preservation Chicago recommends the use, where possible, of brick and stone in a manner that respects the buildings from which the additions rise.

Furthermore, Preservation Chicago recommends that the buildings that line Waveland and Sheffield avenues beyond the bleachers be designated as official landmarks of the City of Chicago as the "Wrigley Rooftop Landmark District." Landmarking is the best way to prevent future demolition and to prevent inappropriate alteration.

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Fullfillment of Landmark Criteria

Integrity:

The Wrigley Rooftop buildings prompt a unique discussion of integrity. There is excellent integrity of the brick and stone facades dating from the period of 1894-1919. Yet the history of the rooftop clubs themselves is part of the history of Wrigley Field, the neighborhood, and the city as a whole. In that sense, the integrity that has not been diminished by the rooftop clubs. The rooftop experience has served to enhance, rather than detract, from the historical integrity of this group of buildings.

Significant Architecture:

In 1906, the original owner of 3609-11 N. Sheffield, Mrs. Anna Mickle, likely did not envision that her 3-story brick apartment building, constructed by G.H. Truesdale Co., would one day be the subject of so much attention. After all, there was not a ballpark across the street at that time that her building was constructed. The same was true for G.A. Strandel, original owner of 1032-34 W. Waveland, whose 3-story building, constructed by the H.D. Moreland and Company, was also built in 1906. These individuals and the respective construction firms paint a prosaic picture of Chicago neighborhood development of 100 years ago. Therein lies the strength of the Wrigley Field experience. It is a neighborhood experience that is visually founded on the brick and stone facades of these classic Chicago buildings. Mrs. Mickle's building is now undergoing a renovation that is raising the height of the building's roof, and ultimately, the bleachers above. Meanwhile, Mr. Strandel's building features rooftop bleachers that will also seek a higher level once the impending expansion ordinance is created.

Critical Part of the City's Heritage:

The Wrigley Field experience and the famous vista of the city beyond are inextricably linked to the history of Chicago. Furthermore, along with Fenway Park in Boston, Wrigley Field provides the greatest connection between baseball of today and baseball of yesterday. The buildings along Waveland and Sheffield Avenues are a critical part of that connection.

Unique Visible Feature:

The vista of Chicago beyond the bleachers appears in the sports highlights on TV news programs around the country and in national telecasts of Cubs games. Thanks to this exposure, Wrigley's outfield panorama is the most commonly televised image of Chicago -- at least as seen by people in other cities. This image serves as a stunning billboard for Chicago.

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