OVERVIEW:
Originally constructed for a Polish congregation in the Pilsen neighborhood, St. Adalbert Roman Catholic Church is a Renaissance Revival complex designed by noted church architect Henry J. Schlacks, who worked for a time in the offices of Adler & Sullivan. Its soaring 185-foot twin towers are the highest structures in the Pilsen neighborhood and easily recognizable.

HISTORY:
The parish was founded in 1874. The earlier church structure was replaced by the current St. Adalbert in 1912. It is not only a fine example of Renaissance Revival architecture but also a chronicle of Polish history. The central figure of the church is a large statue of St. Adalbert and murals, stained glass windows and even the interior color scheme celebrate important Polish national heritage.

Fronting the street, the two buff-colored brick towers are ornamented with finely detailed terra cotta, pierced by arcades and capped by copper cupolas. Visitors enter through a portico defined by a series of polished granite Corinthian columns. Once inside, the interior is a soaring rectangular space based upon the form of Roman basilica.

The Polish community still worships in the church along with newer
Hispanic residents of the neighborhood and a growing English-speaking congregation of second-generation Americans.

**THREAT:**
The Archdiocese of Chicago has stated that portions of the towers are in need of reconstruction and a scaffolding has been installed on the public way in front of the building’s entrance portico. There is currently a campaign titled “Save the Towers” being lead by the religious community of St. Adalbert's seeking donations to address any potential masonry issues.

The Archdiocese of Chicago appears to have many challenges before it in addressing its many historic properties, each of which has played a significant role in the development of Chicago’s neighborhoods and often become landmarks to their communities both for congregants and residents at large. This is such a marked phenomenon that in many parts of the city a neighborhood’s name is nearly interchangeable or intimately associated with the name of its local church. In past years the Archdiocese has demonstrated, on the one hand, a commitment to restore its historic buildings (i.e., the nearby St. Paul's Church in Pilsen/Heart of Chicago and St. Clement's in Lincoln Park and St. Mary of the Angels in Bucktown) while on the other hand actively seeking to demolish others like St. James in Bronzeville, St. Boniface in West Town, St. Lawrence in Grand Crossing/South Shore and St. Dominic on the Near North Side, which is currently mothballed).

Preservation Chicago is bringing about an awareness of this issue of historic churches of all denominations throughout the city which have suffered from systemic deferred maintenance by highlighting the special case of St. Adalbert's.