



**The Goodman Theatre
and
Columbus Drive Plaza of the
Art Institute of Chicago**

Address: 120 South Columbus Drive

Date: Theatre: 1925
Plaza: 1977

Architects: Theatre: Howard Van Doren Shaw
Plaza: Walter Netsch of S.O.M.
Arch: Louis Sullivan

Style: Theatre: Classical Revival
Plaza: Modern

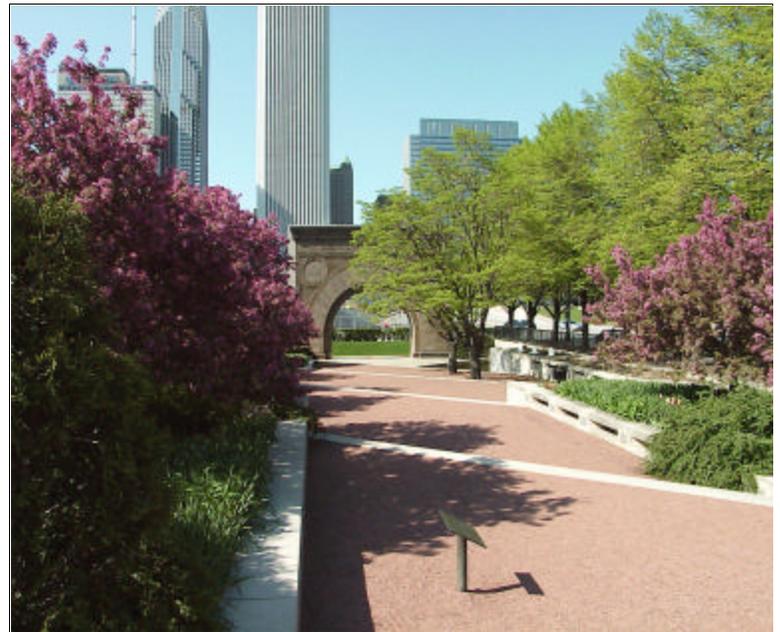
**CHRS
Rating:** Orange

Threat:

The Art Institute of Chicago has plans to demolish the Goodman Theatre on its downtown campus, ostensibly a prerequisite need before a new wing can be erected. Citing problems including lack of space and out-of-date heating and cooling systems, the Goodman Theatre staff built a new theatre in the downtown Theatre District, which opened in October of 2000. The Old Goodman Theatre has been vacant since that time.

The old Goodman Theatre exists primarily underground. An addition could be made that preserves the theatre, with additional space built above. Furthermore, due to the presence of the Illinois Central tracks running through the site below grade, a large amount of air-rights space is available to the immediate west of the theatre. This space could be leveraged to create new buildable "ground," with the added benefit of obscuring the unsightly tracks, much as has been done with Millennium Park to the north.

The Institute's current plan calls for the demolition of the Old Goodman Theatre. The neighboring railroad tracks would either remain exposed, or would be covered with a plaza. Meanwhile, a beautiful, existing public plaza at the corner of Monroe Street and Columbus Drive would be eliminated to accommodate the new building and its off-street bus unloading zone. This existing public plaza, complete with landscaping, integrated lighting and seating, mature trees and a fountain, was designed by the world-renowned Chicago architect Walter Netsch. The plaza is a key and integral part of his well-regarded Art Institute of Chicago expansion, and leads to Louis Sullivan's Stock Exchange Arch, a revered icon to Chicago's architectural community. Netsch's plan calls for the arch to be reactivated in the pedestrian realm as a gateway to an underground passage beneath Monroe Street, leading to what is now Millennium Park. The Art Institute has discussed relocating the arch elsewhere as a part of this expansion.



The descending stairs in the Columbus Drive Plaza were intended to lead to an underground pedway, which would connect to what is now Millennium Park. The pedestrian was to pass through Louis Sullivan's famous Stock Exchange arch prior to entering the stairway.

If the Art Institute's new space planning made better use of air rights above the existing Illinois Central tracks, the existing theatre and plaza could be retained. This arrangement would allow the great Sullivan Arch to become a part of the cultural Mecca of Millennium Park, as intended. Furthermore, the siting of the addition further west would allow it to be visible from Michigan Avenue, making a far greater impact on the city's most important thoroughfare. Finally, a mid-block site would allow the addition to engage in a true dialogue with Frank Gehry's Pritzker Pavilion in Millennium Park.

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Goodman Theatre and Columbus Drive Plaza (Continued from previous page)

Architecture: Designed in the Classical Revival style, the Goodman was built mostly underground due to height restrictions imposed on any structure erected on Grant Park. All that stands aboveground is the Classical portico of Indiana limestone. However, the fine detailing and reserved ornamentation of the entrance portico reveal the care and quality craftsmanship that exist in the below-grade interiors.

The architect of the structure was Howard Van Doren Shaw, one of Chicago's most noted architects. Shaw was born in 1869, and attended Yale, followed by architecture school at M.I.T. After working for a time in William LeBaron Jenney's office in Chicago, he began a practice designing residential properties in suburbs such as Kenwood and Hyde Park. Shaw's architectural style was to use different combinations of classical elements, intermixed with traditional English design. His look was ever-changing from Colonial to Tudor to Georgian, moving easily between them.

Besides the Goodman Theatre, he completed a few other commissions for the Art Institute of Chicago. Also, in addition to the Goodman Theatre, he was also the architect of Kenneth Sawyer Goodman's home in Hyde Park, and his tomb in Graceland Cemetery, which is designed as a miniature version of the theatre.

Shaw was noted for developing new theatrical technological innovations, such as the "sky dome," which is a curved shell of plaster extending over the back wall of the stage. He also created "wagon stages", movable 40' x 40' wooden platforms that helped to set up the next scene.

The Columbus Drive Plaza of the Art Institute was designed by Walter Netsch, a principle designer for Chicago-based Skidmore Owings and Merrill (S.O.M.), one of the world's most respected architectural firms. His noted addition to the Art Institute includes gallery space for the museum, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Columbus Drive Plaza. The exterior features artwork by Isamu Noguchi, and the famous Louis Sullivan Arch, which formerly graced the architect's master work on LaSalle Street, the Chicago Stock Exchange. Netsch's addition to the Art Institute also includes the carefully crafted canopy structures that lead to the Goodman Theatre portico.

History:

The Goodman Theater was established in 1925 as a memorial and tribute to Chicago playwright Kenneth Goodman, with funding provided by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. William O. Goodman. The Goodmans donated a sum of \$350,000 to establish a professional school of drama at the building. Kenneth Goodman was a poet and playwright who dreamed of establishing a school of drama. He was a naval officer in the first world war that at the young age of 34 died due to influenza. At the dedication ceremony on October 20, 1925, three of Kenneth Sawyer Goodman's plays were featured: Back of the Yards, The Green Scarf, and The Game of Chess.



Above, the underutilized site to the west of the proposed Art Institute expansion, shown looking from Monroe Street. Rather than demolishing historic buildings and established public space, this site could accommodate a striking new addition to the Art Institute of Chicago, clearly visible from Michigan Avenue and directly across from Millennium Park.

In 1931, the Goodman School of Drama was created. It lasted until 1957 when, due to lack of funding, there was a need to attract professional actors to intermix with the all-student casts to draw a national audience. Many greats have graced the Goodman's stage, such as Sam Wanamaker, Lillian Gish, James Earl Jones, Brian Dennehey and Christopher Walken.