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## **Landmarks Illinois releases alternative Olympic Village Plan**

**Thursday, August 13, 2009, Chicago, Ill.**—Landmarks Illinois, the state's leading advocacy voice for historic preservation, today issued an alternative site plan for the threatened Michael Reese Hospital complex—the proposed Olympic Village site in Chicago's 2016 Olympic bid.

The plan retains what Landmarks Illinois has identified as six of the campus' most viable historic buildings for re-use, reintegrates the area's street grid, saves significant landscaped areas, and retains the required amount of Olympic Village housing to meet the requirements of the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

“We believe this plan offers a more sustainable approach, not only for the Olympic Village but for a more viable neighborhood after the Olympics,” said Jim Peters, president and CEO of Landmarks Illinois. “By reusing the most adaptable historic buildings—just six of the 29 structures now scheduled for demolition—we think this will result in a more balanced approach for community development.”

“Our organization is supportive of the city's efforts to bring this important event to Chicago. This is why our plan incorporates all the necessary and critical elements identified by the IOC for the Olympic Village,” Peters noted. “Even though a decision on the Olympics will not be made until October 2<sup>nd</sup>, we felt it was critically important to put this plan on the table now, if only to stimulate alternative ideas before the project gets underway.”

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The main features presented in Landmarks Illinois' Olympic Village plan are:

- Saving and reusing a core of four buildings dating to the 1950s that were co-designed by Walter Gropius, who—along with Ludwig Mies van der Rohe—is considered to be one of the most influential architects of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. These buildings are grouped around a pair of open spaces by the renowned landscape designers Hideo Sasaki and Reginald Isaacs. Because all of these properties are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, their reuse would qualify for federal rehabilitation tax incentives.
- Preserving two additional iconic buildings—one, a modernist Power Plant (also by Gropius) that is visible from Lake Shore Drive, which would become the focus of a public plaza connecting to the lakefront; the other, the Prairie-style Michael Reese Building and its gateway bridge across 29<sup>th</sup> Street.
- Re-introducing the historic street grid back into the 37-acre site, which will provide sorely-needed connections to the surrounding neighborhood and the lakefront.
- Construction of Olympic housing that, while conforming to IOC standards, could better accommodate its transition from an Olympic Village into a residential, urban neighborhood after 2016. This would include future development of more than 3,000 parking spaces, a connection to the existing 27<sup>th</sup> Street Metra line station, retail spaces in strategic locations, and three pedestrian connections to the lakefront.

The Michael Reese Hospital complex, which is currently listed on Landmarks Illinois' "10 Most Endangered Historic Places" list, contains 29 buildings. The main hospital building was designed by Schmidt, Garden & Martin in 1907 and is one of the city's most significant early hospital designs, combining what were modern design concepts with rich architectural details. Recent research has revealed the design role and influence of architect and Bauhaus School founder Walter Gropius on the post-World War II expansion of the hospital campus.

In April 2009, city officials released a Request for Qualifications to award demolition contracts. \$11 million worth of demolition contracts were awarded in July 2009.

"The purpose of our efforts behind this alternative plan is to show how the most viable historic buildings on this campus can be saved and integrated into a successful Olympic Village—before it's too late," said Peters.

This project has been funded in part by a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

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*Landmarks Illinois is the state's leading voice for historic preservation. Since its founding in 1971, the 2,500-member statewide organization has gone on to save countless architectural and historic treasures throughout Illinois. Landmarks Illinois' mission today focuses on saving buildings, facilitating preservation, and educating the public through innovative programs and promotion. For more information, visit [www.Landmarks.org](http://www.Landmarks.org).*