



**Public Comment - Committee on Zoning, Landmarks and Building Standards meeting,  
March 23, 2021**

Bonnie McDonald

*President & CEO, Landmarks Illinois*

Good Morning, Chairman Tunney and Committee Members,

My name is Bonnie McDonald and I am president and CEO of Landmarks Illinois. We are a 50-year-old preservation advocacy organization representing the voices of Chicagoans and those across our state.

Today, we thank Alderman King for announcing that she has pulled her proposed cultural exhibits ordinance amendment. We had a productive meeting with Alderman King yesterday about our concerns and appreciate that she considered our points.

I'd like to go on record about why we and many others opposed this ordinance - because it would have negatively impacted cultural organizations small and large, those existing and being planned.

Our reading of the zoning code's definition of cultural exhibits is much more expansive than pertaining only to house museums. We also believe it would have applied to art exhibits, listening houses, private research libraries, scientific collections and more that provide learning opportunities for neighborhoods.

Our research showed more than 30 existing or planned cultural exhibits citywide would have been impacted by this ordinance. This number doesn't include the start-ups that we don't even know about.

The ordinance would have had several negative consequences, including:

- Requiring a rezoning or a special use permit would have been an insurmountable financial barrier for many small non-profit organizations.
- For existing organizations, while grandfathered, becoming a "nonconformity" would have made future expansion or reopening after a temporary closure more difficult.
- There was also a misunderstanding that all cultural exhibits are exempt from property tax. This is not the case, as several nonprofit-owned properties are still on the tax rolls.
- And, the City already has the authority to shut down cultural exhibits, and impose fines, within the existing zoning enforcement mechanisms for organizations that are operating outside their approvals and violating parking, traffic and noise concerns.

The coalition of partners speaking and watching today opposing this ordinance shows how much these organizations matter to their communities. We all believe there should be a future for cultural exhibits in residential zoned districts.



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We also understand Alderman King's desire to engage local residents in a dialogue about their benefits to the community and how to study and mitigate any real concerns. These organizations need innovative assistance programs, clear guidelines for operations, and, of

course, local support. We believe supporting such dialogue can be a continued conversation with the coalition of partners here today, but not under what was the proposed ordinance.

Thank you, again, to Alderman King and to the City Council Members that joined us in opposing this Ordinance and for letting me testify this morning.