FROM THE PRESIDENT
TO OUR MEMBERS

With the arrival of 2022, Landmarks Illinois marked the conclusion of its 50th anniversary year. In 2021, we celebrated our many accomplishments throughout the past five decades (like helping people save nearly 24,000 places in Illinois) while also planning for our future.

Where is Landmarks Illinois going in its next 50 years? We believe our preservation practices must change to remain relevant. Landmarks Illinois sees the need to redefine preservation so that more people, and more places, are a part of telling Illinois’ and our nation’s layered histories.

Kicking off this vision in the New Year is our PRESERVATION FORWARD event on March 10. This spring fundraiser will honor seven, 2022 Landmarks Illinois Influencers who are joining us in moving preservation forward. The evolution of our biggest event of the year comes as we reevaluate our programs and redefine preservation. For 15 years, we hosted the Legendary Landmarks Celebration each spring. We changed the program in 2021 and held our 50Forward anniversary celebration that highlighted 20 Landmarks Influencers who have had a monumental impact on our organization and preservation throughout Illinois. Turn to pages 2 and 3 of this newsletter to read more about PRESERVATION FORWARD next month and our 2022 Influencers.

Over the next year, we have ambitious plans to set new foundations for additional growth and change. We will work with consultants to refine our communications, improve and expand our equity, diversity and inclusion work, and develop a new strategic plan. Through your dedicated support, we’ll expand our staff to redesign and implement programs corresponding to this work. The celebration continues as we mark 10 years of the Skyline Council of Landmarks Illinois and its many accomplishments.

“This is a moment of exciting change, but change is never easy, especially with no roadmap for what we aspire to do – to move preservation forward.”

This is a moment of exciting change, but change is never easy, especially with no roadmap for what we aspire to do – to move preservation forward. I send sincere appreciation to our team, including the staff and our Board of Directors, for their patience and perseverance leading the change that we see is needed in preservation.

To our members, this work isn’t possible without you! You’re supporting people saving places for people, and with more people, in the future. We can all be proud of the accomplished, historic preservation nonprofit that we have built and will continue to build together as members, volunteers and staff. Here’s to a dynamic and successful year ahead.

With appreciation,

Bonnie McDonald
On March 10, Landmarks Illinois will host its PRESERVATION FORWARD event, a redesign of our popular spring fundraiser previously named the Legendary Landmarks Celebration. The reimagining of this event is a response to our 50th anniversary in 2021 when Landmarks Illinois set in motion its bold plans for the future of historic preservation. Our plan is to be more inclusive, engaging and to give communities more say in identifying places that are special to them and worth preserving.

What’s different?

One major change in our spring event is its location. Previously the celebration took place at the Hilton Chicago. PRESERVATION FORWARD, however, will be held at the Old Post Office in Chicago, a monumental building that was saved with the help of Landmarks Illinois sustained advocacy. After sitting vacant for nearly two decades, an $800 million renovation of the 2.5 million square-foot Old Post Office was completed in 2020.

Something else guests will notice at PRESERVATION FORWARD is a short awards program, giving you more networking opportunities, and cocktails and interactive food stations will replace a sit-down dinner. Guests will also enjoy an after-party featuring desserts from Chicago’s pastry chefs, late-night snacks and music entertainment.

Who are we honoring?

PRESERVATION FORWARD will recognize people joining us in our push to move the preservation field forward, our 2022 Landmarks Illinois Influencers. This year’s honorees are a group of seven women, leaders shaping our communities and inspiring us to rethink how we save places and for whom. When choosing our 2022 Landmarks Illinois Influencers, we were inspired by our Women Who Built Illinois Database launched in 2021. This first-of-its-kind database includes more than 100 women who shaped Illinois’ built environment from 1879-1979, but often went unrecognized for their work. The first annual PRESERVATION FORWARD continues this effort to call attention to women making a positive impact on their communities and our built environment.

We are honored to call attention to our 2022 Landmarks Illinois Influencers next month at PRESERVATION FORWARD and hope you will join us for the celebration! Visit Landmarks.org/events/preservation-forward to learn more about the event and each of our 2022 Influencers.

Above: Credit Liz Chilsen; right: Credit Ken DeMuth

2022 INFLUENCERS

Mariah DiGrino
Partner, DLA Piper

Mariah DiGrino is one of Chicago’s principal attorneys making adaptive reuse projects feasible and attractive to developers in the Loop and the city’s neighborhoods through incentives and public policy. As one of the all-female executive team who redeveloped the Old Post Office, Mariah reinforces how women are in the lead on Chicago’s preservation projects.

Eleanor Esser Gorski
Executive Director, Cook County Land Bank Authority

Through multiple leadership roles with the City of Chicago and now the Cook County Land Bank Authority, Eleanor Esser Gorski has advanced historic preservation as an integral part of Chicago’s economic and community development strategy. Her groundbreaking work to develop Chicago’s Neighborhood Opportunity Fund is providing needed capital to small business owners on the city’s South and West Sides.

Tiara Hughes
Chicago Landmarks Commission, Commissioner, FIRST 500 Founder, SOM Senior Urban Designer

Architect Tiara Hughes is a strong leader on the Commission on Chicago Landmarks where she advocates for a heightened level of equity and inclusion in the City’s landmarking process, empowering communities to decide which places they want to save. Through her civic leadership, activism, and her creation of the FIRST 500 platform to promote the voices of Black women architects, Tiara is reshaping preservation’s future for the better.

Cheryl Johnson
Executive Director, People for Community Recovery

As Executive Director of People for Community Recovery, Cheryl Johnson has been a fierce advocate for preserving affordable housing at Chicago’s historic Altgeld Gardens and Phillip Murray Homes. A lifelong resident of Altgeld Gardens, Cheryl is a well-known and highly trusted community leader where she continues to fight for environmental justice and economic equity for south side and south suburban residents.

Tonika Lewis Johnson
Social Justice Artist

Tonika Johnson is a photographer, social justice artist and life-long resident of Chicago’s South Side Englewood neighborhood. Her work, including that through her Folded Map Project™ and her new Inequity for Sale project, reveals injustices and inequities in real estate and land use practices, including historic preservation, and encourages us to reevaluate and create positive change.

Stacey Pfingsten
Executive Vice President, American Institute of Architects Illinois

Stacey Pfingsten has been an effective grassroots preservation advocate and is now using her persuasive skills to imbue preservation as a part of Illinois’ extensive architecture community as AIA Illinois Executive Vice President. Her forward-thinking legislative and education work is positioning preservation for future success.

Alicia Ponce
AIA, NCARB, LEED AP BD+C, Founding Principal, APManarch

As the founder and principal at a female- and Latina- owned architecture firm, Alicia Ponce works to adaptively reuse existing and historic buildings and make them healthy and sustainable. Her efforts are not only inspirational, but demonstrate how reusing places of our past can contribute to carbon reduction and fight climate change.

Above: Credit Liz Chilsen; right: Credit Ken DeMuth
STATEWIDE NEWS

THE STATE OF PRESERVATION

SCHMIDTKE HOUSE Elgin

The Schmidtke House, newly annexed from unincorporated Kane County into the city of Elgin, has consequently lost its county landmark protection and will be demolished as part of a warehouse development if not relocated. Landmarks Illinois and the Kane County Historic Preservation Commission urged the Elgin Heritage Commission to facilitate a preservation outcome with Elgin’s City Council. The developer stated he will give the midcentury home to a party willing to relocate it by an April deadline. Local architect John Schmidtke built the home for his family in 1967 at 35W655 Toll Gate Road. It was designated a Kane County Landmark in 1996.

COURTESY KANE COUNTY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

GILLSON PARK Wilmette

The Wilmette Park District has undertaken a comprehensive planning process regarding future changes to Gillson Park, prompting residents to push for local preservation and park advocates to form Keep Gillson Green (KGG), a group urging the least intrusive design option proposed by park district consultants. With KGG and architectural historians, Landmarks Illinois advised park district officials to accept Concept 1 of the five proposals, a design that would have minimal impact on the Prairie School-inspired park’s historic integrity. The 1915 waterfront park was improved in 1933 by noted landscape architects C.D. Wagstaff and Robert Everly, who incorporated the park’s distinctive curvilinear roadways, informal tree plantings and stone council rings.

COURTESY WILLIAM ZBOREN

BRESEE TOWER Danville

Listed on Landmarks Illinois’ 2012 Most Endangered Historic Places in Illinois, Bresee Tower in Danville is in immediate danger of demolition. The Classical Revival-style building, designed by the Chicago firm of Mundie & Jensen, was built in 1917 as the First National Bank. It is the tallest building in Danville and was listed on the National Register in 2018. The building has experienced severe dilapidation following 16 years of vacancy and poses a safety risk. Landmarks Illinois is advocating for the preservation of Bresee Tower and is coordinating with an architectural firm and a developer who have interest in adaptively reusing the building for housing.

COURTESY ILLINOIS ROUTE 66 SCENIC BYWAY

IN THE FIELD

JAMES R. THOMPSON CENTER Chicago

In December 2021, Gov. J.B. Pritzker announced the state had selected a purchaser for the Thompson Center: Prime Group, which plans to reuse, rather than demolish, the Helmut Jahn–designed Post Modern building that Landmarks Illinois included four times on its Most Endangered list. Based on renderings presented by Prime Group, the building will get a dramatic overhaul including a new glass curtain wall, new mechanical systems and changes to the iconic atrium to create retail, hotel and office space. Landmarks Illinois views the proposal as a preservation success for the long-threatened building, but is hopeful more of the structure’s aesthetic integrity is retained. A National Register of Historic Places nomination for the building, commissioned by Landmarks Illinois and funded by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, is under review with the National Park Service.

COURTESY SEAN REILLY

LAKESIDE CENTER Chicago

Lakeside Center at McCormick Place, recognized as an iconic fixture on Chicago’s skyline, was designed by Gene Summers and Helmut Jahn for C.F. Murphy Associates and built between 1968 and 1971. The building has long been threatened by disinvestment and underutilization and demolition discussions between the Illinois Legislature and the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority have been persistent. Lakeside Center was recently one of several Chicago locations proposed by developers for a new casino. In January, Landmarks Illinois gave a conditional endorsement of the Lakeside Center’s reuse as a casino and entertainment center due to the following positive impacts of the proposed project: a significant historic building in need of major rehabilitation would be invested in and adaptively reused, the reuse of the structure is the most environmentally sustainable and changes to the iconic atrium to create retail, hotel and office space. The Wilmette Park District has undertaken a comprehensive planning process regarding future changes to Gillson Park, prompting residents, local preservation and park advocates to form Keep Gillson Green (KGG), a group urging the least intrusive design option proposed by park district consultants. With KGG and architectural historians, Landmarks Illinois advised park district officials to accept Concept 1 of the five proposals, a design that would have minimal impact on the Prairie School-inspired park’s historic integrity. The 1915 waterfront park was improved in 1933 by noted landscape architects C.D. Wagstaff and Robert Everly, who incorporated the park’s distinctive curvilinear roadways, informal tree plantings and stone council rings.

COURTESY WILLIAM ZBOREN

FEDERAL PRESERVATION LEGISLATION Statewide

Landmarks Illinois continues to work with partner organizations to advocate for the adoption of two key federal bills: the Route 66 National Historic Trail Designation Act, co-sponsored by U.S. Reps. Rodney Davis and Darin LaHood, and the Historic Tax Credit Growth & Opportunity (HTC-GO) Act, which has six members of the Illinois House delegation as co-sponsors. The Route 66 legislation, which has gone through committee and awaits a vote in the House, would help preserve and promote the scenic “Mother Road” and increase economic development opportunities for the communities that have long supported its cultural heritage, idiosyncratic character. The HTC-GO Act contains provisions to increase the historic tax credit from 20 percent to 30 percent permanently for preservation projects less than $2.5 million and temporarily for larger, more expensive projects. The adoption of this bill would lead to more historic places in Illinois being preserved.

COURTESY ILLINOIS ROUTE 66 SCENIC BYWAY
When the Skyline Council organized in 2011, its hope was to break down the barriers to entry for young professionals committed to the field of historic preservation and provide them with opportunities to socialize, network with experts in the field, and lead service projects within communities across the state of Illinois. Many Skyline Council members also brought a new perspective to preservation instead of strict focus on saving the work of well-known architects, members launched a more in-depth discussion about how to celebrate cultural history and bring a heightened awareness to the importance of allowing communities to determine what places are important.

What began as a group of less than 20 members has expanded to more than 60, with a growing network of relationships with universities and preservation-related firms across Illinois and the country. Perhaps the most rewarding and long-lasting aspects of the Skyline Council are its service projects and engagements directly with community organizations. From mural installations at the Forum in Chicago’s Bronzeville neighborhood, to research for the recently launched Women Who Built Illinois database, the Skyline Council has made meaningful contributions to the work of Landmarks Illinois.

“It’s provided an opportunity for me to engage new volunteers and provide small nonprofits and cultural institutions, building owners and under-represented communities with any support we can provide through Skyline Council and our networks,” said Erica Ruggiero, Chair of Skyline Council’s Service Subcommittee and long-time member.

Leadership roles within the Skyline Council, which mirrors Landmarks Illinois’ Board of Directors, not only help individuals with public speaking and interpersonal communication skills but also set up opportunities for increased responsibility on committees within the greater organization and seats on the Board. This progression illustrates the importance of having emerging professionals active and able to contribute to preservation: instead of strictly concentrating on successful leaders and the organization, the Skyline Council has incorporated Landmarks Illinois’ Golden Initiative, a foundation dedicated to “People Saving Places for People” into its work.

Liz Peterson is a Senior Marketing Coordinator for Newmark Limited and is pursuing her MBA at University of Illinois at Chicago. She was recently awarded a scholarship through the Goldie Initiative, a foundation dedicated to advancing the careers of women in commercial real estate.

Further solidifies this relationship and provides young professionals with the guidance they need to progress within their career to navigate relationships within a nonprofit.

Over the last decade, the Skyline Council has brought forward more confident young professionals in the field of historic preservation and contributed meaningful service on behalf of Landmarks Illinois. The Skyline Council’s continued success will rely on its leadership to remain active in organizing annual fundraising events like the popular trivia night, Skyline Social and neighborhood pub crawls and in continuing its service projects, working with community partners and offering pro bono preservation services and consulting.

In addition, the Skyline Council hopes to extend its reach to students at colleges and universities throughout the state who may be considering a career in historic preservation or who are passionate about the built environment and to continue to incorporate Landmarks Illinois principles of “People Saving Places for People” into its work.

By Liz Peterson, Chair of the Skyline Council

The field of historic preservation, with its many disciplines, can be a difficult one to navigate even for seasoned professionals. For young professionals, finding opportunities for leadership roles and building professional relationships within their chosen field is crucial for building a successful career. No matter how well-known the adages are about the importance of networking, it is especially daunting for young professionals entering a room full of people they’ve never met before.

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On November 30, 2021, Landmarks Illinois’ Real Estate and Building Industries Council celebrated the newly restored Old Cook County Hospital at a special event. Presented by Walsh Construction, the evening included a cocktail networking reception at the property’s hotel, Hyatt Place Chicago, and evening included a cocktail networking reception. A case study will be presented on the stone masonry repair and restoration conducted at the Tribune Tower from the perspective of both the museum gallery. For more details and registration go to Landmarks.org/calendar.

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Paul Bunyan in Atlanta along Route 66.

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