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January 31, 2025

(VIA EMAIL)

Commission on Chicago Landmarks  
Permit Review Committee  
121 N. LaSalle Street  
Chicago, IL 60602

To Members of the Permit Review Committee:

Landmarks Illinois supports the Griffin Museum of Science and Industry's application to alter the museum's South Portico. At the invitation of MSI leadership, we have reviewed the plans for these changes and find them to be a thoughtful approach to rehabilitating this long-dormant feature.

The Griffin Museum of Science and Industry is among Chicago's most significant landmark buildings. Constructed in 1893 as the Palace of Fine Arts for the Chicago World's Fair, it is the last building remaining from that pivotal moment in the city's history. Since 1933, it has enjoyed a successful reuse as the Museum of Science and Industry, the vision of pioneering philanthropist Julius Rosenwald. Generations of Chicagoans and tourists have visited the museum to learn. But they have not been able to access the original entrance to the building or to experience its connection with Jackson Park.

We are enthusiastic that the current proposal will reactivate the south entrance, allowing visitors to experience entering the building as they might have in 1893. We wholeheartedly support the placement of an at-grade entrance within the staircase, literally centering the needs of users requiring an accessible entrance while still allowing users who are able to ascend the staircase to do so on either side. We appreciate that the enclosure of the portico uses transparent materials to maintain the line of site to the original exterior wall, and that the design visually distinguishes new from historic elements, in keeping with historic preservation best practices.

We encourage the Permit Review Committee to approve this application. Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,

Kendra Parzen  
Advocacy Manager