

2017 Most Endangered Historic Places in Illinois

Singer Pavilion

2929 S Ellis Ave., Chicago, Cook County



Credit: Graham Balkany, AIA, Graham Balkany Architect

In 2009, Landmarks Illinois included the Michael Reese Hospital campus on its Most Endangered Historic Places in Illinois List. At the time of our 2009 listing, the campus included irreplaceable modernist buildings designed by the internationally famous architect Walter Gropius and his Architectural Collaborative. The campus, located between 29th and 31st Streets, and S. Cottage Grove and S. Lake Park Avenues, was threatened with demolition as part of Chicago's bid for the 2016 summer Olympics and was subsequently demolished with the exception of one

significant building: the Singer Pavilion. Local

firm Loeb Schlossman and Bennett was part of Gropius' Collaborative and oversaw final design of Singer Pavilion. The city has marketed the vacant campus, including Singer, for redevelopment. Development teams were asked to include a member with preservation experience and reuse of Singer Pavilion was encouraged, but it was not required.

Built in 1948, Singer was one of the first postwar structures constructed at the Michael Reese campus and reflects Gropius' interest in how architecture and placement of a building in a beautiful landscape could actually aid in the recovery of the ill. Built to house the [Reese Psychiatric-Psychosomatic Institute](#), the pavilion features a southern orientation and the generous use of exterior-mounted sunshades, rather than barred windows like past psychiatric institutions, and patient rooms faced a landscaped park meant to sooth and comfort long-term psychiatric patients. Singer won an AIA award in 1951.

We urge the city to continue its push for inclusion and reuse of Singer Pavilion in any redevelopment plan, as the last remaining building of what once was an exceptional example of institutional buildings designed with Walter Gropius' oversight. Given Singer's proximity to the Mies van der Rohe-designed IIT campus, together, they could heighten the potential of the South Side as a destination of great modern architecture for visitors.

Singer Pavilion was determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places in 2014 ([PDF](#)). Adaptive use of Singer would enable a developer to utilize federal historic tax credits – adding a critical redevelopment financing tool for the project.

What you can do:

- Reach out to Fourth Ward Ald. Sophia King and urge her to push for the inclusion of Singer Pavilion in any redevelopment plan for the former Michael Reese Hospital Campus.
435 E. 35th Street
Chicago, IL 60616
Email: Wardo4@cityofchicago.org

Additional Links:

- “City begins developer selection process for Michael Reese, neighboring lakeside sites,” *Curbed Chicago*, Oct. 12, 2016:
<http://chicago.curbed.com/2016/10/12/13258194/chicago-development-news-michael-reese-hospital-developer>