



LANDMARKS  
ILLINOIS

## 2022 MOST ENDANGERED HISTORIC PLACES IN ILLINOIS



# Century & Consumers Buildings

## Chicago

"The Consumers and Century Buildings have stood prominently at the corner of Adams and State Streets for over one hundred years...Their demolition would not only create a visual hole in the streetwall, their loss would deny this commercial district important revenues and vibrancy that would come with their rehabilitation and reuse."

- MICHAEL EDWARDS

*President & CEO of Chicago Loop Alliance*



## QUICK STATS

### LOCATION

202-220 S. State St.  
Chicago, Cook County

### YEAR BUILT

202 S. State St.: 1915  
220 S. State St.: 1913

### ARCHITECT

202 S. State St.: Holabird & Roche  
220 S. State St.: Jennie, Mundie, Jensen

### CURRENT OWNER

U.S. General Services Administration

### HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

Two, highly visible, early 20th-century commercial buildings sit in a prominent location on Chicago's State Street. Both are included in Chicago's Loop Retail Historic District listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

### WHY IT IS ENDANGERED

The buildings sit deteriorating, without a reuse plan and at risk of demolition. The buildings' current owner has marketed the structures for redevelopment in coordination with the City of Chicago. A bidder was previously selected to redevelop the property, but the project was halted due to security concerns by the adjacent federal courts. There is a current appropriation request of \$52 million for the buildings' demolition.

### TAKE ACTION

Reach out to U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin, Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot and GSA Administrator Robin Carnahan to voice opposition to the demolition of these prominent historic State Street buildings.







# BACKGROUND

The Century and Consumers Buildings are two individual historic buildings on South State Street. The Century Building (202 S. State St.) was designed in 1915 by the legacy architecture firm of Holabird & Roche (today's Holabird & Root). Originally, the building was constructed to house the Buck & Rayner Drug Firm. In 1917, Century Trust & Savings Bank bought the property and changed its name to the Century Building. After 1950, the building went through multiple owners until General Services Administration (GSA) acquired the building in 2005.

The Consumers Building (220 S. State St.) was designed in 1913 by architects Jenney, Mundie & Jensen. The building got its name from its first tenant, the newly formed Consumers Company. After the Consumers Company left the building in 1917, it was home to many businesses and storefronts until it was also acquired by the GSA in 2005.

The two Chicago School-style, high-rise office buildings bookend two small-scale retail buildings at 212 and 214 S. State St. — all four of which are vacant and were never occupied by GSA since their acquisition, despite years of planning.



*Credit: Archie Collection  
(Left to right: 220, 214, 212, 202 S. State St.)*



## BACKGROUND cont.

The structures, except 212 S. State St., are all a key part of [Chicago's Loop Retail Historic District](#), which was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1999. Few areas in downtown Chicago are as architecturally important as the two square blocks bounded by Adams, Clark, Jackson and State Streets, which includes the [Mies van der Rohe-designed Federal Center Campus](#).

In 2017, the City of Chicago [agreed to oversee a Request for Proposal](#) process for the sale, reuse and redevelopment of the four-building site on State Street, which include the Century and Consumers Buildings. Despite the selection of a qualified developer, [redevelopment plans were halted](#) in 2019 by the city due to ongoing security concerns expressed by judicial occupants of the Dirksen Courthouse to the west.

These security concerns have been addressed by the GSA, but the court is still pushing for the demolition of the deteriorating Century and Consumer Buildings. Additionally, U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin of Illinois submitted an appropriation request of \$52 million for the demolition of the four buildings, which was approved for the 2022 GSA budget.







## CURRENT THREAT

A \$52 million appropriations request was [approved in March](#) for GSA to demolish the Century and Consumers Buildings, as well as the smaller commercial buildings located at 212 and 214 S. State St.

Demolition is currently being pursued due to ongoing federal security concerns relating to the Dirksen Courthouse and office building, which sits directly west of the Century and Consumers Buildings.

In 2017, a proposal by Chicago real-estate firm CA Ventures was selected to revitalize the Century and Consumers Buildings. The [\\$141 million redevelopment plan](#) involved the purchase of the buildings, along with the other two commercial structures, for \$10.4 million. The plan included saving the Century and Consumers Buildings and the façade of 214 S. State St. from demolition. However, the City of Chicago halted the project altogether due to security concerns expressed by the judiciary at the Federal Dirksen Courthouse.



The safety issues stem from the buildings' proximity to the back of the courthouse, with some windows that look directly toward federal courtrooms. While CA Ventures addressed these concerns in consultation with the GSA, the city halted the sale, as well as the redevelopment plan, until negotiations with the federal courthouse are resolved.



## CURRENT THREAT cont.

The court's safety concerns must be solved if the Century and Consumers Buildings are to be redeveloped instead of demolished. Without such a solution, all four State Street properties risk being torn down, leaving an empty parcel of land for an indefinite amount of time in the heart of Chicago's most important and historic downtown retail corridor.

In March 2022, the Chicago-based historic preservation nonprofit, Preservation Chicago, also called attention to the Century and Consumers Buildings on its Chicago 7 Most Endangered List. Also in March, Landmarks Illinois joined Preservation Chicago and the National Trust for Historic Preservation in sending a letter to the GSA voicing opposition to the possible demolition of the buildings.



Michael Edwards, President & CEO of Chicago Loop Alliance, said this about the buildings' significance:

“The Consumers and Century Buildings have stood prominently at the corner of Adams and State Streets for over one hundred years and are part of the architectural and commercial legacy of State Street — one of Chicago’s most important economic corridors. Their demolition would not only create a visual hole in the streetwall, their loss would deny this commercial district important revenues and vibrancy that would come with their rehabilitation and reuse. An empty lot on State Street does not make it a great street. The federal government should not be allowed to leave a black eye on downtown Chicago.”





# WHAT YOU CAN DO

Reach out to Senator Durbin, Mayor Lightfoot and GSA Administrator Robin Carnahan to voice opposition to the demolition of these prominent historic State Street buildings.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

### **Sen. Durbin**

Washington, D.C. office: 202-224-2152

Chicago office: 312-353-4952

Springfield office: 217-492-4062

Carbondale office: 618-351-1122

Rock Island office: 309-786-5173

[Website](#)

[Email](#)

### **Mayor Lightfoot**

Email: [letterforthemayor@cityofchicago.org](mailto:letterforthemayor@cityofchicago.org)

[Website](#)

### **Office of the Administrator, GSA Robin Carnahan**

202-501-2472

[Website](#)

Twitter: [@GSACarnahan](#)