

PRESERVATION, ZONING, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, AND

QUALITY OF LIFE

For over half a century, the North Dearborn Association (“NDA”) has been the foremost preservation organization in Chicago’s “Gold Coast”. A similar assessment should also apply to the NDA for its proven ability to resolve neighborhood issues in a manner that consistently enhances the quality of life within this Near North Side community.

The early years of the North Dearborn Association were spent primarily in court, **fighting building code violations** brought on by cost-cutting landlords who had, in addition, divided the interiors of these grand old homes into numerous, unattractive apartments in order to wring every last dollar of profit out of them. The remedying of these code violations coupled with a sense of pride (or embarrassment) awakened by a **“garden walk”**, a concept introduced by the NDA, caused residents to clean up and plant flower-filled gardens -- the neighborhood was coming back. The North Dearborn Association also monitored the implementation of the promise it had extracted from the developer of **Sandburg Village**: that there would be an agreed-upon ratio of town houses to high-rises. Also as befits the Sandburg redevelopment, the NDA was able to convince the City that **Clark Street** should, with few exceptions (e.g., a grocery store, a dry cleaners), be restricted to residential zoning and not allowed to be repopulated with bars. Thus, there would be an uninterrupted, stable, residential neighborhood from LaSalle to Lake Shore Drive.

Also during this period, adults with school-age children were becoming increasingly anxious, and deservedly so, about the **safety of their children**, given the volume and speed of vehicular traffic between the outer Lake Shore Drive (the “Outer Drive”) and the Loop (downtown) and from the Loop to the Outer Drive, particularly during rush hours. (At that time, the Outer Drive was connected to both North State and Dearborn Parkways by chicane-like connectors.) To remedy this safety problem, these connectors had to be closed. After several years of lobbying the Administration, the NDA **met with Mayor Richard J. Daley; immediately thereafter, the Mayor persuaded the Park District to close the connectors**. The consequences of those closings : (i) the volume and the speed of traffic subsided, making the area significantly safer for school children (comparable to a suburban neighborhood), so that families were not forced to move to safer environs; and (ii) the north end of what now would become the Gold Coast “neighborhood” was capped by a small, but beautiful park (especially so when the Lincoln Gardens are in full bloom), with the Chicago History Museum on its west.

Density

In the mid-70's, preservation (and its relationship to density) became a major concern on the Gold Coast. The North Dearborn Association stepped to the fore on the issue and was urged by our (relatively new) alderman, Burton F. Natarus, to use **down zoning** (vs. land marking) to tackle the problem. The NDA immediately spearheaded a successful drive to obtain the consents of Gold Coast property owners to down zone their property to R5. After crafting a comprehensive document based on those consents, and after a considerable degree of North Dearborn Association lobbying, the Chicago City Council passed into law the **1979 Re-Zoning Amendments**. Shortly thereafter, an affected property owner filed suit in U.S. District Court, seeking to overturn these zoning amendments, and the **NDA** successfully intervened to support and provide some heavy lifting for the City's position. This **position** was subsequently **upheld** by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 7th Circuit, and the Supreme Court of the United States refused to review the lower courts' opinions. For **over twenty years**, these pro-preservation down zoning **amendments** have **helped save** from demolition (and the construction of density-intense high rises in their place) some of Chicago's most **historic buildings** and **architectural masterpieces**. More recently in this density arena, the North Dearborn Association became a **co-founder** (1997) of the **Near North Preservation Coalition** ("Coalition"). Amongst other campaigns aimed at reducing the density of proposed structures (and their attendant vehicular congestion), the Coalition's negotiations with a **developer** over his **proposal to build a 32-story high-rise** on the property at **65 East Goethe**, resulted in the recently-completed, **8-story, premiere-quality condominium building at that address**. The Coalition was also able to get **passed**, urgently-needed, **pro-preservation / density-reducing height limitation legislation** for new construction.

Preservation

The North Dearborn Association has, over the years, **successfully negotiated with a number of developers to preserve and restore structures they were proposing to demolish or significantly alter**. Several of the more recent examples: a written agreement with **CVS Pharmacy** to preserve and restore the historic facades on the store it constructed at State and Division Streets ; a written agreement to preserve / restore and convert into luxury condominiums with in-house parking, the turn-of-the-century building at **18 East Division Street** that once housed the Latin School of Chicago; an oral agreement, offered by the developer converting the **Ambassador West Hotel** (1300 North State Parkway) into **condominiums**, detailing his plans for restoring that stately, historic structure, thereby adding another Gold Coast / Near North Side building to the rolls of "Preserved and Restored". Perhaps the most important role the NDA will ever play in the preservation arena is the one it is currently playing as **community ombudsman for the redevelopment of the Three Arts Club's land mark building** (1300 North Dearborn Parkway).

Community Development

Two examples come to mind: comprehensive, separate **written agreements with the NDA regarding the construction and certain proscribed uses of two condominium buildings**, one at **1250**, the other at **1301 (“The Whitney”) North Dearborn Parkway**. **The housing stock of the area was certainly improved by the addition of these two buildings**. Two other examples must be mentioned: (i) **Sutton Place** -- The first gated community on the Gold Coast, and (ii) **Beekman Place** -- Not only a fine addition to the neighborhood, but the initial proposal successfully buried the ideas of another developer who was proposing a movie theater complex within a multi-storied shopping mall (reputedly his plans called for 90 retail stores). **The North Dearborn Association played a material role in selecting the developer and in cooperatively working with him on refining his redevelopment plans**. Another redevelopment project that merits the NDA’s close attention and at least a modicum of its perseverance, is the substantial renovation taking place at **1447-51 North Dearborn Parkway**.

Enhancing the Quality of Life For Gold Coast Residents

After the **murder** of a Gold Coast woman and the **mugging** of an elderly couple on a warm, sunny afternoon on Lake Shore Drive, the North Dearborn Association **conceived, planned and successfully carried out a police manpower petition drive**. It then persuaded a prior Mayor’s Chief of Staff and his Police Superintendent **to provide additional police for Gold Coast neighborhood foot patrols** (though at the time, there was a city-wide police manpower shortage). **After several nighttime assaults on women residents**, the NDA developed the “Let There Be Light” campaign **to increase the lumens from street lights and to arrange for periodic parkway tree trimming**, all in an effort **to provide for safer, better-lit streets**. The NDA **supports** the community policing program (CAPS).

The NDA **organized and led a coalition** of community organizations and individual area residents in a successful campaign **that brought a newly-constructed, full-branch Chicago Public Library to the Near North Side**.

The North Dearborn Association was **able to secure** a very popular, **area-wide permit parking district**, thereby **providing much-needed additional parking for area residents** (at the time, permit parking districts were opposed by the Administration, and this particular one would be the largest permit parking zone in the City) .

Responding to a flood of residents’ complaints of alcohol-related vandalism, litter

and late-night noise, the NDA worked with Division Street tavern owners and Alderman Natarus in an effort to limit the number of late-night liquor licenses granted in the Gold Coast area; the NDA also negotiated a written agreement with Walgreens (Dearborn & Division) to eliminate the sale of all liquor and to provide that Walgreens will never put a door of any type on the Dearborn side of its building; finally, the NDA negotiated a written agreement with the 3rd Coast Restaurant (Dearborn & Goethe) which limits (voluntarily) its license usage to a liquor service bar.

The North Dearborn Association **initiated and organized popular annual media panels on the “State of the City”** at the time of “Council Wars” and coinciding with the Mayor’s “State of the City” address to The League of Women Voters. Over time, it procured as panel members every major political editor, columnist, correspondent, reporter, and news anchor in Chicago’s newspaper, television, and radio communities. It also **organized and presented informative and popular forums for candidates for public office**, from U.S.Senate, Governor, Mayor, and States Attorney, to Alderman (the last being the most important) .

The NDA **provided seed money for the restoration and renovation of Goudy Square Park; it also contributed funds for the renovation of the Ogden School play lot and for landscaping projects (e.g., for the Three Arts Club’s building and for ornamental parkway trees in the 1400 and 1500 blocks of North Dearborn Parkway), as well as for sidewalk re-paving.**

The NDA **founded the successful “Joy of Toys” Holiday Wrap Party** where toys are collected and wrapped **for underprivileged children** and distributed at public schools . Nearly **3,000 toys** have been **distributed** to youngsters since the start of this community outreach program .

For over 50 years, the North Dearborn Association has, by and large, **thwarted** the encroachment of **commercialism** in an effort **to preserve the residential quality** of the 1200 block of North Dearborn . It also **worked to ensure the successful transformation of a decaying Tuscany Hotel (1244 North Dearborn) into the Claridge Hotel (now Hotel Indigo).**

The NDA has been **sought out by a variety of organizations and individuals** throughout Chicago’s Gold Coast / Near North Side community **to provide counsel, assistance and support.** For example, the NDA has strongly supported the **Near North Preservation Coalition** in several major zoning matters, including **providing trial testimony by two former NDA presidents in opposition to the proposed construction of a 40-story apartment building containing 196 dwelling units at the corner of Banks and Lake Shore Drive.** These facts are but a few that have been marshaled **into an on-going, eight-year-long litigation seeking** to significantly reduce its height .

Its presence and lowered height would hopefully serve to discourage further high-rise construction on the Gold Coast, which would maintain that “delicate balance” that presently exists between the traditional row houses and a limited number of high-rises --- further perpetuating the charm and livability of this unique and special neighborhood.

The NDA is a not-for-profit community organization dedicated to historical and architectural preservation and beautification, and to the enhancement of the quality of life for the residents of the Gold Coast / Near North Side community of Chicago.