

January 21, 2021

**To:** Mayor and Members of City Council 202100186

**From:** Paula Boggs Muething, City Manager

**Subject:** **Emergency Ordinance – Designating The Mercantile Library building a Local Landmark in the Central Business District**

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Transmitted is an Emergency Ordinance captioned:

**DESIGNATING** The Mercantile Library building located at 414 Walnut Street in the Central Business District as a Local Historic Landmark.

On December 7, 2020, the Historic Conservation Board (HCB) voted unanimously to recommend the Local Historic Landmark designation of The Mercantile Library building in the Central Business District to City Planning Commission and City Council and The City Planning Commission recommended approval of this Local Landmark designation at its January 15, 2021 meeting.

Summary

The petitioner is requesting a Local Historic Landmark designation for the Mercantile Library Building at 414 Walnut Street in the Central Business District. The building is currently office space. This designation will make the building potentially eligible for historic tax credits to renovate and convert the building to residential space. The two levels of the Mercantile Library will remain.

The Mercantile Library Building is historically and architecturally significant

- The building was built in 1905 during the transformation of the Central Business District from low-scale mixed-use commercial buildings to tall “sky scrapers.”
- The association with the Young Men’s Mercantile Library as a private library and learning institution.
- The association with the Emery Family who were multi-generational leaders in Cincinnati business, civics, the arts, and real estate development.
- The building was designed by the firm of Joseph G. Steinkamp, who were leading architects of the late 1800s and early 1900s in Cincinnati.
- The building is an example of Chicago Commercial Style Architecture, which was a popular style in Cincinnati during the transition from low-scale to high-rise buildings in the Central Business District.

cc: Katherine Keough-Jurs, AICP, Director, Department of City Planning