

**Local Historic Landmark  
Designation of The Mercantile Library  
Building  
414 Walnut Street  
Central Business District**

**Economic Growth & Zoning Committee**

**February 17, 2021**

### Exhibit B: Local Historic Landmark Designation: 414 Walnut Street - Mercantile Library Building

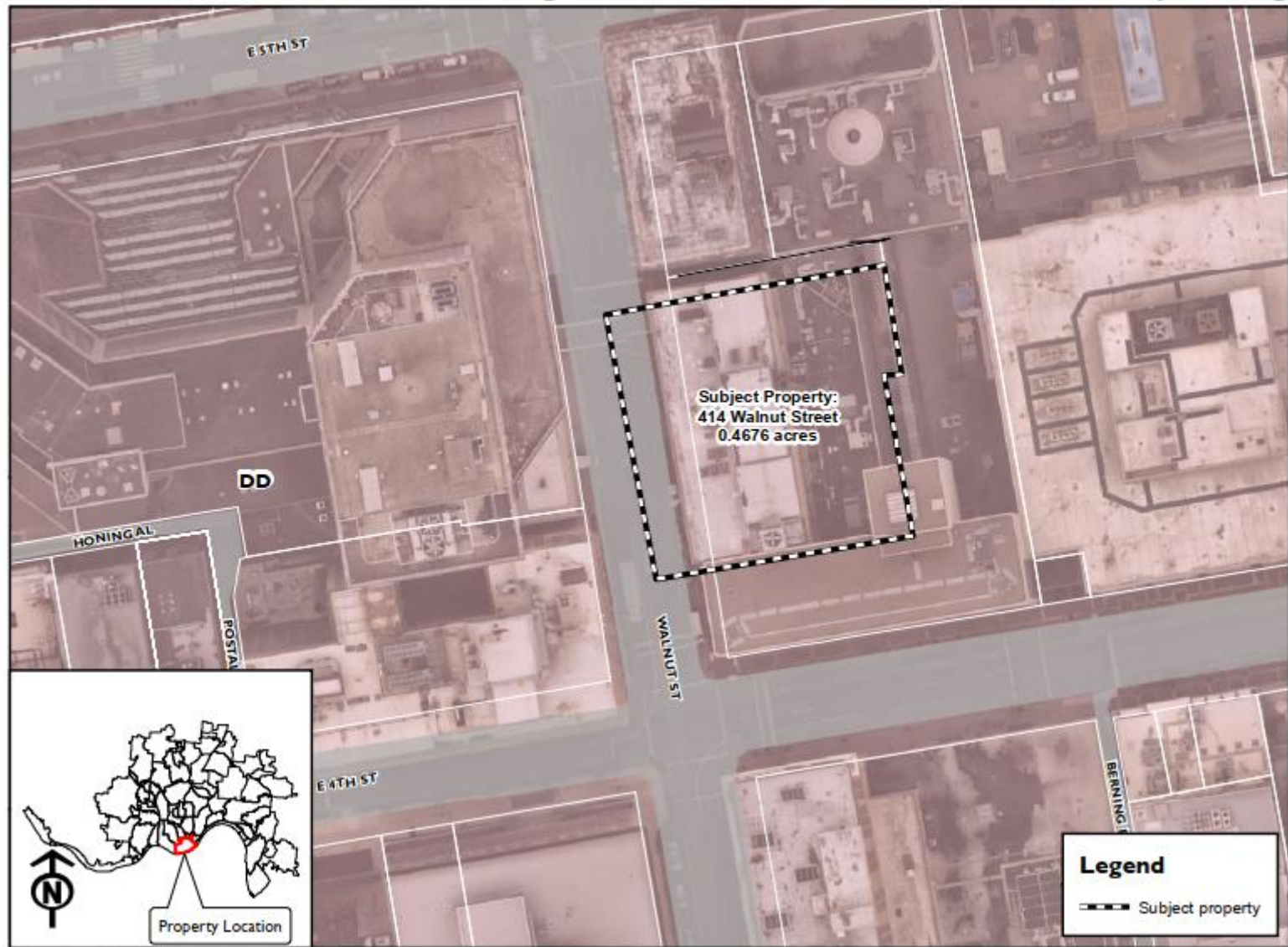




Figure 2. Historic photo of Mercantile Library Building, circa 1910, courtesy of The Mercantile Library





Mercantile Library Building, 414 Walnut Street, main entrance

Historic Landmark designation application submitted by:

- Applicants – City Studio

The Historic Conservation Board reviewed and approved the proposed Local Historic Landmark designation on December 7, 2020, recommending historic designation to the City Planning Commission and City Council

- MCA Center, LLC owns 414 Walnut Street
- Designation will make the building potentially eligible for State and Federal Historic Tax Credits

The Cincinnati Zoning Code specifies that a structure or structures having historical significance must have one of the following attributes:

1. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
2. That are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or



3. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
4. That has yielded, or may be likely to yield information important in history or prehistory

The Mercantile Library is being nominated under:

1. Criterion 1 (historical significance) and;
2. Criterion 3 (architectural significance)

The Mercantile Library building is architecturally significant:

- Designed by Joseph G. Steinkamp
- Chicago Commercial Style architectural style during transition from low-scale to high-rise buildings in Cincinnati

The Mercantile Library building is also historically significant:

- Constructed in 1905
- Example of early “sky scraper”
- Private library and learning institution
- Association with Emery Family

- The Local Historic Landmark designation of The Mercantile Library in the Central Business District meets the requirements of Chapter 1435 of the Cincinnati Municipal Code (Historic Preservation). The documentation in this designation report provides conclusive evidence that all required findings may be made for the proposed designation
- This designation will help preserve this architecturally significant building

In making such determination, the City Planning Commission shall consider all of the following factors:

The relationship of the proposed designation to the comprehensive plans of the city and of the community in which the proposed Historic Landmark, Historic District or Historic Site is located; and

- **This designation is consistent with *Plan Cincinnati (2012)* will help preserve this architecturally significant building in the Central Business District and will benefit the City of Cincinnati as a whole**

The effect of the proposed designation on the surrounding areas and economic development plans of the city; and

- **Designation will not have a negative impact on plans in the City but will contribute to the continued revitalization of the Central Business District**

Such other planning and historic preservation considerations as may be relevant to the proposed designation.

- **This designation will help contribute to redevelopment in the Central Business District increasing housing opportunities**



- Proposed guidelines cover rehabilitation, additions, demolition and site improvements
- The Historic Conservation Board and City Planning staff have determined the proposed guidelines are acceptable to meet the goal of preserving the architecture of this building

- Joint Staff Conference with the Historic Conservation Office and the Department of City Planning was held on November 17, 2020
- The applicants and the developers were the only ones present and there was no opposition

## *Plan Cincinnati (2012)*

- Sustain Initiative Area: preserve our built history with new development incentives and regulatory measures
- Live Initiative Area: “Provide a full spectrum of housing options, and improve housing quality and affordability”

Planning Commission voted unanimously on January 15, 2021, to recommend Local Landmark Designation of the Mercantile Library Building to City Council.

The Cincinnati Planning Commission recommends that the City Council take the following actions:

- I. **APPROVE** the Local Historic Landmark designation of The Mercantile Library building at 414 Walnut Street in the Central Business District as described in the “The Mercantile Library Building Historic Designation Report dated January 2, 2021” as seen in Attachment B

2. **APPROVE** the attached map amendment designating the Local Historic Landmark; as seen in Attachment A; and
  
3. **APPROVE** the “The Mercantile Library building Historic Conservation Guidelines dated January 2, 2021” as seen in Attachment C.