

## **EMERGENCY**

**DBS**

**- 2021**

**DESIGNATING** the Mercantile Library Building located at 414 Walnut Street in the Central Business District as a historic landmark.

WHEREAS, MCA Center, LLC, the owner the Mercantile Library Building located at 414 Walnut Street in the Central Business District, has applied to designate the building as a local historic landmark; and

WHEREAS, the Mercantile Library Building is named for The Mercantile Library housed on the building's 11th and 12<sup>th</sup> floors, which was originally founded on April 18, 1835 by a group of 45 young businessmen to promote learning and to provide themselves with a library and reading room downtown; and

WHEREAS, the library, which owns more than 200,000 volumes, remains one of the few subscription-based libraries in the United States; and

WHEREAS, the Mercantile Library Building was designed by the Joseph G. Steinkamp & Brothers firm, which was considered one of the leading architecture firms in Cincinnati at the time and which firm designed several other significant downtown buildings, including the Robertson Building at 106 East Seventh Street, the Hotel Metropole at 609 Walnut Street, and the Art Deco-style American Building at 30 East Central Parkway; and

WHEREAS, the Mercantile Library Building is a twelve-story, flat-roofed, mixed-use commercial building that was completed in 1905 and was one of the few skyscrapers built in Cincinnati in the first decade of the 20th century; and

WHEREAS, the Mercantile Library Building is architecturally significant as it exemplifies the Chicago Commercial style of architecture that is identified by its tripartite composition corresponding to a classical column, a heavy one- to two-story base with storefronts, upper stories with minimal ornamentation, and a crowning cornice; and

WHEREAS, the Mercantile Library Building is also representative of the transformation of downtown Cincinnati (particularly in the area between Fourth Street and Seventh Street and Vine Street and Walnut Street) from a low-scale mixed commercial and residential district to the commercial core of tall buildings that exists today; and

WHEREAS, following a public staff conference, the Historic Conservation Board, at its regularly scheduled meeting on December 7, 2020, and upon considering the factors set forth in Cincinnati Municipal Code Section 1435-07-1, recommended designation of the Mercantile

Library Building as a local historic landmark and further recommended adoption of conservation guidelines governing the maintenance, rehabilitation, and modification of the proposed historic landmark; and

WHEREAS, upon receipt of the recommendation of the Historic Conservation Board, the City Planning Commission, at its regularly scheduled meeting on January 15, 2021, and upon considering the factors set forth in Cincinnati Municipal Code Section 1435-07-2-B(c), recommended the designation of the Mercantile Library Building as a historic landmark and the adoption of conservation guidelines governing the maintenance, rehabilitation, and modification of the proposed historic landmark; and

WHEREAS, the City Council finds that the Mercantile Library Building has historic significance pursuant to Cincinnati Municipal Code Section 1435-07-01(a)(1) for its association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history, particularly as it was one of the earliest high-rise commercial buildings built in downtown Cincinnati in the first decade of the 20th century; and

WHEREAS, the Council additionally finds that the Mercantile Library Building has historic significance pursuant to CMC 1435-07-1(a)(3) because the building embodies the distinctive characteristics of an architectural type, period, and method of construction, specifically the Chicago Commercial style of architecture; and

WHEREAS, the Council finds that the historic designation of the Mercantile Library Building conforms to the following goal of Plan Cincinnati (2012): the “Sustain” goal to preserve the City’s built history (p. 197); and

WHEREAS, the Council considers the designation of the Mercantile Library Building as a historic landmark and the adoption of related conservation guidelines to be in the best interest of the City and the general public’s health, safety, and general welfare; now, therefore,

BE IT ORDAINED by the Council of the City of Cincinnati, State of Ohio:

Section 1. That the Council approves the Designation Report for the Mercantile Library Building located at 414 Walnut Street (“Mercantile Library Building”), which report is attached hereto as “Exhibit A,” and specifically adopts as its own findings that the Mercantile Library Building, depicted on the attached “Exhibit B” and located on the real property more particularly described on the attached “Exhibit C,” has historic significance and qualifies in all respects for designation as a historic landmark under Chapter 1435 of the Zoning Code of the City of Cincinnati (“Zoning Code”); specifically, Council designates the Mercantile Library Building as a local

historic landmark under Zoning Code Sections 1435-07-1-(a)(1) and 1435-07-1-(a)(3). By reference, Exhibits A, B, and C are incorporated herein and made a part hereof.

Section 2. That the Zoning Map of the City of Cincinnati is amended to superimpose over the existing underlying zoning district the designation of the Mercantile Library Building as a local historic landmark.

Section 3. That, pursuant to Zoning Code Chapter 1435, Council hereby adopts the “Mercantile Library Building Historic Conservation Guidelines,” attached hereto as “Exhibit D” and made a part hereof, which guidelines shall govern the preservation, rehabilitation, or modification of the Mercantile Library Building historic landmark.

Section 4. That the Clerk of Council is directed to promptly notify the Historic Conservation Board, the City Planning Commission, the Director of City Planning, the Director of Buildings and Inspections, and the City Solicitor of the Mercantile Library Building historic landmark designation.

Section 5. That this ordinance shall be an emergency measure necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health, safety, and general welfare and shall, subject to the terms of Article II, Section 6 of the Charter, be effective immediately. The reason for the emergency is the immediate need to permit the owners of the property to promptly apply for the Ohio Historic Preservation Tax Credits for which they will become eligible following passage of this ordinance.

Passed: \_\_\_\_\_, 2021

---

John Cranley, Mayor

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Clerk