



## BRENDAN REILLY

ALDERMAN—42ND WARD

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November 18, 2009

### RE: Community Meeting Invitation – Three Arts Club Columbarium Proposal

Dear Neighbor:

I am writing to invite you to join me at an upcoming public meeting to review a new proposal to re-purpose The Three Arts Club building located at 1300 N. Dearborn. This community meeting marks the beginning of what will be a very public process for the proposed reuse of this historic landmark structure. I am pleased to co-host this meeting in conjunction with our partners at the North Dearborn Association and the Gold Coast Neighbors. I am grateful for their assistance in helping me foster a civil public dialogue throughout this community process.

Now that the property owner has concluded its competitive bidding process and has selected Depree Bickford Associates LLC as the winning bidder – I have informed the developer that his team will be expected to go through our regular community process. I have told Mr. Bickford and his team that they are expected to engage local residents and be prepared to make a detailed presentation of their proposal to the broader neighborhood – to answer any and all questions regarding their proposed operation and address specific concerns. Please join us.

**What: Community Meeting: Three Arts Club Columbarium Proposal**

**Who: Alderman Brendan Reilly – 42<sup>nd</sup> Ward  
North Dearborn Association  
Gold Coast Neighbors Association**

**When: 6:00 PM on Wednesday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2009**

**Where: The Latin School  
59 West North Boulevard  
Auditorium, 1<sup>st</sup> floor**

Please understand that as we work through this public process, I plan to listen carefully to the opinions of all of my constituents who live in proximity to the Three Arts Club. I want to be very clear: I am not the source of the columbarium proposal and I have not endorsed this project. As I do with all development proposals in the 42nd Ward, this project will be put through a very open and transparent public process that allows the development team and broader community to discuss the specifics of the proposal. I will closely monitor those discussions and will depend heavily upon community input when formulating my disposition on this plan.

I must also take this opportunity to address unfounded rumors that have circulated throughout the neighborhood in recent days. Please note: the winning bid was selected by the property owner as part of a private financial transaction – neither my office nor the City of Chicago played any role in influencing that decision whatsoever. In fact I first learned of the winning bidder when contacted by Crain's Chicago Business with a request to provide comment for their breaking news story. Now that there is a real proposal on the table, our process begins.

Some are also trying to assert that this proposal would include a full-service crematorium on-site and could include cemetery operations such as embalming. Again, this is not true. The developer has made it clear that he has no interest in operating a crematorium or cemetery at this location. Even if the developer wanted to operate a crematorium on site, the Zoning Code does not permit such a use in the RM-5 Residential District zoning classification – precisely the current zoning for this parcel. Cremation is a "special use" which can only be secured through via public process at the Zoning Board of Appeals and with aldermanic approval. Rest assured that I would never support a petition to allow a crematorium if it were ever proposed.

Some neighborhood residents have raised concerns over the prospect that major alterations or significant building additions might be planned for this historic structure. Again, this cannot occur because of the property's current zoning and its Landmark designation. As you may know, in recent years, my predecessor chose to down-zone the property, putting the structure in to "non-compliance" – meaning the structure is essentially "too large" for its classification and cannot be redeveloped in a manner which adds to its non-conformity. As such, the developer would be unable to build an addition or expand the current building envelope.

The Department of Zoning has informed me that, upon their review of the general scope of the work proposed by the developer, there would be no need for the developer to pursue an "up-zoning" of the property in order for the proposed use to occupy the building. According to the proposal, the applicant's primary scope of work would be focused on restoring the building's exterior to its original 1914 appearance and making modest interior renovations, mostly to the upper floors of the structure. The proposed alterations could be made under the building's existing non-compliant status. This is good news for those who are concerned about the threat of potential up-zoning in the Gold Coast neighborhood. I have absolutely no interest in supporting an up-zone request for this site – even though the structure's existing landmark status already provides ample protection against major alterations to the building.

I appreciate the fact that over the course of many years, some residents of the Gold Coast and North Dearborn neighborhoods have grown skeptical of the propriety and transparency of development decisions rendered by their local alderman. However, as your new alderman, I can assure you that I have absolutely no oath of loyalty to real estate developers and evaluate these proposals objectively while carefully considering the opinions of my voting constituents.

Please know that I will continue to maintain an open mind regarding any future plans for the historic Three Arts Club. Like you, I very much want to see it put back to productive re-use, back on the tax rolls with the least impact on local infrastructure and your quality-of-life.

Sincerely,

Brendan Reilly  
Alderman, 42<sup>nd</sup> Ward