

CITYWIDE

## Ramova Theater Landmarking, Six Corners Peoples Gas Project Secure Key City Approval

Both projects could be approved by the City Council at Wednesday's meeting. The council's zoning committee also approved a Northwest Side anti-gentrification ordinance but delayed a vote to landmark Pilsen's St Adalbert's Church.



By Molly DeVore  
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The Ramova Theater, 3520 S. Halsted St., on August 4, 2021. Credit: Colin Boyle/Block Club Chicago

CITY HALL — After months of delays, the \$110 million redevelopment of the Six Corners Peoples Gas site

will finally go to City Council for a vote.

The council's Committee on Zoning, Landmarks and Building Standards signed off on the massive overhaul at Tuesday's meeting. The committee also approved final landmarking status for Ramova Theater in Bridgeport and endorsed a sweeping anti-gentrification ordinance on the Northwest Side.

All three proposals are slated to be voted on at Wednesday's City Council meeting. A proposal to landmark Pilsen's St. Adalbert's Church stalled as the committee postponed an expected vote after a lengthy discussion.

GW Properties has proposed transforming the Peoples Gas site along Irving Park Road and Kilpatrick Avenue into 346 apartments and at least a dozen retail stores spread across four one-story commercial buildings and one six-story residential building. Project developer Mitch Goltz **previously said** he hoped to start construction on the project at the end of the summer, but **those plans were postponed** because of a labor dispute.

A zoning change for the development **was approved by the Chicago Plan Commission** in March, but the project was deferred from the zoning committee's agenda six times before finally being approved Tuesday.

The clock was ticking on the zoning change. If the project had not been approved, it would have been considered denied on Oct. 9, according to city code.



A rendering of the apartment complex planned for the former People's Gas site in Six Corners. Credit: Provided/ Block Club Chicago

A sticking point with the project came as Ald. Jim Gardiner's (45th) office insisted on a **project labor agreement**, Goltz previously said.

**Project labor agreements are a type of pre-hired agreement** negotiated between an employer and construction unions. They typically specify wages and safety protocols, include no-strike and no-lockout clauses, and provide dispute resolution procedures, Frank Manzo IV, an economist at the Illinois Economic Policy Institute, previously told Block Club.

Goltz said he initially refused to sign because it would have forced him to name a specific contractor. Goltz eventually signed an agreement between GW Properties, the Chicago and Cook County Building and Construction Trade Council and 21 local trade organizations, said Sara Barnes, the project's zoning attorney.

The agreement ensures 100 percent of the project's bids will go to union groups as well as groups that have been certified through the city's Minority and Women-Owned Business Program, Barnes said.

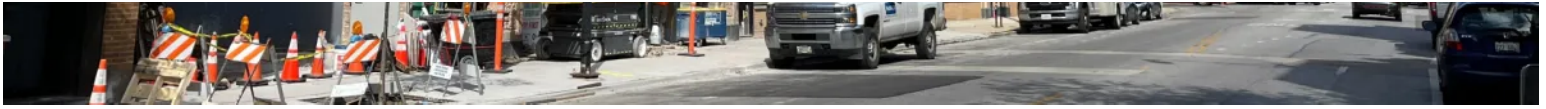
At Tuesday's meeting, representatives from the Portage Park Chamber of Commerce and the Old Irving Park Association spoke in favor of the project and urged the committee to approve it.

Jeremy Esparza, a business agent with LiUNA! Local One, also spoke during the Tuesday meeting and thanked Gardiner for pushing for a project labor agreement.

"346 units would be great for the community, but we want to make sure that those who are building them are being respected as well," Esparza said.

Goltz said he hopes to start construction sometime next year. The development is expected to take about 24 months and will create around 750 construction jobs, according to the project presentation.





The renovated Ramova Theatre includes Other Half Brewing, Ramova Grill and a concert venue. Credit: Joe Ward/Block Club Chicago

## Ramova Theater

The newly restored Ramova Theatre at 3508 S. Halsted St. in Bridgeport is one step closer to becoming a historic landmark.

The zoning committee approved the landmark designation Tuesday with no discussion. The **Commission on Chicago Landmarks unanimously voted to recommend the designation** in June.

The Ramova opened in 1929 as a sister theater to the Music Box Theatre in Lakeview. The interior was designed in the “atmospheric” style of the 1920s, with an auditorium meant to resemble Spanish courtyards and stars on deep blue ceilings that would glimmer before each movie.

The theater closed in 1985 and was eventually acquired through eminent domain by the city in 2001, according to previous Block Club reports.

Developer Tyler Nevius with Our Revival Chicago LLC took over the theater in 2020 and began rehabbing the space. The Ramova is now home to a 1,500-capacity music venue, the **Other Half Ramova brewery** and the Ramova Grill restaurant.



Ald. Jessie Fuentes (26th) speaks about the new preservation ordinance at a rally and teach-in on July 16, 2024 at the Hope Center church in Hermosa, 1829 N. Kostner Ave. Credit: Ariel Parrella-Aureli/Block Club Chicago

## Northwest Side Anti-Gentrification Ordinance

The committee also approved the **Northwest Side Housing Preservation Ordinance**, which aims to protect housing in rapidly gentrifying parts of Hermosa, Logan Square, Avondale, West Town and Humboldt Park.

The anti-gentrification ordinance was introduced by Aids. Carlos Ramirez-Rosa (35th), Daniel La Spata (1st), Jessie Fuentes (26th), Byron Sigcho-Lopez (25th), Felix Cardona (31st), and Rossana Rodriguez-Sanchez (33rd). The legislation builds off **two programs** introduced in 2021 that protect two-, three- and four-flats along The 606 and in Pilsen.

Originally **passed by council in 2021**, the demolition surcharge pilot law charged developers \$5,000 per unit and \$15,000 per building for tearing down single-family homes and multi-unit buildings in parts of Humboldt Park, Logan Square and Pilsen. The pilot program was **extended twice** and is set to expire at the end of the year. **Under the new legislation**, the demolition charges would be \$20,000 per unit and \$60,000 per building.

The fees from the demolition surcharge go to the **Chicago Housing Trust** and the **Here To Stay Land Trust**, groups that preserve affordable housing.

The Housing Preservation Ordinance would give tenants the right of refusal, which means they have the first opportunity to purchase their building when it goes on sale. The legislation would also legalize the construction of two-flats by right in all areas currently zoned for single family-housing, within the ordinance's boundaries.

Fuentes said the 26th Ward has lost hundreds of residents to rising rents and high property taxes.

“Our communities are under real threat of gentrification and displacement,” Fuentes said. “Many of our home owners do not see a future in our communities.”

Shortly after **The 606 trail was built in 2015**, two- and three-flats along the trail began to be converted into luxury, single-family homes, Ramirez-Rosa said. Between 2013 and 2018, the area near The 606 lost almost 60 percent of its two- to six-flat buildings, according to the DePaul Institute for Housing Studies.

Fuentes said the ordinance can serve as model for how to fight gentrification throughout the city.

“[The ordinance] will help protect the diversity and historic character of our neighborhoods,” Ramirez-Rosa said.



A rendering of the proposed Sunshine Community Center. Credit: Chicago Plan Commission

## Sunshine Community Center

Plans to create a community center and business incubator space in Washington Park moved forward Tuesday.

Sunshine Development Corp. and **Sunshine Gospel Ministries** want to create **the Sunshine Community Center**, a three-story building that will sit on vacant, city-owned land bounded by 60th and 61st streets, King Drive and Calumet Avenue.

Plans call for a gymnasium, fitness center, visual and graphic arts classrooms, recording studio, outdoor athletic facilities, rentable offices, business incubator space, cafe and 90 parking spots.

Sunshine Gospel Ministries Executive Director Kimberly Salley said Washington Park residents have been asking for a community center since 2014. The space will provide the neighborhood with much-needed senior programs, entrepreneurship training and support programs for families, Salley said.

Sen. Mattie Hunter has set aside state funding for the project and Sunshine has applied for city funding, Salley said.