



## Landmarks Illinois Statement

**Regarding SP3. Authorizing the City Manager to negotiate a lease agreement with Celadon Construction Corporation NFP for the “Adaptive Use and Rehabilitation of 2603 Sheridan Road, the Harley Clarke Mansion and its Grounds” (RFP 24-07).**

**October 14, 2024**

**Kendra Parzen Advocacy Manager, Landmarks Illinois**

Good evening, Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council. My name is Kendra Parzen, and I am advocacy manager for Landmarks Illinois. For nearly ten years, we have advocated alongside Evanstonians to save and repurpose the Harley Clarke Mansion.

When we were contacted by city staff in early 2023 with the news that the Artists Book House would exit its lease of Harley Clarke, we were ready to spring into action to help find another user. We were happy to support staff in the preparation of both the RFEI and RFP, sharing our expertise in crafting requests that lead to successful outcomes for historic buildings. Our objective throughout this process has been to demonstrate that the reuse of this building is still entirely possible despite its long vacancy, and to provide *options* for Evanston that offer a financially feasible path for its rehabilitation, without public dollars, while still maintaining a meaningful level of public access. This is a high bar. Thus, we are pleased that the RFP process has resulted in four responses, all of which rely on long-term lease and leave the property in public ownership. Evanston’s expert staff have selected Celadon’s response as their recommended path forward following a careful review process

consistent with Evanston's typical approach to RFPs. We commend the City for responding to calls for increased transparency by taking the atypical step of releasing the RFP responses to the public.

In the years my organization has advocated for Harley Clarke, Evanstonians have made it abundantly clear that they believe this building should continue to stand along Evanston's lakefront as a community asset. As we have seen many times over, the best avenue for a building's preservation is active use. Harley Clarke has been vacant for too long. It is time to give it a renewed future. Thank you.