



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 19, 2025

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PUBLIC MEETING TO ADDRESS DEMOLITION THREAD FACING HISTORIC CENTRAL CITY PLAZA

MILWAUKEE, WI – Community members, preservation advocates, and local leaders will gather for a public informational meeting on **Sunday, February 23, from 1-3 PM at Pilcrow Coffee (416 W Walnut St., Milwaukee, WI 53212)** to discuss the future of **Central City Plaza**, Wisconsin's first Black-owned and Black-operated shopping center, which is currently facing demolition.

Built in 1973, Central City Plaza housed 14 Black-owned businesses—at a time when fewer than 1% of all Wisconsin businesses were Black-owned. The Plaza was designed by Alonzo Robinson Jr., the state's first registered Black architect, whose work has been recognized by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office, and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Throughout his career, Robinson designed churches, public buildings, and small neighborhood projects for Milwaukee's Black community. Central City Plaza remains his largest and most significant commercial project.

The Plaza's development was championed by Felmers Chaney, a major figure in Milwaukee's Black history. Chaney was the city's first Black police sergeant, founder of the Black-owned North Milwaukee State Bank, and served as president of the Milwaukee NAACP. His leadership made Central City Plaza a reality, ensuring that Black entrepreneurs had a space to thrive in an era of systemic economic barriers.

Architecturally, Central City Plaza is one of Milwaukee's rare examples of New Formalism, a style popular in the 1960s and 1970s that merged classical elements like symmetry and arches with the clean, modern lines of Midcentury design.

This meeting will provide an opportunity to learn more about the Plaza's history, understand the demolition threat, and explore pathways for preservation and adaptive reuse.

Members of the press are encouraged to attend and cover this developing story. Interviews with community advocates and preservation experts will be available at the event.

About Milwaukee Preservation Alliance

Milwaukee Preservation Alliance is a non-profit organization devoted to promoting stewardship and awareness of the historic, cultural, and economic value of Milwaukee's built heritage. MPA aims to strengthen Milwaukee's neighborhoods by advocating for and promoting their unique cultural spaces and architectural assets in order to foster a strong and vibrant community as well as demonstrating the link between historic preservation and viable economic development.