

BRONZEVILLE, NEAR SOUTH SIDE

Bronzeville's The Forum, Once The Epicenter Of Black Life In Chicago, Will Be Restored After City Council Approval

Now, the team behind the \$20 million rehab is fundraising to bring the storied venue on East 43rd Street back to life.

Jamie Nesbitt Golden and Justin Laurence 1:40 PM CDT on May 26, 2021



Credit: Colin Boyle/Block Club Chicago
The Forum Bronzeville on March 31, 2021.

Credibility: Original Reporting Sources Cited



BRONZEVILLE — The restoration of The Forum is one step closer to reality after the City Council approved a zoning change allowing the 19th-century building to return to its roots as a performance venue.

The Forum, 318 E. 43rd St., previously was zoned for residential use. The change to commercial zoning boosts an ongoing redevelopment aiming to provide a banquet hall, retail and restaurant space. Efforts to rehab the building have been underway for years, with entrepreneur Bernard Loyd pouring his own money into remediation and repairs.

Loyd, who owns Urban Juncture, launched a crowdsourcing campaign late last year to defray some of the cost, raising less than half of the \$50,000 goal. It will take at least \$20 million to bring The Forum back into operation, Loyd told Block Club in February.

The City Council vote will allow Loyd to use a \$250,000 state grant to continue rehab work on one crucial part of the structure near the 43rd Street Green Line station. Rehabilitation of the West Annex is expected to be completed by 2022.



Credit: Colin Boyle/Block Club Chicago

THE FORUM Bronzeville at 318-324 E 43rd St on March 31, 2021.

Built in 1897, The Forum once was the epicenter of Black life in Chicago, hosting everything from movement meetings to live performances from world-renowned artists like Nat King Cole and Muddy Waters.

Ald. Tom Tunney (44th) said he supported the venture during a zoning committee meeting Tuesday, adding that the cultural landmark is “key to revitalizing the historic community.”

Loyd said the building — when complete — also will provide incubator space for Black creatives.

“The decision to return The Forum to commercial zoning — after 10 years of hard work by our team — is critical to its further rehabilitation,” Loyd said. “The Forum was a civic, cultural, and commercial hub of our community, and we can now focus fully on bringing it back.”

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Justin Laurence



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