

THE MARK TWAIN

CITY AREA	Downtown
NEIGHBORHOOD	Near North Side
DEVELOPER	Chicago Housing Authority, NHP Foundation
ARCHITECT	Weese Langley Weese Architects
PROJECT TYPE	Residential
PROJECT STATUS	Completed, March 2020

[The Mark Twain](#), a five-story Art Deco gem dating to 1932, is one of the few remaining single-room occupancy (SRO) affordable housing developments on the Near North Side. It is also one of the largest at 148 units. Operated continuously as an SRO since the 1980s, the building just underwent a [four-year renovation](#) by Chicago-based Weese Langley Weese Architects. This is a direct outcome of Chicago's SRO Preservation Initiative, which has begun to pay dividends for older historic properties vulnerable to the wrecking ball.

The NHP Foundation, a non-profit affordable housing developer focused on preservation, acquired the property in 2016 as part of the SRO initiative and brought in Chicago-based Weese Langley Weese Architects to lead the renovation. Each apartment includes upgraded private bathrooms, new kitchenettes and all new plumbing, mechanical and electrical systems. There is also a new rooftop deck and restored vintage lobby and façade with intricate terra cotta detailing. The building's long-term affordability is assured through Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) project-based vouchers for all 148 units.

The City's SRO ordinance creates a 180-day window before the private sale or transfer of a property during which affordable housing developers can weigh an opportunity to invest. Since its passage in 2014, the ordinance has led to the preservation of 11 buildings and more than 1,400 units of affordable housing. Another recent success is the historic [Carling Hotel SRO](#) in nearby Old Town, with 80 refurbished apartments. Preservation of existing affordable housing, including SROs, is a priority for the Lightfoot Administration—all the better when it occurs in an affluent part of town.



Courtesy of Preservation Chicago



Artist rendering, post-renovation

Further reading:

[Press release](#). City of Chicago, March 6, 2020.
[SRO Mark Twain Hotel to be renovated with \\$53 million in financing](#). Mark Buckshon, Chicago Construction News, February 12, 2019.
[Mark Twain Hotel renovation](#). Preservation Chicago, October 2017.
[The Mark Twain](#). Property management page.

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