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From Carson Pirie Scott to City Target: A Case Study on the Adaptive Reuse of Louis Sullivan’s Historic Sullivan Center

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FROM CARSON PIRIE SCOTT TO CITY TARGET: A CASE STUDY
ON THE ADAPTIVE REUSE OF LOUIS SULLIVAN’S HISTORIC
SULLIVAN CENTER

By
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FROM CARSON PIRIE SCOTT TO CITY TARGET: A CASE STUDY ON THE ADAPTIVE RESUE OF LOUIS SULLIVAN’S HISTORIC SULLIVAN CENTER

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This study provides an in-depth exploration of the adaptive reuse of one of Chicago’s most iconic structures over the course of a year from the Summer of 2011 to the Summer of 2012. The Sullivan Center was converted from a mid-scale retailer to City Target. Through extensive interviews with the Target development team, Chicago city officials, historians and Landmark Commission representatives this study documents the conversion and identifies the successes and opportunities of the project. The study follows the project from design development to completion, and provides insight on the local community perspective on the development.
# Table of Contents

**INTRODUCTION** .................................................................................................................. 2

**CHAPTER 1: Chicago’s Changing Retail Architectural Landscape in the Late Nineteenth Century** .................................................................................................................. 3

**CHAPTER 2: Purpose of this Study** ..................................................................................... 11


**CHAPTER 4: The Adaptive Reuse Process: From High End Retailer to Discount Superstore** .................................................................................................................................. 14

Integration of Historic Buildings into Present Society ......................................................... 16

**CHAPTER 5: Suburbanization of City Center** .................................................................... 18

**CHAPTER 6: The Historic Review and Landmark Commission** ........................................ 18

**CHAPTER 7: Inception and Integration of the Target Store into the Sullivan Center** .......... 20

Ceiling Conditions .................................................................................................................. 20

Window Displays .................................................................................................................... 22

**CHAPTER 8: Historic Building with Design Challenges** .................................................... 25

**CHAPTER 9: City Target opens in the Sullivan Center** ....................................................... 30

**CONCLUSION** .................................................................................................................... 31
INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 2011, the retailer Target publically announced plans to convert a large portion of the historic Carson Pirie Scott building in downtown Chicago into a Target store. Provided the high profile status of the Sullivan Center to the Chicago landscape it became noteworthy to record this adaptive reuse project. In an effort to document the transformation this two part study documents the conversion of one of Chicago’s most iconic structures through the project cycle. From the preliminary drawings, revisions and city reviews to the construction buildout this study will analyze the adaptive reuse of the former Carson Pirie Scott building.

The first part of this study is a historical analysis of the building based on existing literature, interviews with local historians and Landmark Commission representatives. The Carson Pirie Scott building is a high profile structure along the State Street shopping district, thus there is an extensive amount of existing material which has recorded the history. However, this study will yield additional findings by exploring the current Target development which has not yet been thoroughly analyzed and documented.

Part two has a significant methodological shift, from printed to oral sources, with a series of interviews with the Target design team and city officials involved in the adaptive reuse of the Sullivan Center. The interviews explore the goals of each party, discovering the successes and opportunities of the project.

This study will explore and identify the architecture that is considered sacred and the architecture that is adaptable to needs of the new tenant. The analysis of existing literature combined with interviews offers a new perspective on the current developments of the Sullivan Center. This research analyzes and documents the adaptive reuse of the
Sullivan Center, with the goal of contributing to the larger body of works that exists on the adaptive reuse of historically significant structures. This study sets out to encourage larger conversations regarding the adaptive use of unoccupied historic structures in Chicago and other cities.

CHAPTER 1: Chicago’s Changing Retail Architectural Landscape in the Late Nineteenth Century

Chicago was a dramatically changing city in the 1890’s. With the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 behind it, the city was quickly becoming known as a world class city with a flourishing architectural community. Chicago was reported to have increased in population from 600,000 to 1.7 million during the last decade of the nineteenth century. Such astonishing growth contributed to the demand to rebuild structures and continue to develop an urban downtown. Chicago quickly became a city known for a growing roster of skilled architects who wielded new construction techniques. With the opening of the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893 the city was recognized on the global scale as a force to be reckoned with in urban development. Daniel Burnham served as the chief architect for the exposition and was adamant that the Beaux Arts architectural style would be dominant throughout the Exposition. Louis Sullivan agreed to design a building for the exposition, yet he strongly opposed the style of architecture promoted by Burnham. However despite his opposition, Sullivan used this event as an opportunity to bring awareness to his firm, and voice his disinterest in repeating the architectural styles

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1 University of Chicago Library, “Chicago in the 1890’s,” map, University of Chicago, 1890.
2 University of Chicago Library, “Chicago in the 1890’s,” map, University of Chicago, 1980.
of the past and set the tone for his departure from traditional architecture, to present new styles to the public in downtown Chicago.

The rapid growth of downtown Chicago provided the opportunity for architects to design and build structures of varying sizes and styles and most importantly experiment with new construction methods. With the Exposition placing Chicago on the map, the city quickly became an architectural playground for entrepreneurial architects to explore their ideas. The development of steel structures, elevators and bay windows drastically changed the landscape in Chicago as architects began to build taller and with larger spans of glass in building facades. The famous Chicago window developed at this time which became an essential part of retail storefronts. It is a window that consists of three sheets of glass, a large fixed centerpiece flanked by two smaller windows. Often times the Chicago window would project out from the building façade forming an operable bay window which would provide ventilation into the building.

Today, what is known as the “Loop Retail Historic District,” was once a flourishing landscape of retail establishments in the late nineteenth century. As mass transit evolved from streetcars to elevated trains, State Street became known as the retail corridor, a true shopping destination for Chicago’s growing community (Figure 1, Appendix A). As retail development along State Street expanded at the turn of the century, many architectural styles were present, simultaneously paying tribute to the past and displaying techniques and materials of then present day Chicago. Although there were a vast variety of styles, there was a consistency in the growing height of structures. The buildings were constructed taller, the presence of brick was diminished in

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commercial construction, and the introduction of large spans of glass grew more common. The focus became more on function and honesty in materials, reducing the amount of decorative architectural details employed solely for decorations sake. Thus the architecture is both functional and aesthetic. Retailers began to flock to the shopping corridor to engage in the architecture that allowed for larger window displays to entice the customer to come in and view merchandise and shop⁴. State Street not only became a destination for shopping, but also for flânerie and window viewing⁵⁶.

Several iconic structures contributed to the shopping corridor, the Marshall Field’s Building became a shopping destination for Chicago’s community, catering to the whims of Chicago’s affluent women. On the west side of State Street, Daniel Burnham and Charles Atwood’s Reliance Building employed modern building techniques with steel beams, terra cotta and bay windows, which made the building stand out from the once brick and mortar downtown. The retail landscape was changing and the inspired architects of the time were eager to contribute to the new style of architecture developing in downtown Chicago.

Daniel Burnham made a name for himself by helping rebuild Chicago in the late nineteenth century, as did another notable architect who made significant contributions to the modern landscape of downtown Chicago, Louis Sullivan. Born and raised in the

Boston area, Sullivan has often been considered the “father of the skyscraper.” After spending time in Boston and having difficulties finding consistent work, Sullivan relocated to Chicago following the Great Fire and found great success. He worked for several firms before partnering with Dankmar Adler, thus forming Adler and Sullivan. He became well known as one of the founders of the School of Chicago and as one who most energetically rejected the historical revival styles that were so prevalent in other great Chicago architectural works such as Burnham’s. Sullivan was in great opposition to Burnham’s salute to the European style of architecture. Sullivan saw the opportunity to create great structures, pushing the limits of the architecture of the time and no longer being the servant to the client and public trust, but creating artistic architecture based on his own philosophy. Sullivan was not inspired by creating architecture which paid homage to the styles of the past, with a preference for a modern approach to architecture, he used the fast growing city of Chicago as his canvas to create a new style of architecture for public use.

During the late nineteenth century, Louis Sullivan studied at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in France (1874-1875), which greatly influenced his subsequent work. Sullivan began to consider his larger role, rather than simply as a building’s architect, he saw himself as an artist, merging the worlds of the commercial built environment with user experience and spiritual connection. In certain aspects, Sullivan gravitated towards the

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8 The term The Chicago School generally refers to the group of late nineteenth century Chicago architects who developed innovative building techniques that shaped commercial building in the twentieth century.
Art Nouveau style. He felt a strong connection to many artists of the style and considered himself the artist and decorator of his buildings. Sullivan believed art exists first in nature and art is a connection between the soul and nature.\(^{10}\) Sullivan states, “True art is the product of fertilization of the human soul by the soul of nature,” and goes on to describe phases in which the soul unites with nature.\(^{11}\) Much of Sullivan’s written work focused on the field of art in general, not explicitly architectural design, often calling himself an artist-architect.

Sullivan sought to design buildings through a renewal of style by foregoing architectural traditions and aligning closely with new movements of the time which overlapped the practice of architecture with artistry. Often clashing with Chicago’s more traditional architects, Sullivan sought to bring another perspective to the architectural landscape, a revolt against traditionalist architecture. He had developed a style of architecture that was more streamlined and modern for the time. He broke away from traditional European influenced architecture to embrace the buildings natural materials while deriving decorative ornamentation from nature. It could be argued that Sullivan subscribed to the closed unity of conception.\(^{12}\) That once the space was designed by the architect, it was complete and could not allow for additional incorporation of items, for unity had already been achieved. Sullivan wanted to be involved in the design of all aspects of a building. Although some in the architectural community did not receive Sullivan’s writings well at the time, his buildings were greeted with success and

admiration for their artistic designs, which were quite different from the surrounding architecture. Even those who opposed Sullivan’s design approach recognized him as a man of formidable talent.

There were many times in Sullivan’s career where his architectural style was widely received with acclaim and he was honored for his innovative thinking and architectural creativity, with the Sullivan Center being one of the most documented structures to support his work. Equally, there were many architectural critics of his work. During his career he often struggled with maintaining a steady workflow to engage in his design philosophy. However, there are few who deny his contributions to the architecture of the Chicago skyline.

In the late nineteenth century, Sullivan was commissioned to develop a retail center along the State Street shopping corridor at the corner of East Madison and State in Chicago. The building was constructed in 1899, originally designed for the Schlesigner and Mayer Store, but in 1904 Carson Pirie Scott Company bought the building it occupied for over a century. Today it is known as the Sullivan Center and will be referred to as such throughout this writing. Designed with steel beam construction, the façade boasted large plate glass windows to showcase retail merchandise in window displays. The building was designed with the first two floors open with high ceilings to accommodate retail activities, while the higher floors were visually deemphasized to be used as working floors. This design process can be seen in both the exterior and interior design of the building. On the exterior, the ornate façade constructed of bronze plated cast iron was designed with distinct vegetal motifs cladding the first two stories. The iron designs, also developed personally by Sullivan, clearly broke characteristics of traditional
architecture previously observed along State Street and emphasized the philosophy of creating a passionate and humane urban vision.\textsuperscript{13} The main entry at the corner of Madison and State Streets was designed as a two-story rotunda to be the showpiece of the building with ironwork that transforms the exterior to appear as black lace. The innovative steel frame construction is clad with white terra cotta which spans the width and height of the structure.

Although Sullivan’s involvement in the center was primarily creating the exterior façade, it is arguably the most impactful architectural detail present in the structure itself. Sullivan placed great emphasis on the architectural ornamentation of a structure. With the cast iron cladding at the pedestrian level, the design expands upward with terra cotta sheathing on the façade of the upper floors and between the window bays. Understanding the design of building was to house a retail merchant who sells goods to the public, Sullivan created an elaborate ‘picture frame’ around the large windows to showcase the retail product of Carson Pirie Scott. Sullivan utilized the ironwork to fabricate his design, which plays with light and shadows to misconstrue a sense of structural support from above.\textsuperscript{14} The motifs presented in the iron work are organic in nature, as Sullivan conceived the designs as poems in nature rather than strictly architectural ornamentation.

Through the artistic use and design of materials, Sullivan creates a building where the top floors appear to be floating above the main structure. The upper floors incorporate large Chicago windows to create a horizontal affect. With large expanses of glass, the


upper structure appears very light in comparison to the heavy ironwork on the first two floors, thus it has created a floating illusion in the space.

The Sullivan Center underwent several renovations and adaptations under the ownership of Carson Pirie Scott through the design direction of Sullivan. Sullivan also worked on several other retail buildings in Chicago, which share similar proportions of window and steel framing. It is through these structures, and most notably the Sullivan Center, that the prototype for the retail department store design was developed.¹⁵

The Sullivan Center became an iconic structure in the State Street shopping district, distinctly pronounced from its architectural surroundings with its unique ornamentation façade. The building has not only served to define Sullivan’s school of thought on architecture and design, but also as a branding and marketing opportunity for its tenants. Carson Pirie Scott used the storefront in marketing material and promoted themselves as a high-end retail option alongside other department stores on State Street.

There is true romance in the architecture, which was not altogether common in the downtown Chicago landscape where the revival of classicism and modern simplicity were often designed into the urban landscape.¹⁶ Sullivan designed his buildings with uniformity on the exterior and open layouts in the interior to allow for flexibility of use. Sullivan maintained control of the architectural design of the space, but allowed the future user to adapt the interior to the specific user needs.


CHAPTER 2: Purpose of this Study

In this writing, the exploration of the iconic Sullivan Center will occur through detailed analysis of the structure as the Carson Pirie Scott building and its importance to the retail shopping district in Chicago for nearly a century. Further discussion will center on the subsequent closure of the Carson Pirie Scott building in 2007 and how the building has been perceived as a vacant storefront since then. Finally, an exploration of the adaptive reuse of the Sullivan Center converting from a high-end retailer to a big-box discount retailer, Target Store, in 2012. This writing will also explore the impact on the perception of the building, along with the shift in the architectural fabric of the building and its integration back into the community.

The ideas of adaptive reuse will be explored in specific regard to the Carson Pirie Scott building, through analysis of the benefits and disadvantages that occur during the adaptive reuse. This will be viewed from various perspectives by the collection of interviews from Chicago city officials, Eleanor Esser Gorski, Assistant Commissioner with the City of Chicago Department of Housing and Economic Development, and historian Suzanne Germann with the Landmark Commission, Joan Pomaranc with the American Institute of Architects, the Target design team Project Manager, Mary Shaffer and Interior Design Director, Heather Sexton and landlord representatives from Joseph Freed and Associates. The interviews took place throughout the project, from August 2011 when the project was publically announced, through the opening of City Target in the July of 2012. These interviews assist in understanding the impact of adaptive reuse on a community, while presenting potential risks that may be overlooked by all parties when paradoxically mutual goals are shared by all involved. Interviews took place over the phone, through email and in person. Construction site visits were performed to
document the adaptation and restoration of the Sullivan Center as it was transformed into the City Target, images are available in the attached Appendix A. The library of the Art Institute of Chicago kindly allowed me to view and reference the architectural archives which assisted in the research portion of the historical account of the Sullivan Center. The Chicago History Museum provided substantial information regarding Chicago during the late nineteenth century and the architectural landscape of the time. The timely conduct of this study offers an evolving perspective of this project with in the moment reactions and responses from the Chicago community and involved parties. The use of existing literature combined with the interviews provides this study with the ability to cohesively analysis the adaptive reuse of the Sullivan Center in present day.

Along with the information provided through interviews, the thesis will analyze the architecture of the structure from its previous format as a Carson Pirie Scott to its adaptation into a Target Store. This will include store graphics and marketing merchandise presented in the windows for customer viewing. By studying the adaptation from an upscale retailer to a discount retailer, the study can analyze how the architecture and the idea of this iconic structure in the State Street shopping district are impacted. Altogether, this study serves to analyze the specific adaptation of an iconic structure in the Loop Retail Historic District to outline the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with adaptive reuse. By studying this present day adaptation closely, insight can be provided and opportunities can be outlined for future adaptive projects dealing with iconic historic structures.

In 1854 two Scotch-Irish immigrants Samuel Carson and John T. Pirie, founded The Carson Pirie Scott department store was in Amboy, Illinois two hours west of Chicago. It started as a dry goods store and was a modest beginning to the grand retailer it would become. Carson Pirie opened an additional wholesale and retail store on Lake Street in Chicago, a prominent trading district at the time, and the business quickly became one of the first chain stores in the United States. The stores grew with success and they constructed a new location on State Street in Chicago, a building which was destroyed in the Chicago Fire of 1871, resulting in a loss of over sixty percent of the retailer’s goods.

In 1890, Robert Scott partnered with Carson and Pirie, thus changing the retailers name to Carson Pirie Scott. In 1904 the company moved into the twelve story Sullivan designed building where it sold to both the wholesale and retail public. The ornately decorated building grabbed the attention of potential customers, but Carson Pirie Scott did not exist without competition from neighboring State Street retailers. Just north was Marshall Field & Company. Marshall Field’s targeted the more affluent cliental of Chicago, while Carson Pirie Scott appealed to the middle-income population. Carson

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Pirie Scott found success in offering retail goods, but also offered customers the opportunity to purchase insurance policies in their stores.20

The company continued to grow and expand across the country throughout many decades during the twentieth century. However, during the 1970’s Carson Pirie Scott lost its foothold on the consumer market as other department store retailers entered the Chicago marketplace. In 2006, after switching hands between several different companies over the past two decades, Carson Pirie Scott announced it would close their iconic State Street store.

CHAPTER 4: The Adaptive Reuse Process: From High End Retailer to Discount Superstore

As a prominent fixture on the State Street shopping corridor, Carson Pirie Scott became known as a local Chicago retailer for both mid-scale and high-end retail products. The retailer prided themselves on their excellent customer service and ability to offer a variety of products at various price points for customers. The closure of the flagship store in 2007 left the historic Sullivan Center empty and vulnerable to disrepair and neglect. Although rich in history and attractive in finishes, the space posed many challenges to potential tenants due to the large columns breaking up the space, the large square footage of the original tenant and the historical protection of the building. Due to these factors the retail portion of the building sat empty for nearly five years while restoration took place to restore the façade and interior to its original condition based on the Sullivan design.

It proved challenging for the ownership group to find a tenant who could utilize the one hundred and twenty thousand square foot space. Many retailers who were interested in having a presence in the State Street shopping district could not occupy such a large footprint, or did not want to design within the requirements of a historic structure. It could be argued that Sullivan designed the building with the foresight for the space to be divided with ease for future tenants. The building provides a uniform storefront with Chicago windows along the north and west facades which could accommodate additional entrances if the building were to be divided for multiple tenant occupancy. However the building exterior is protected under the Landmark Commission, making such modifications impossible. Therefore the building requires one tenant for the first floor space left vacant by Carson Pirie Scott.

When Target showed interest in the space the City of Chicago and the ownership group were welcomed the idea of integrating a Target into the Sullivan Center. Tax incentives were available to Target for developing a project in a historic structure and the city and Landmark Commission were willing to work openly with the Target team to develop design solutions which they felt constituted of a balance between protecting the historic nature of the building, and allowing Target to create a brand identity within the interior.

Though the city and ownership group welcomed the prospect of the Target store in the Sullivan Center, the Chicago community displayed mixed reactions to the potential development. The local newspapers ran articles regarding a discount retailer taking over
a high-end historically significant building. Architecture and design blogs voiced concerned over the integrity of the building being compromised by a Target store. Urban planners claimed that the suburban infiltration of the urban environment has occurred once again. Although the community did not want to see the building sit empty, there was significant concern for the alternations that could occur with Target planning to occupy the space.

Integration of Historic Buildings into Present Society

With many perspectives on the adaptive reuse of the Sullivan Center it becomes important to explore the possibilities of a historic space in an urban environment. In regard to the reuse of historic structures, architectural historians divided into two distinct schools of thought which we will explore in relation to the Sullivan Center.

The first approach is that historic spaces should adapt to current society and evolve with the ever changing landscape. This direction includes the alteration of historic structures to be adapted into new purposes and businesses based on societal demands. Former churches may be adapted into modern condominiums, downtown warehouses become apartments, and retail shops convert into new businesses. The evolution of the building is accepted and encouraged so that it maintains relevance in present society. Historic buildings can undergo a revitalization which may alter the architecture or impair the historical significance of the structure. This approach considers the relevance of the

23 The Condoist, 3.
building into present society a strong priority and will compromise elements of the historical architecture to keep its place in society.

The second approach to historic structures is that they should remain intact per the original design and not altered, other than to complete restoration of the space to retain the original design. This approach is used to provide historical accuracy to a structure and creates a museum like quality. The structure will be repaired and restored to either its original condition or the condition of the space during the time period when it was historically significant. For example, a home that was restored to the condition of when it was occupied by a former President of the United States, not when it was constructed. The event of a President residing in the home created the historical significance, thus the space is preserved based on this significant event. With this approach to preservation, the space is restored as closely as possible to the previous condition, removing the traces of later alterations, which arguably could be identified as removing a part of the less significant history of the structure. This approach is often used to create a factual representation of how the building existed at the time of construction or significance. The structure takes on a museum like quality and does not show the evolution of time on the materials, it exists independent of societal changes or demands on the structure.

In the case of the Sullivan Center, the building had undergone a significant restoration project starting in 2003 under the ownerships direction to restore the building to its original condition. Diligence was paid to restoring the space with historical accuracy to its condition as Carson Pirie Scott, and extensive work was completed to repair the interior and exterior architectural elements that had weathered time, alterations and neglect. Although the building was restored to its original condition, it did not have a
tenant to occupy the space until Target signed a lease to occupy the space. With the space turning from an upper midscale retailer to a discount retailer the Sullivan Center becomes classified in the adaptive reuse category.

**CHAPTER 5: Suburbanization of City Center**

The Target brand falls into the discount retailer sector, competing against Wal-Mart, Costco and Kmart. These brands have been excluded from many urban areas, finding success in suburban areas. Recently these brands have made inroads in city center development, government officials have provided incentives through tax credits and building departments are willing to work collaboratively with the retailers. Many in the local community have also expressed excitement for suburban chain brands entering the urban landscape in order to have the same amenities that are provided in the suburbs.

The economic climate has also contributed to the suburbanization of urban areas. With local businesses closing their doors, retail shop fronts in downtown environments sit empty with city officials and landlords eager to have a new business occupy the space. Large chain retailers have the cash on hand available to continue growth and expansion, and are able to move in on these vacant urban spaces. The economic climate of the twenty-first century has changed the landscape of the State Street shopping corridor.

**CHAPTER 6: The Historic Review and Landmark Commission**

The Landmark Commission was highly involved in the design reviews of Target’s proposed adaptation of the Sullivan Center. Because the building is protected, the Landmark Commission was able to have a voice in the design and be an active partner in the final product. There were many onsite meetings and revisions to the proposed design based on Landmarks preference of how the space was to be addressed.
The exterior of the building is fully protected, which prevents Target from adding exterior signage or branding elements. Many architectural features of the interior are also protected by the Landmark Commission. The interior columns throughout the space are protected and had to remain exposed in the Target layout. The columns had fallen into disrepair and were also restored by preservation specialists the Target design team hired. The escalators were also deemed historically significant and the Landmark Commission asked Target to create an educational display at the escalator bay to explain the design of the escalator and the importance to the building.

Figure 1. Exterior rendering of City Target
Source: Target Design Team, 2012

The Landmark Commission has protected the entry on the corner of State Street and Madison Street. The storefront, revolving doors, ornate wood ceiling and inlay
flooring will all remain intact in the current finish materials. This posed a design challenge for the Target team, because the main entrance is not accessible to persons in a wheel chair, therefore the design team had to make accommodations for a secondary accessible entrance.

**CHAPTER 7: Inception and Integration of the Target Store into the Sullivan Center**

Target originally started considering the Sullivan Center for conversion in 2006. At that time however the retailer had not yet developed a smaller footprint prototype ready for implementation and the property did not have the square footage Target required to move forward with the project. A few years later, with the development of a small prototype that allowed for a flexible design format of a multi-story space, Target reconsidered the Sullivan Center for its downtown Chicago location. The standard Target footprint requires a minimum of one hundred and thirty five thousand square feet in a large open format on one level. The Sullivan Center only provided one hundred and twenty thousand square feet, on three levels, and had many large columns throughout the space. In addition, the upper level posed challenges with an ‘L’ shape plan paired with large columns and existing elevator bays which were required to remain intact.

In order for Target to consider the Sullivan Center for its operations, the retail giant had to drastically deviate from its prototype and develop new design solutions specific to the Sullivan Center. Special design consideration was given throughout the space with attention to detail and its historical status in the following regards.

**Ceiling Conditions**

The ceiling height throughout the Sullivan Center required special design consideration in order to adequately heat, cool and light the space per Target’s design
requirements. The existing ceiling holds much historic significance and is protected under Chicago’s Landmark Commission; therefore it could not be penetrated or altered. The ceiling height on each floor is much lower than what Target’s prototype calls for. The engineering team had to develop innovative techniques to run shallow ducting for the mechanical runs in order to adequately heat and cool the space for Chicago’s notoriously cold winters and humid summers. The design incorporates a perimeter mechanical system, which resides inside a soffit that provides an uncluttered interior ceiling that highlights the column capitals. The solution developed does not impede on the existing Sullivan architecture, but will provide enough air to accurately condition the space.

![Figure 2. Perimeter HVAC soffit design.](image)

Location: Sullivan Center, Target Construction Site
Source: Lisa Switzer, 2012

The other challenge the ceiling height poses to the Target design is the proper lighting of merchandise. In Target’s prototype, the ceiling design incorporates a standard two foot by four foot acoustical lay-in ceiling with drop-in fluorescent lighting. Due to
the historical significance and protection of the building, the architectural and design team had to thoughtfully consider how to create a design that works within the existing conditions without penetrating into the ceiling structure. This had to be done while creating a design that would meet the Target lighting requirements for general and merchandise lighting. The design resulted in the incorporation of more decorative lighting throughout the retail space to include pendant lighting to highlight design elements along with surface mounted track lighting fixtures to provide general and merchandise light, while accenting the existing columns and ceiling design.

**Window Displays**

A prototypical Target store has a bay of glass in the storefront at the entry and exit without daylight access throughout the remainder of the store. The architecture of the Sullivan center employs large spans of glass along each exterior wall throughout each story of the building. While the building was occupied by Carson Pirie Scott the windows were utilized for retail storefront displays which highlighted the retailer’s current product offerings to entice customers to come in and shop. This was quite different from Target’s business model and approach to merchandising and Target did not incorporate window displays into the preliminary design. Instead, Target held merchandising racks off the windows and created walkways along the storefront. When Target submitted this design intent to the Landmarks Commission it was poorly received and Landmarks requested that Target reconsider the design of the space to include window displays, as the Chicago community had become accustomed to along the State Street shopping corridor.
Figure 3. Image of exterior storefront at Sullivan Center
Location: Sullivan Center, Chicago, IL
Source: Lisa Switzer, 2011

Figure 4. Exterior Rendering of Target Proposed Window Displays
Source: Target Design Team, 2011
With this request in mind, Target utilized a Visual Merchandising team to create window displays along the retail storefront. This was another new approach for Target, as the majority of the locations nationwide did not have window access close to merchandise. The merchandising team developed several key window displays that will be visible to pedestrians walking down State Street, along with window displays that are visible from the Chicago L trains that pass along the second level on Wabash. The displays will highlight the current merchandise and product offerings, while creating brand awareness for the potential customer. The custom window displays consist of custom fixtures to properly display window merchandise.

Figure 5. Image of storefront
Location: Sullivan Center, Chicago, IL
Source: Lisa Switzer, 2012

The new design which incorporates window displays pleased the Landmarks Commission; however it posed additional design challenges to the store layout due to the
requirement of additional square footage for display purposes thus taking away from space allotted to merchandise racking.

CHAPTER 8: Historic Building with Design Challenges

Target is accustomed to occupying ground up construction spaces that are built to suit their specific programming requirements for square footage and retail merchandise allocation. Until recently, they have not typically pursued projects in existing buildings and of those they had, they were not historic structures or in urban environments. The idea of building a Target in the Sullivan Center initially seemed farfetched to many on the Target team due to the overall size and design constraints. It took a lot of time and examination of the current prototype model to see how it could be successfully adapted into an urban historic structure. Extensive meetings occurred between the design and operations teams to evaluate the Sullivan Center space and its adaptation into a Target
store. There are several site conditions that are specific to this location for which the
design and operations teams had to develop solutions.

The Target store occupies the most prominent corner of the Sullivan Center
located on the corner of State and Madison Streets in downtown Chicago with its iconic
entrance at this intersection. The intricate ironwork façade is protected by the Landmark
Commission; consequently Target is not allowed to install any exterior signage along the
façade of the building. This means all signage and branding opportunities must occur
within the interior facade of the structure and cannot directly adhere to the glass.

The large circular columns spaced evenly throughout the floor plan are designed
with intricate capitals that punctuate the space, original to Sullivan’s design. The capitals
are protected by the Landmark Commission as well and cannot be altered or covered.
This design feature required the Target team to integrate the columns and capitals into the
store design and contract with a restoration specialist to repair and restore the columns
which had fallen into disrepair over the years. The columns also created a space planning
challenge for Target, with the typical floor plate allowing for wide aisles and large spans
of retail shelving for product display. Several merchandising pieces had to be custom
developed specifically for this location to increase capacity while working within the
column layout. Not only does the development of custom fixtures increase cost, but also
requires extensive programming for the Target team to ensure product minimum
quantities are met for floor space requirements. This again, meant additional planning
and coordination for the Target design and operations teams.
Target’s interior finishes are typically utilitarian and industrial, focusing on function and durability of the space, rather than the aesthetic. However, provided the high profile status of the historic Sullivan Center, paired with excitement of the first Target in downtown Chicago, the design team recognized the need to elevate the interior finishes of the Target store to better align with the expectations of the Sullivan designed space. As previously mentioned, the lighting package was developed with decorative fixtures to reflect a more upscale appearance throughout the store. The prototype vinyl composition tile that is traditionally installed in Target stores was eliminated and the design team selected terrazzo flooring to work within the smaller areas of existing marble.

Figure 7. Interior Renderings of City Target
Source: Target Design Team, 2012
flooring. The design team chose to depart from the prototype finishes to better integrate the discount retail brand into a highly designed space.

These revisions to the prototype did not occur without laborious meetings between the design, operations and finance teams. Each upgrade in material and finish selection had to be justified and tracked through the proper channels. The design decisions involved large cross-functional teams and increased budgets. The high visibility of this store paired with the numerous deviations from a standard prototype design resulted in a project team of over one hundred people. The development team completed a large portion of the design with internal resources, but also solicited the help of Minneapolis based architecture firm RSP Architects. Although the store is not considered a standard flagship store because of its limited space, it is considered a higher design store. With an upgrade in interior finishes and an enhanced customer experience the Target team has developed a new store type based on the adapted prototype, which will be known as City Target.

Target envisions this new brand as an opportunity to fill a gap for urban consumers. City Target will occupy smaller footprints, often utilizing existing structures. The designs will be sensitive to the existing structures and incorporate existing architectural elements into the store design. Target is slated to open three City Targets in the United States in 2012. The first to open in Chicago, then Los Angeles and Seattle, all utilizing existing architecture to house the new concept. In the case of the adaptation of the Sullivan Center, the Target design team was diligent in considering Sullivan’s approach to the design of the building. Target partnered with the Landmark Commission to address the requirements and recommendations of the Commission to preserve the
architecture, alongside educating the consumer on the history of the space through graphic displays inside the store. The vision of City Target at the Sullivan Center is to elevate the Target shopping experience, yet create joyful spaces which are functional and innovative in design. The design team’s goal is to delight and surprise the guest by incorporating cutting edge design elements, as Sullivan previously did at the building’s inception. The design team would like to have Chicago welcome City Target through the thoughtful incorporation of existing design elements of one of Chicago’s most notable architects. Target sees the larger monetary and resource investment in this City Target as necessary to capture the urban customer who is aware of the historic architectural surroundings.

When interviewing the Target design team, they felt they acted in the best interest of the existing design of the building, with respect to Sullivan’s architecture. The design team worked to create a design which integrated the existing architecture into the new store design. Target worked closely with Landmarks to highlight the prominent architectural features and pay homage to the historic Sullivan Center. It is important to note however that not all parties were supportive of the Target retailer occupying the Sullivan Center. The City of Chicago showed support for the City Target project and rallied around the concept of revitalizing the State Street shopping corridor. Local architectural bloggers voiced concern for the integrity of the architecture as the discount retailer planned to occupy the first two floors. Sullivan Center had become an iconic staple to the State Street shopping corridor and many people in the Chicago community were concerned that introducing a big box discount retailer would lessen the character of

24 Mary Shaffer, interview by author, Chicago, IL, December 10, 2011.
the historic street. Additionally, many people in the community take pride in the fact that downtown Chicago has been able to keep brands like Target, Costco and Wal-Mart at bay with locations outside of the downtown loop. To some, the integration of the suburban brands into downtown Chicago threatens the urban character of the loop through suburbanization of the urban environment.

CHAPTER 9: City Target opens in the Sullivan Center

On July 25, 2012 City Target opened its doors to the public in the historic Sullivan Center. The Target team focused their public relations efforts on the opening and had local news media and bloggers at the opening to document the event. The opening served as a historic event on several accounts. It was the first City Target to open for the brand, and it’s the first retail tenant to occupy the historic Sullivan Center since the closure of Carson Pirie Scott.

Chicago is a city that takes pride in its rich architectural history. As the date neared for the store to open the local media was eager to tour the City Target and provide feedback on transformation of the interior space. The Chicago Tribune published an article highlighting the retailer’s ability to stay true to the Sullivan design. City Target “strikes the right balance between preserving the aesthetic integrity of one of the nation’s great works of architecture and projecting the visual brand of one of the nation’s biggest retailers.”26 The article goes on to highlight that the opening of the project gives the State

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26 Blair Kamin, “Retailer’s redesign hits the Target; company stays true to Louis Sullivan design in ex-Carsons store in Loop,” Chicago Tribune, July 26, 2012.
Street retail district a major boost, and “revives the building as a living landmark, not a frozen museum piece.”

Overall, the general tone of the media’s reaction to City Target was pleasant and satisfied that the architectural integrity of the Sullivan Center was preserved, with no exterior signage and attractive window displays the retailer was sensitive to the historical architecture, respecting the past while having a presence in the shopping district.

CONCLUSION

The adaptive reuse of the Sullivan Center into City Target provided the Sullivan Center an additional opportunity to interact with the Chicago community, rather than simply exist as a building façade. There is significance in a building’s ability to stay relevant in society. Although the building went from housing a midscale retailer to a discount retailer, it has integrated back into society after years of neglect and non-use. In the case of City Target at the Sullivan Center it demonstrates that a historically significant structure can be successfully adapted to continue to participate in a constantly evolving society.

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27 Blair Kamin, “Retailer’s redesign hits the Target; company stays true to Louis Sullivan design in ex-Carsons store in Loop,” Chicago Tribune, July 26, 2012.