



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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**CITY OF CHICAGO TO HONOR PURPLE HEART VETERANS WITH STREET SIGN
INSTALLATIONS AT CITY HALL AND FORT DEARBORN**

CHICAGO — On Wednesday, May 21, 2025, at 9:00 a.m., the City of Chicago and the Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs will host a public ceremony honoring Purple Heart Veterans and recognizing the City's official designation as a Purple Heart City. The event will include the installation of two Purple Heart City signs: one in front of City Hall on LaSalle Street and another at the historic site of Old Fort Dearborn, located at Michigan Avenue and Wacker Drive.

Purple Heart Veterans, their families, and friends will gather to mark this important occasion, including Retired Lt. Col. Eldridge Johnson Jr., a Purple Heart recipient and the first African American pilot in the Illinois National Guard. Lt. Col. Johnson played a pivotal role in helping bring this designation to fruition and remains a passionate advocate for veteran recognition.

"Chicago is proud to stand with our veterans, especially our Purple Heart recipients, who have borne the scars of war," said **Mayor Brandon Johnson**. "This designation is more than symbolic, it is a pledge to continue building a city where our veterans are seen, supported, and honored for their service."

"This designation reaffirms our city's commitment to remember and honor the price paid by so many," said **Kevin Barszcz, Director of the Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs**. "Since World War I, more than 30,000 Illinois service members have made the ultimate sacrifice in defense of our nation — including my uncle, Hilario Vazquez, who was killed in action during the Korean War. Thousands more returned home with wounds that many still carry today."

The designation of Chicago as a Purple Heart City was made official on October 30, 2024, when the City Council unanimously passed a resolution sponsored by Alderman Gilbert Villegas and members of the City Council's Veterans Caucus. The resolution was signed by Mayor Brandon Johnson and reflects the City's enduring commitment to honoring the service and sacrifice of those who were wounded or killed in combat.



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“Designating Chicago as a Purple Heart City is a powerful gesture of respect and remembrance,” said **Alderman Villegas**. “It reflects our deep appreciation for those who’ve endured the unimaginable and ensures their sacrifices are visible and honored in the heart of our city.”

The Purple Heart City designation is part of a national initiative led by the Military Order of the Purple Heart, a veteran service organization dedicated to recognizing U.S. military personnel wounded or killed in combat. The program highlights municipalities that demonstrate ongoing support and appreciation for Purple Heart recipients and their families.

The City of Chicago welcomes all Purple Heart Veterans, their families, and the general public to attend this solemn and meaningful ceremony.

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