

E.C. neighborhood 'marked' by the state

Marktown finds place on state's most endangered historic places

BY STEVE ZABROSKI - Times Correspondent

EAST CHICAGO | The tiny Marktown neighborhood was named one of the state's most endangered historic places on Monday, and residents there hope to avoid the fate of the last city property to make the list.

The Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana released its annual 10 Most Endangered List of Hoosier Landmarks, which this year includes the 1917 planned community on the city's far northwest side.

The 1929 First National Bank Building at Chicago Avenue and Indianapolis Boulevard is no longer on the endangered list, having been demolished last year to make room for a retail shopping center.

"Being on the list might help, it might not," said Raphael Bejar, president of the Marktown Preservation Society, Inc. "Only time will tell."

The Indianapolis-based foundation published its annual tally of threatened places to raise awareness about rescuing

endangered landmarks and preserving historic neighborhoods and downtown areas.

"The list can attract grants to study structural conditions or fund rehabilitation, and it also draws attention from elected officials who can contribute to finding solutions," said Mark Dollase, the foundation's vice president for preservation services.

Marktown has been identified for concern due to the deteriorated condition of many of its 215 homes, and unregulated modifications to their original appearance such as amateur-built building additions, fencing and driveways.

"There's so much that can be done here," Bejar said. "The politicians come around and tell us that money is available for things, but once the election is over, Marktown gets put on the back burner again."

The city's Redevelopment Department recently hired Bauer Latoza Studios, a well-known

Chicago architectural firm, to develop a revitalization plan for the Marktown community.

"Professionals will meet with city officials, Marktown residents and property owners to define the problems facing the neighborhood and develop viable solutions designed to reverse the trends established over the past 30 or more years," said Paul Myers, redevelopment commissioner and Marktown resident.

Myers said a local street repair project begun in 1990 — and originally scheduled to be finished in 1995 — is now under contract and should be completed this summer.

Since the inception of the Most Endangered program in 1991, the landmarks foundation claims 40 saves and nine losses.

"There are a lot of good people in Marktown," Bejar said. "We've been promised a lot of things. When I see something actually happening, I'll believe it."

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TOP 10

See the Whole List of the 10 Most Endangered Hoosier Landmarks at the Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana website at

www.historiclandmarks.org or learn more about the Marktown Historic District at www.marktown.org.

The 1929 First National Bank building at the corner of Indianapolis Boulevard and Chicago Avenue in East Chicago is no longer on the list of endangered Hoosier landmarks. The limestone, granite and marble structure was demolished last summer to make room for a retail shopping center with a drive-through pharmacy window.

Photo by Steve Zabrowski

