MARKTOWN

In 1914, Chicago industrialist Dayton Martin established the Mark Manufacturing Company, a steel mill, just north of the Inland Steel Company's new Indiana Harbor works. Mark wished to create a model industrial community for his employees and commissioned a popular Chicago architect, Howard Van Doren Shaw, to design a new town.

The result was a distinctive community of 200 white frame buildings—stores, ole, single-family and duplex homes, and dormitories—constructed on a swampy 82-acre site.

Educational, recreational and service facilities were provided, including Marktown's own school, playgrounds, tennis courts, baseball and football fields, and an automobile service garage. The town was owned and maintained by the company and the homes were rented to the employees at reasonable rates.

The design of Marktown was greatly influenced by the architect's extensive travels in England, Spain, and Italy and still projects a strong European feeling. The architecture of Marktown closely resembles the English half-timber style Shaw used in designing his own residence in Lake Forest, Illinois. The narrow residential streets and white stucco facades of the community reminded visitors of small European towns.

A unique landscaping feature was the fountain, formally centered in a town square at the intersection of Broad and Dickey Roads. This square was removed in 1939 when Dickey Road was realigned. The original fountain is now utilized as a construction office, and a bar and grill. The hotel stands vacant, but the majority of the residential units still reflect the original character of Mr. Mark's town. In 1942, the homes were sold to individual buyers.

Marktown presently has a population of 683, with a gross density of 16.8 persons per acre. Forty-three percent of all families own their homes, the median value of houses is $32,600. The residents have indicated a great interest in the future of the neighborhood. This interest is demonstrated in the high degree of pride and sense of loyalty residents have for their community.

Marktown is an architectural landmark as well as a home for many families. While the improvement of residential quality on all buildings needed some type of improvement have been identified as starting points for a citizen and City-organized housing rehabilitation effort. Most of the original Marktown area falls in this category. The problem can be overcome, but it will require that all residents work together to improve their truly unique neighborhood.

TRAFFIC—Non-residential traffic should be discouraged by closing entry to the neighborhood at Oak and Spring Streets. Heavy traffic on Dickey Road should be limited to daytime working hours. Small, convenient off-street parking lots should be made available throughout Marktown to lessen congestion on narrow residential streets. Several lots are shown on the Marktown plan.

PARKS AND RECREATION—The small park adjacent to Marktown School should serve as a focal point for neighborhood recreational activity. A children's playground area, a basketball court and a small picnic area are areas of the many activities that could be located in this area. Street trees and parkway landscaping for each neighborhood should be initiated on those streets indicated in the plan. Four children's play areas or "tot lots" are needed for easy access from all parts of Marktown. A physical buffer such as a mound of earth or row of trees should be placed between the neighborhood area and noisy streets, factories or unpleasant views. A buffer is suggested around the park area.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES—The existing neighborhood center should be expanded to provide additional areas for work-shops, community meetings and recreational activities. An increased lighting level on the residential streets is recommended.

COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES—The improvement of the commercial facilities along Dickey Road should be encouraged. This could be accomplished through site landscaping, remodeling of stores, well-designed parking areas, and more attractive outdoor advertising.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE—The unique origin and design of Marktown give it architectural significance. An application has been submitted to register Marktown as a State and Federal architectural landmark. This recognition, when obtained, will give the neighborhood an identity and recognized status that could be a valuable asset in improving the environment. This could be completed in a new "Fountain Square" opposite the school, consisting of a small paved area with a fountain and benches to tell the story of Marktown. The Marktown plan illustrates one arrangement for such a new square.