

“40 over 40”

Illinois’ 40 top preservation successes: 1971-2011

- Landmarks Preservation Council – 1971.** Non-profit advocacy organization created to save Louis Sullivan’s Chicago Stock Exchange Building (demolished in 1972). Eight years later, group’s mission expands to entire state (LPCI). Renamed Landmarks Illinois in 2006.
- Main Street, Galena – 1971.** A plan to clear four historic blocks for a shopping mall is defeated, with support from Citizens Against Urban Renewal (CURB), which leads to a new master plan that focuses on tourism and historic preservation.
- GAR Hall, Peoria – 1972.** Beaux Arts-style structure (1909) built by Civil War veterans is saved from demolition by newly-organized Central Illinois Landmarks Foundation. Public meeting space further restored in 2008.
- Public Library, Chicago – 1972.** Proposal to replace Classical-style building (1897) with a new library is stopped by outpouring of public sentiment led by Chicago Heritage Committee and LPCI. Building converted to a city-owned cultural center in 1977.
- Marquette Building, Chicago – 1973.** Early skyscraper (1895) saved from demolition after LPCI prepares a financial reuse study. Building is restored by a new owner, the MacArthur Foundation.
- East School, Pittsfield – 1973.** Civil War-era building saved by the Pike County Historical Society after the county school board calls for its demolition. Now houses the society’s history museum.
- South Sixth Street, Springfield – 1976.** Purchase and rehabilitation of late-19th century commercial block by Carolyn Oxtoby—for retail and residential uses—helps spark the preservation of other downtown historic structures.
- Main Street Program, Galesburg – 1977.** One of three pilot locations for a National Main Street Program, originating in the Midwest Office of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Illinois Main Street Program created in 1993.
- Clarke House, Chicago – 1977.** Greek Revival-style structure (1836) relocated—including a dramatic move over an “L” track—to the Prairie Avenue Historic District by the City and the Colonial Dames of America.
- Federal Tax Credit – 1977.** Illinois’ first certified historic rehabilitation project (2218 N. Fremont, Chicago) is completed, followed by more than 1,000 other “tax act” projects in the next three decades. The same year, the Donohue Building (1883), a former industrial structure in Printing House Row, becomes Chicago’s first residential loft conversion.
- Central Square, Lockport – 1979.** Demolition of an 1896 school halted by a consortium of local government agencies, leading to other key preservation projects in this Illinois & Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor community (e.g., Adelman, Gaylord, and Norton buildings).
- C.B. & Q. Railroad Roundhouse, Aurora – 1981.** Demolition of rare limestone structure (1856-64) is stopped by the City, which then spurs conversion of machine shop into a public transportation center.
- U.S. Post Office and Courthouse, Quincy – 1984.** Impressive structure (1887) sold to a private developer, which leases ground floor for post office operations and creates national reuse model.
- Chicago Theater, Chicago – 1985.** Private demolition plans halted when City purchases iconic movie palace (1921) and donates preservation easement to LPCI.
- Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, Springfield – 1985.** Gov. Jim Thompson combines preservation services, historic sites, and historical library into new state agency. Early task is recommending state’s WPA-era park lodges to the National Register of Historic Places.
- Zimmerman Site, LaSalle County – 1988.** Proposed destruction of the site of the Grand Village of the Illinois, a former native-American settlement, for a 190-unit residential subdivision is prevented when it is purchased by the State of Illinois.
- Broadway District, Rock Island – 1989.** Residential area containing 800 properties (1860-1910) down-zoned to encourage building rehabilitation. “Great Unveiling” program, which removes artificial siding from historic houses, wins preservation award in 1993.
- Orpheum Theater, Champaign – 1989.** Copy of French opera house (1914) saved by local residents, led by the Preservation Association of Champaign County, after closing as a movie theater. Converted to a children’s museum in 1994 and, later, restored.
- Dana-Thomas House, Springfield – 1990.** Acclaimed design by Frank Lloyd Wright (1902-04) reopens to the public, following its acquisition—and nine-year restoration—by the State of Illinois.

Holy Family Church, Chicago – 1990. Dramatic 11th-hour campaign by Holy Family Preservation Society raises \$1 million, saving Victorian Gothic masterpiece (1857-66) from demolition.

Courthouse Square, Bloomington – 1990. Block of historic commercial buildings facing McLean County Courthouse saved after public pressure prevents demolition for a new courthouse.

Town Square Depots, Carbondale – 1990. City purchases and restores two vacant railroad depots for new uses, spurring the rehabilitation of other historic commercial buildings surrounding the town square.

Normal Theater, Normal – 1993. Art Deco-style movie theater (1937) reopens after purchase by City and restoration by public-private community partnership.

Catsup Bottle, Collinsville – 1995. Distinctive industrial water tower (1949) on Route 159 saved from demolition and restored to original appearance by nonprofit Catsup Bottle Preservation Group.

Black Metropolis/Bronzeville, Chicago – 1998. Nine surviving structures from one of the nation's most significant African-American commercial districts (1889-1936) protected as local landmark district. Several buildings adapted for new uses, including a high school and public library.

Fort Sheridan, Highland Park – 1998. More than 100 protective easements donated to LPCI as part of the decommissioning of this National Historic Landmark (1887); former military properties rehabilitated as private residences.

Wagner Farm, Glenview – 1998. Early-20th century farmstead rescued from subdivision redevelopment by Citizens Organized for Wagner's (C.O.W.S). The 18-acre parcel, including a farmhouse and barn, is now a local park district-owned educational facility.

Reliance Building, Chicago – 1999. Pioneering office skyscraper (1890-95) reopens as a boutique hotel, following multi-year project that restores the long-vacant building, using City tax increment financing assistance.

Historic Chicago Bungalow Association, Chicago – 2000. Nonprofit organization created to promote appreciation and preservation of this residential building type (1910-30), through city grants, homeowner education, and the listing of several bungalow neighborhoods on the National Register of Historic Places.

Coronado Theater, Rockford – 2001. Ornate movie palace (1927) reopens as downtown performing arts center, after two-year restoration effort sparked by the City and Friends of the Coronado.

Historic Michigan Boulevard District, Chicago – 2002. Mile-long "streetwall" of historic buildings facing Grant Park (1885-1930) receives local landmark district protection—following a 26-year effort.

Chicago Park District, Chicago – 2002. Two restoration projects—the Alfred Caldwell Lily Pool and the Humboldt Park Boathouse—win statewide preservation awards, as part of a district-wide landscape preservation program.

Dempster Street Station, Skokie – 2002. Prairie Style "L" station (1915) moved from path of proposed transportation center (Ten Most list, 1995) and restored for retail use.

N.O. Nelson Factory, Edwardsville – 2002. Vacant industrial complex (1895) adapted for new Edwardsville campus of Lewis & Clark Community College. Listed on "Ten Most Endangered" list in 1999.

City Hall/Fire Station, Pontiac – 2004. A portion of this Romanesque Revival-style structure (1900) reopens as Route 66 Association Hall of Fame and Museum. Other Route 66 restoration projects include historic gas stations in Dwight, Mt. Olive and Odell.

Farnsworth House, Plano – 2004. Masterpiece by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1950) opens as house museum, following massive fundraising campaign by LPCI and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Placed on "Ten Most Endangered" list in 2003, after being put up for sale and threatened with dismantlement and out-of-state move.

Tree Studios/Medinah Temple, Chicago – 2007. Adaptive use of historic block (1894-1913) wins preservation awards, eight years after it was scheduled to be razed for a high-rise and shopping mall.

Union Station, Springfield – 2007. Romanesque Revival-style building (1898) reopens as downtown visitor's center, following decades of vacancy and underutilization. Restoration includes reconstruction of long-missing three-story clock tower.

River Forest Women's Club, River Forest – 2008. Prairie Style building (1913) wins statewide preservation award, after being restored as single-family residence. Listed as "Ten Most Endangered" property in 2005 after long-time owners vacate structure.

Champaign County Courthouse, Urbana – 2010. Long-missing clock tower (1901) restored, following 35-year fundraising effort.