

# Landmarks Illinois

## 2012 Ten Most Endangered Historic Places

### BLAIR HOUSE

925 N. Sheridan Rd., Lake Bluff (Lake County)

This Modernist masterpiece was designed by Keck & Keck, a preeminent firm of the era. The Blair House has been widely published, both at the time of its construction in 1955, as well as in numerous books on the work of Keck & Keck and modern architecture. In 1957 the *Architectural Record* called it "A Residence of Exceptional Distinction." Currently for sale, the house sits on a large lakefront lot. With no protection in place the Blair House is highly vulnerable to demolition to make way for new construction. Contemporary houses of the mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century continue to be threatened throughout Chicago's North Shore. The Blair House is particularly representative of this important period of design.

### BRESEE TOWER

2-4 N. Vermilion St., Danville (Vermilion County)

Vacant since 2006, the Classical Revival-style Bresee Tower was built in 1917 as the First National Bank, designed by the Chicago firm of Mundie and Jensen. The tallest building in Danville, the tower is now owned by a Kentucky-based company that is unable to finance a renovation. The company is willing, however, to "gift" the building to a non-profit. The County, the City and local groups are working together to strategize on redevelopment options and are committed to finding a rehabilitation solution. But the continuing deterioration of the building's terra cotta facades is cause for great concern and shortens the window of opportunity for saving this landmark building.

### BRUCH-GUERTLER HOUSE

101 Blair Ave., Alton (Madison County)

Built in 1854 of limestone quarried from the property, the Bruch-Guertler house is a fine example of craftsmanship, local industry, and early settlement architecture. Bringing his craft from Germany, Ignatz Bruch arrived in Alton in the early 1850s and quickly established himself as a successful stone mason. The early limestone, Gothic Revival house is remarkably intact, but has suffered a decline in the hands of a neglectful owner and has received several citations from the city. It is hoped that the Bruch-Guertler house, considered a local architectural treasure – not only of Alton, but of the state of Illinois – can be sold or conveyed to a new owner.

### FOX RIVER COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL

1600 Dundee Avenue, Elgin (Kane County)

In a picturesque setting near the Fox River, this beautiful wooded campus is an important natural landscape that contains several significant buildings by noted Prairie School architect John S. Van Bergen. The low-slung buildings, with their stucco, stone and tile details, fit organically into the landscape. Built in 1923 as the Chicago Junior School, the school closed its doors in 2011 due to declining enrollment and the property is currently in foreclosure and for sale. While its 53 acres present a prime development opportunity, the beauty and integrity of the school buildings are a rare extant example of the country school campus. The school deserves protection and careful planning for future reuse.

### FREEPORT CITY HALL

230 W. Stephenson, Freeport (Stephenson County)

This distinctive red sandstone city hall (1889) sits on a prominent corner in Freeport's downtown. Over the years it has suffered from lack of maintenance, heavy use and multiple unsympathetic remodelings. In addition, settling in one corner led to serious concerns about the building's structural stability. But this Romanesque Revival gem is still a local icon and a group of residents would like to see it rehabilitated to become a functional municipal building once again. The City has moved its offices to a rental facility nearby while they consider what to do. A study group recently approved by City Council has until October 2012 to research viable solutions for the future use of the building.

### HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS

Statewide

The historic neighborhood school is a building type threatened statewide. These buildings are architecturally distinctive, well-built and centrally located. With misconceptions about renovation costs and unfavorable state funding formulas, many school districts have opted to build unsustainable new schools in outlying areas or to replace historic schools on site. Historic schools in the towns of El Paso, Harrisburg, Jacksonville, Pekin and Springfield are all threatened with or proposed for demolition. The state school construction law only provides funding "to replace aging schools." SB 639 proposes a language amendment to the law that would allow "rehabilitation" as a qualifying funding request. This simple change would encourage local school districts to give equal consideration to renovation.

### HOTEL GUYON

4000 W. Washington, Chicago (Cook County)

Completed in 1928 as a residential hotel, the Hotel Guyon is a prominent West Garfield Park neighborhood landmark. It has been vacant for almost a decade. Since a 1980s renovation the building has had numerous owners and is currently in court due to many code violations. Despite a need for affordable and senior housing in the neighborhood, the state of the current lending market makes a renovation of the Guyon, the largest residential building on the city's West Side, challenging for developers.

### MARBOLD FARMSTEAD

21722 State Hwy 29, Greenview (Menard County)

At one time the Marbold family owned thousands of acres in Menard County. A group of concerned citizens has been working for ten years to save this extraordinary piece of Illinois history for use as an educational center. In the meantime, the outbuildings have continued to deteriorate and the house has been unoccupied. Although the ownership of the farmstead is now secure, the real work of raising money to rehabilitate the buildings and create programs lies ahead.

### MAYWOOD HOME FOR SOLDIERS' WIDOWS

224 N. First Ave., Maywood (Cook County)

Built in 1924 to house the widows of Civil War soldiers, this classic brick structure represents a long tradition of caring for veterans and their families in Maywood. Its relatively small project size and prominent location should make it the lynchpin of much-needed redevelopment efforts in this historic suburb. The Home has been vacant since 2003 and owned by the City since 2008, while viable redevelopment options have been passed over, despite the strong leadership of the local Historic Preservation Commission. This building needs a realistic plan and the support of the City to make it happen. Historic buildings like this are often the key to a community's revitalization and city officials should partner with the HPC to find a new use.

### PRENTICE WOMEN'S HOSPITAL

333 E. Superior St., Chicago (Cook County)

This Bertrand Goldberg-designed building has been vacant since September, 2011. Ownership has reverted from Northwestern Memorial Hospital to Northwestern University, which wants to demolish it and land bank the property until it can finance a new medical research facility. This concrete, clover leaf-shaped structure, which was built in 1975, is representative of Goldberg's organic architectural designs and is highly adaptable for reuse due to an open floor plate structural system. After Prentice was included on last year's endangered list LI commissioned studies of three possible reuses for the building. The University, however, has claimed none are feasible for its needs.

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## Preserving a Legacy for the Future

Landmarks Illinois

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