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Belleville Turner Hall makes statewide endangered list

Wednesday, April 6, 2011, Springfield, Ill.—The Belleville Turner Hall, 15 N. First St. in Belleville (St. Clair County), was named to Landmarks Illinois’ annual “Ten Most Endangered Historic Places” list, which was announced today at a press conference in the State Capitol.

“At the time of its construction, this was one of the largest private gyms in the U.S.,” said Jim Peters, President of Landmarks Illinois. “We hope that the publicity generated by this “10 Most” listing will spark a new use for this important building.”

Landmarks Illinois, the state’s leading voice for historic preservation, listed nine other endangered historic properties on its annual list which focuses attention on sites throughout Illinois threatened by deterioration, lack of maintenance, insufficient funds, or inappropriate development.

The Belleville Turner Hall, with Art Deco and Gothic ornamentation, was constructed by the German community in 1923-24 as a social and civic center. Its primary purpose was a venue for physical fitness and educational programs for the community. Owned by the City of Belleville since 2006 and vacant, the building is in need of a new use and immediate repairs. A grassroots organization has offered to raise funds for repairs and to develop a plan for converting the building into a visual and performing arts center, but the City has not expressed interest.

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Background

Since the inception of Landmarks Illinois' "Ten Most" list in 1995, more than a third of the listed properties have been saved, less than a quarter have been demolished, and the rest remain threatened or are being rehabilitated.

This year's list also includes: an 1859 mansion, a pair of buildings that housed one of the state's most noted artists, a turn-of-the-century historic bridge, an 1871 county sheriff's residence and jail, a former social settlement house, a 1930s Art Deco theater, a Bertrand Goldberg-designed modern hospital, three century-old Catholic churches, and one of the state's most extravagant movie palaces.

Landmarks Illinois is celebrating its 40th year as a statewide advocacy and education organization. The not-for-profit works with citizens and communities throughout Illinois to preserve, protect and promote historic places through advocacy and education. In addition to the Ten Most Endangered list, the organization also sponsors an annual awards program and a matching grants program for County Courthouses.

The complete "Ten Most" list, including photos of the following sites, is available at www.Landmarks.org through the "Press Room" link.

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Landmarks Illinois is the state's leading voice for historic preservation. Since its founding in 1971, the 2,500-member statewide organization has saved countless architectural and historic treasures throughout Illinois. Landmarks Illinois' mission today focuses on saving buildings, facilitating preservation, and educating the public. For more information, visit www.Landmarks.org.