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Sheriff's Residence and Jail makes statewide endangered list

Wednesday, April 6, 2011, Springfield, Ill.—The former Sheriff's Residence and Jail, 259 W. State St., Paxton (Ford 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.

"This structure is believed to be the oldest of its kind in Illinois," said Jim Peters, President of Landmarks Illinois. "We hope that either a public or private reuse can be found for this vacant historic property."

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.

Located next to the Ford County Courthouse, this 1871 Italianate-style, brick house served as a sheriff's residence, with an attached stone jail, for 120 years. The County repurchased the building from private owners in 2007 with the intent of using it to relocate probation offices from the courthouse. However, county officials have since decided against this approach and have suggested possible demolition. Local advocates have urged the County to consider other options, such as leasing the property for office space or for a community use. To date, county officials have been unwilling to consider these options.

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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, an historic bridge, a 1920s community center that promoted physical fitness, a former social settlement house, a Bertrand Goldberg-designed modern hospital, a 1930s Art Deco theater, one of the state's most extravagant movie palaces, three century-old Catholic churches, and a pair of buildings that housed one of the state's most noted artists.

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.