

**Statement by Landmarks Illinois
to the Rockford Historic Preservation Commission**

**regarding the proposed Piety Hill District as a
Rockford Landmark District,**

July 9, 2019

Good Evening Members of the Commission,

My name is Lisa DiChiera, Director of Advocacy for Landmarks Illinois.

We are happy to be here today to support Rockford Landmark designation for this very important neighborhood and representation of early residential design bookended by two historic schools. A majority of homeowners, who have lovingly and proudly cared for their historic properties for many years, are seeking their recognition and protection. The two historic schools, architecturally significant in their own right, have served the families of these homes along with countless other Rockford residents. One of these schools, the former Garrison School, now too serves as residence to many proud homeowners.

Many of the proposed district's homeowners are long-time residents of Piety Hill, within the Signal Hill neighborhood. After the demolition of two significant Piety Hill historic buildings, neighbors have recognized that their cohesive blocks are not immune to vacancy and disinvestment. Some thought these demolished buildings and their homes were already protected by their location in a National Register Historic District and were surprised to learn that this designation is only honorific.

So local advocates and residents took charge and decided to nominate the Piety Hill section of Signal Hill as a local landmark district recognizing its architectural and historic significance. With grant assistance from Landmarks Illinois, Matt Wicklund, a professional historic preservation consultant who regularly prepares landmark nominations for the Department of Planning of the city of Chicago, has provided further information on this proposed historic district through his research and documentation as presented to you tonight.

In addition to this multi-block area exemplifying an early surviving, intact group of homes and neighborhood schools, built in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century to house and accommodate a growing middle class, this project was a true grassroots effort led by long-time and newer residents who love their historic neighborhood.

We thank the Save Piety Hill coalition for reaching out to us to assist, we thank Matt Wicklund for his additional work on this nomination and city staff for their assistance.

Thank you for your consideration.