

2022 MOST ENDANGERED HISTORIC PLACES IN ILLINOIS



Credit: Friends of Ziock

Elks Lodge #64

Rockford

"The restoration of our historic places, as well as new development opportunities has made this community thrive. The historic significance of the Elks Lodge building is paramount to the continuation of this mission."

- SANDI KOHN

President of the River District Association in Rockford



QUICK STATS

LOCATION

210 W Jefferson St.
Rockford, Winnebago County

YEAR BUILT

1912

ARCHITECT

Lawrence P. Buck

CURRENT OWNER

Privately owned

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

The Elks Lodge #64 long served as a community meeting place as well as an event and retail space near downtown Rockford. It is architecturally significant to the history of Rockford and has both local and national historical designations.

WHY IT IS ENDANGERED

The building is in disrepair due to the current owner's neglect, requires emergency repairs and poses a public safety risk. It faces an immediate threat of demolition.

TAKE ACTION

A preservation-minded developer and/or buyer is needed to save the former Elks Lodge and maintain its presence as part of the gateway to the West Downtown Rockford Historic District.

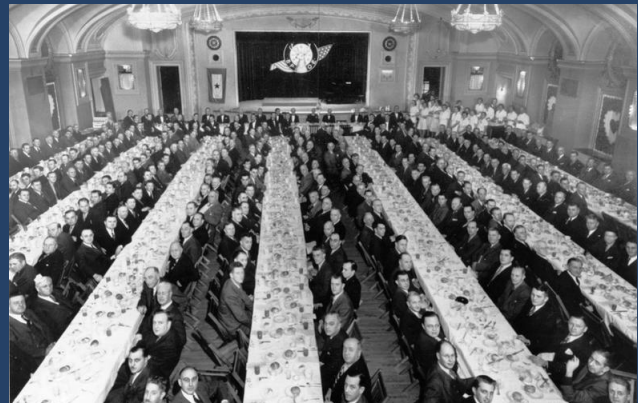


Credit: Friends of Ziock



BACKGROUND

The [Elks Lodge #64](#) has a long history in Rockford, and the structure has been used for many community activities. However, it has been vacant and deteriorating since 1990. It was built in 1912 and served many years as a lodge for the local Elks Club. Chicago-based architect Lawrence P. Buck designed the multi-story clubhouse made from red and brown brick with green tile. It has an exterior finish similar to that of the American Insurance Company across the street – making it an important part of the architectural aesthetic of this downtown area in Rockford. Buck was influenced by the English Arts and Crafts movement and Chicago Prairie School philosophy, which are reflected in the building's overall design. There is a second floor, a Classical-Revival ballroom and a bowling alley on the lower level.



Credit: Rockford Public Library

The Elks Lodge was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2005. It is also part of the [West Downtown Rockford Historic District](#) and is a local landmark in Rockford as of 2004. Its location on the corner of Jefferson Street and Main Street makes it an important gateway to Rockford's West Downtown commercial district. Many nearby buildings have been successfully renovated, including the Coronado Theatre. Rehabilitating the Elks Lodge building is needed to continue the revitalization and reinvestment efforts seen in the area.

It is the intention of local organizations like [Friends of Ziock](#) and the [River District Association](#) as well as the City of Rockford to promote and reinforce the historic district's redevelopment opportunities. The Elks Lodge holds a linchpin corner to mark the gateway into this important downtown district.



CURRENT THREAT

A current court order calls for the immediate demolition of the historic former Elks Lodge #64. Once a prominent community gathering space, the building has had a long history of sitting vacant and deteriorating. The Elks Club vacated the property in the 1990s, and it has since had several owners who never utilized the building. At one point, the building was donated to Goodwill Industries, which made some needed improvements and sold it to the current owner a decade ago. Since then it has suffered deterioration due to a lack of maintenance and funding to make necessary repairs.



Credit: Friends of Ziock

A previous developer with an option on the building passed away in 2007 before being able to embark on a restaurant and banquet center redevelopment. The current owner of 10 years has said he too would rehab the building as a restaurant, wedding and event space, but has been unable to proceed and has accumulated more than \$60,000 in city fines due to code violations.

A spring 2021 listing of the building for sale was unrealistic in price and prompted the River District Association to [hold a press conference](#) at the Elks Lodge to encourage movement from the owner and the city. Amid the organization's warnings about public safety hazards including falling brick and a collapsing roof, the city brought the building into court.



CURRENT THREAT cont.

In August 2021, a [judge ordered the owner to demolish the building](#) with a January 2022 deadline. Rather than making emergency repairs, the owner continues to claim he is [pursuing reusing the building](#) as an event venue but does not have the funding to do so. Also without available funds, the city is unable to pursue demolition or stabilization of the structure, and the building continues to sit in limbo.

Despite its current negative presence due to neglect, the Elks Lodge's location within the West Downtown Rockford Historic District does provide some benefits. For one, it opens up the possibility of a developer being able to use [key financial incentives](#) for the building's rehabilitation. The location makes the 20% federal historic preservation tax credit available with a qualified rehabilitation. Additionally, the Elks Lodge is in the State of Illinois' River Edge Zone, which also provides use of the state's 25% River Edge Historic Preservation Tax Credit. Rockford is one of five cities in Illinois with access to this additional financial incentive for the rehabilitation of historic buildings.



Credit: Friends of Ziock

The building's downtown location also provides a variety of commercial reuse opportunities. Possible reuse scenarios include a restaurant, boutique hotel, banquet or event facility, or innovative office space. More than 700 parking spaces are within 200-300 feet of the main entrance. To the south is [Veterans Memorial Hall and Museum](#), one of the oldest museums in the county. To the east of the building, a new public library is being constructed and is expected to be complete in 2024. A mixed-use residential and commercial project is also planned adjacent to the new library. To the northwest, is [304 Main](#), a preservation project with newly renovated upscale classic or loft-style office space for professional service companies and creative firms. Immediately adjacent to that building is the historic and completely renovated Coronado Performing Arts Theatre.



CURRENT THREAT cont.

Several other residential and commercial properties on the same block have been recently rehabilitated or have renovations underway, making the Elks Lodge rehabilitation a key part of downtown Rockford's overall revitalization.

Sandi Kohn, president of River District Association in Rockford said this about the significance of this building:

"The history of our beautiful downtown has been top of mind for the developers and business leaders in the River District, which includes the important West Downtown Rockford Historic District. The restoration of our past mixed with new development opportunities have made this community thrive. The historical significant of the Elk's Club building is paramount to the continuation of this mission. I, for one, cannot wait to see it back to the splendor of its past, ready for enjoyment of Rockfordians for generations to come."



Credit: Rockford Public Library



WHAT YOU CAN DO

For those with an interest in learning more about the opportunity to purchase and redevelop the building, please reach out to Friends of Ziock, which continues to encourage the owner to sell due to a lack of movement toward a rehabilitation of the building and failure to address code violations.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Friends of Ziock

Email: friendsofziock@gmail.com

Website: <https://ziock.org/>

Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/friendsofziock/>