



RIPS NEWS

Advocates for Historic Architecture

Membership Meetings

- May 19, 2026
Tuesday 7:00 PM Hauberg Civic Center, 1300 24th Street, Rock Island
- June 16, 2026
Tuesday 7:00 PM Hauberg Civic Center, 1300 24th Street, Rock Island
- July 21, 2026
Tuesday 7:00 PM Hauberg Civic Center, 1300 24th Street, Rock Island

An email reminder with the Meeting Agenda will be sent prior to each meeting with confirmation of time and location of each meeting at your request. Remember to keep the third Tuesday of each month marked on your calendar for monthly RIPS meetings and activities

MEMBERSHIP

It's time to renew

Many of you have renewed, but some have not. Please check your mailing label and renew if you haven't.

Annual dues are
\$15 individual
\$25 family dues.

We will assume any amount over that is intended as a donation unless you specify that it's for multi-year membership.

Membership dues and donations can be sent to Rock Island Preservation Society P.O. Box 3261 Rock Island, IL 61204-3621

Members may opt in for emailed newsletters and monthly reminders of upcoming meetings with agenda. If you prefer not to receive a paper copy of the newsletter, you will receive an email with a link to the newsletter on our website. Past newsletters are kept on the website.

Thank you for your ongoing support of preservation in Rock Island!

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY LEGISLATION

Housing Affordability Bills: What They Mean for Rock Island

Like most Americans, Quad Cities residents have felt the squeeze — at the grocery store, the gas pump, and the rental market. Costs are rising, and wages have not kept up. Housing affordability is a genuine challenge, and it deserves thoughtful solutions.

Governor Pritzker's BUILD Plan aims to tackle it by building more housing — fast. The initiative, now advancing in the Illinois legislature as HB 5626 and SB 4060–4065, would cut red tape and accelerate construction by overriding local zoning laws, allowing multi-unit housing and Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) in all residentially zoned districts, reducing parking requirements, and introducing third-party inspections and financial incentives.

The goal is right. But the approach deserves a closer look — especially for communities like ours.

Rock Island is not a one-size-fits-all situation

Our housing market is very different from that of Chicago and other high-cost areas. Rock Island and most downstate communities remain relatively affordable. There are vacant lots available for new development and an existing zoning ordinance that already supports infill housing and ADUs. Rock Island, and many other communities have partnered with organizations such as Habitat for Humanity to facilitate new construction. The real barriers to new construction here are material costs, labor costs and shortages of skilled labor, and financing — not zoning restrictions.

Approaches that are tailored to local conditions and that preserve the authority of communities to shape our own neighborhoods are preferred to a statewide, one size fits all mandate.

Solutions that could work here

- Rock Island would benefit from targeted, community-centered strategies, such as:
 - Trade union and apprenticeship partnerships** that address labor costs and build local workforce capacity
 - New construction material technologies** that lower per-unit building costs
 - Subsidized mortgage and home improvement programs** that help working families achieve and maintain homeownership

A model worth building on

Rock Island has a history to be proud of. The Broadway Historic District Association reversed a long decline by restoring single-family homeownership and rebuilding community pride — a grassroots effort that could serve as a model for communities across Illinois.

Legislation that unintentionally undoes that kind of progress by allowing multi-unit conversions without local input or oversight should not be imposed locally.

Get informed and get involved

Affordable, safe, quality housing matters deeply to this community. We encourage you to follow this legislation. Visit ilga.gov/Legislation and search for HB 5626 and SB 4060–4065. Legislators do not know what you think unless you tell them. Your opinions and comments matter to them. Email addresses are Senator Mike Halpin (senatormikehalpin@gmail.com) and Representative Gregg Johnson (support@repgregjohnson.com).

RIPS PRESERVATION AWARDS 2026



Martin Bush will receive an award for his home restoration at 1225 37th Avenue. The award recognizes extensive exterior restoration, especially a reproduction of the original slate roof. Slate appears in very few Rock Island homes and no local roofers work in slate. Although impressive, the home is easy to overlook because of its location. It is sited on over an acre lot, well back from the street and mostly surrounded by woods. This natural landscape makes it nearly invisible to the casual passer-by.

The home was built for Louis and Regina “Renie” (Mosenfelder) Kohn in 1924. The several block area surrounding the home had been subdivided by Genie’s brother, Louis Mosenfelder. Another brother, Eli, was a partner with Kohn in the downtown

department store, Mosenfelder & Kohn, later renamed M & K. It was located in the Fries Building, now the western portion of Renaissance Lofts on the northwest corner of 18th Street & Second Avenue.

Kohn, who was retiring from business in 1927 at age 70 decided that the family needed a new house. The Kohns had lived for 25 years in a huge Queen Anne style home at 824 23rd Street. That home still stands but has been stripped of its wraparound porch.

This large brick and stucco Tudor style home was built in 1924. A poorly reproduced picture of the home was featured in the year-end Argus. Surprisingly, no architect or builder was noted in the newspaper coverage. A tantalizing sentence noted that his daughter, Irma, a talented professional artist had “.....supervised the planning and created an attractive exterior and a spacious and artistic interior.” Irma, who painted under the name Irma Rene Koen, had clearly planned for her artistic needs with a huge studio with large windows and a skylight on the north side of the third floor. Another daughter, Margo, had already wed and moved away.

Although Renie died in 1933, Louis lived there until his death in 1942. His obituary reported that he “.....had devoted much of his time to the enjoyment of gardening and a study of wild flowers, with which he filled the ravine and rolling grounds of his home at 3637 Twelfth street.” The home was inherited by Irma who had lived here intermittently over the years. She sold it for \$25,000 in 1943. Over the next 40 years, the house changed hands every 4-5 years, with owners, Betty Ann and Joseph Sutton staying for about 20 years. Throughout these years, the valuation increased modestly, indicating relatively little inflation. Under the ownership of Robert and Walette Ellis in 1974, the large homesite was subdivided and two smaller lots on 12th Street were created and sold. When that occurred, the address of this home was changed from 12th Street to 37th Avenue.

A swimming pool was added in 1984 and, in 1987, a one-story addition was designed for the 37th Avenue side by architect Edward Angerer. Mr. Bush purchased the home in 2008.

Thanks to Wendy MacDonald of the South Rock Island assessor’s office for much of the information in this article.

To learn more about Irma Rene Koen and her art see www.IrmaReneKoen.wordpress.com a website created by Cynthia Wiedenman Empen.

This year we are only recognizing one property with an award. We did have another candidate, but decided to wait another year because some work on that project is ongoing.

