

The Indianapolis Star Real Estate column.(Column)

Source: 🇺🇸 Indianapolis Star (Indianapolis, IN)

Publication Date: 02-JUN-07

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Jun. 2--CRAFTSMANSHIP IS IN BLOOM IN THE LITTLE FLOWER AREA: Something about the Little Flower neighborhood just begs for a pitcher of lemonade. Maybe it's the sight of all those porches and small, but well-tended lawns.

"These little homes are just fabulous," said Vickie Gibson, who moved to the area last December. "Everyone has a front porch. Most people have a porch swing. . . . Neighbors know each other, so people feel safe."

The neighborhood, awash with bungalows and brick, consists of about 1,600 homes, said Morris Schefcik, president of the Little Flower Neighborhood Association. The biggest share of homes, he said, was built in the 1920s and 1930s, when craftsmanship and individuality were more common than the cookie-cutter subdivisions necessitated by the baby boom years. Real plaster walls, crown molding, leaded and stained glass, intricate brick patterns, hardwood flooring and ubiquitous front porches were the norm back then, Schefcik said.

"To have a complete house with every original window working, and the front door containing leaded, stained glass, is just amazing."

Real estate agent and Little Flower resident Sue Solmos agreed.

"There were three or four builders here who were true craftsmen," she said. "Sometimes when people take off wallpaper, they see that the plasterer signed the wall."

Gibson, a former condo resident, said she, too, fell for the neighborhood's character and diversity.

"The homes are all unique," she said. "The yards are quite small and easy to care for, so most of the yards are beautifully maintained."

"I like that it feels like a real neighborhood," Solmos added. "People walk their dogs, and run, and stroll with their babies, and everybody is so friendly. You couldn't walk down the street if someone were sitting on the porch without someone saying, 'Hi.' "

The neighborhood has been helped, Solmos said, by business redevelopment, including corridor improvements along Emerson Avenue and this spring's opening of a \$7 million cancer treatment center at Community Hospital East. Also, the Linwood Square shopping plaza was renovated about six years ago, giving Little Flower residents ready access to a Kroger, a CVS and other retail outlets, she said.

Gibson said she also likes the proximity to other neighborhoods and Downtown. "Little Flower has the same charm as the Downtown renovations without the hefty price tag," she said.

LITTLE FLOWER

--Location: Between East 16th Street and East 10th, bordered on the west by North Sherman Drive and on the east by North Emerson Avenue.

--Commute: Ten minutes to Downtown Indianapolis.

--History: The biggest rush of construction took place in the 1920s and 1930s. Some homes were built in the 1940s and a few after World War II.

--Prices: Generally, \$80,000 to \$160,000.

--Schools: Indianapolis Public Schools; private schools include Little Flower Catholic School and Scecina Memorial High School.

--Homeowners group: Little Flower Neighborhood Association.

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