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THE STAR



SERVING THE PASADENA, ALTADENA AND SOUTH PASADENA AREAS

Area homes to get fresh look and new owners

By Janette Williams, STAFF WRITER

PASADENA — A first-time home buyer at age 81, Mary "Miki" Makel can hardly believe the little 1925 Spanish Colonial house in Garfield Heights really belongs to her.

"Would you believe it, after all the years I've worked, after all this time when I'm getting down to Social Security, I've come into a home?" Makel said, smiling. "I think it can't be real, it can't happen to me — but nothing's too hard for God."

Makel, who moved into the restored two-bedroom house two weeks ago, is the first person to buy a house through Heritage Homeownership Partners, a non-profit program formed in January through Pasadena Heritage to rehabilitate historic homes as affordable housing.

The Fay Place house in Northwest Pasadena, bought for \$90,000 and sold for \$132,000, is the first of three planned home rehabilitation projects to be completed in the program, funded in part with \$141,000 from the city.

A second house on nearby East Claremont Avenue is almost finished, and the partnership is looking for a third home in the area.

Makel — who retired two years ago after working for 22 years at the City Club of Pasadena — said she fell in love with her house the first time she saw it, even though it was "all torn apart and looked awful."

The house, part of a 13-home 1920s subdivision on a one-block private street — still had many original features intact. But now the fireplace works and is surrounded by reproduction Batchelder tiles, the aluminum windows have been replaced, the floors refinished, and the original hexagonal tiles in the bathroom uncovered.

"We were looking for people renting in the neighborhood to buy the house, and Miki is the perfect person," said April Boettcher, president of the Neighborhood Association in Garfield Heights. Parts of that neighborhood became the city's second designated historic neighborhood earlier this year.

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Staff photo by WALT MANGINI
MARY "MIKI" MAKEL, left, talks to Aprilé Boettcher, who is with the Garfield Heights Neighborhood Association.

HOMES

Program assists first-time buyers

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"There are a number of boarded-up houses, a lot of dilapidated houses and we're all looking for a way to improve the quality of life of everyone living here," Boettcher said.

"We were thrilled they approached us for assistance," said Alison Becker, the program's project director. "They were a growing and energetic neighborhood association, they seemed highly motivated, and our mission is to promote revitalization in historic neighborhoods. It seemed like they were a perfect partner to begin our work."

Potential buyers of future rehabilitated houses must fit strict criteria, Becker said. They must be low to moderate-income first-time buyers. Pasadena residents most likely already renting in the area and "willing to take on the challenge of owning a historic home," she said.

Becker hopes to step up the program, eventually targeting other areas of the city.

"This is our first season, and we are looking to grow considerably over the course of the next several years, hopefully six (houses) next year," she said. "We will definitely move to increase the product without com-

promising what's special about being small and hands-on, where you're able to make the details shine in these historic old homes."

Makel, whose husband died two years ago, said it even feels good to have a mortgage.

"Nothing can stop me now."

