

Boyle Heights Couple Found Their Dream House Right Down the Street

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Seven years ago, the Alba family finally had saved enough money to move out of Boyle Heights, where they had lived most of their lives.

Joseph Alba, an evangelical minister and a Spanish interpreter in Superior Court, and his wife, Carmen, a teacher's aide, began scouting for their dream house in a more affluent neighborhood farther east, such as Whittier or Hacienda Heights.

After two years of looking, a friend suggested that they inspect an old two-story house on Boyle Avenue only a mile away from the graffiti-covered buildings they wanted to leave.

Even after decades of neglect, the stately old house with its four bedrooms, a sun room, thick beveled-glass windows, three bathrooms, a basement and brass trimmings was "a steal" at \$45,000.

"As soon as we saw it, we all fell in love with it," Carmen, 50, recalled.

The Albas are among the increasing number of Boyle Heights residents show-

ing their faith in the community's future by choosing to stay rather than leave once they can afford to move. Programs offering low-interest loans for refurbishing old homes are part of the reason.

Soon after their purchase in 1978, the Albas heard about a city-run, low-interest loan program to restore deteriorating homes in low-income areas.

A \$15,000 loan at 6% interest for 10 years enabled them to begin refinishing the rich, dark wood molding and paneling, clean the cracked paint off the brass fixtures and paint inside and out.

Raul Escobedo, manager of the Boyle Heights Community Redevelopment Agency, calls the Alba house one of "the proud ladies of Boyle Avenue."

"I'd rather see people refurbish these homes than see them destroyed," said Alba, 57, sitting comfortably in the large front room of his house. "I'm glad we stayed. I drive to work in seven minutes or less. The other day I walked."

—LOUIS SAHAGUN



JOSE GALVEZ / Los Angeles Times

Joseph Alba works in the yard of his old Victorian home in Boyle Heights that he purchased for the bargain price of \$45,000 in 1978 and refurbished.