ABSTRACT

CREATIVE PROJECT: Elwood, Indiana: A City-Wide Preservation Study

STUDENT: Joshua Michael Stowers

DEGREE: Master of Science in Historic Preservation

COLLEGE: College of Architecture and Planning

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As many communities across the America’s Midwest continue to lose population, their built environments and historic resources are quickly crumbling and fading away. For almost a half-century, cities and towns have used historic preservation to help stabilize and rehabilitate individual properties, neighborhoods, and districts. This improves economic and social stability in these neighborhoods, but often ignores larger contextual influences across the entire community. By expanding the traditional role of historic preservation with a multi-tiered approach, cities can produce and execute city-wide economic strategies that promote rehabilitating and stabilizing of the whole community. Leveraging historic preservation as an economic tool, help establish neighborhood-lead initiatives for clean-up and restoration of the built environment, including the opportunity to use preservation grants and funds to finance the investment. Communities must be committed to a long-term self-preservation strategy that enables individuals to re-establish the local economy.

The city of Elwood, Indiana, serves as a case study of how a small community can establish a network of local historic neighborhoods, utilize flexible city-wide guidelines, and expand opportunities historic preservation offers the community. This project follows each step of the process, from city-wide policies to neighborhood initiatives and an individual property owners’ rights. The conclusion shows that, if applied on a holistic, city-wide scale, historic preservation can play a crucial role in stabilizing and rehabilitating whole cities.