ABSTRACT

THESIS PROJECT: Preserving the Rural Midwest: Applying Historic Preservation Practices to Community Development

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This thesis studies the impacts of historic preservation as a community development tool in rural areas. With rural communities experiencing declining populations now more than ever, the research completed suggests that preservation can be a holistic solution to this as well as other challenges that come with population loss. Justification for such an approach can be found in studies completed for urban contexts and reframed to fit the needs of rural areas. Through this mindset, three rural Indiana communities were selected for study and comparison. Their local historic preservation ordinances, funding sources, and quality of life were evaluated based on the ability to manage change and address specific rural challenges outlined in the paper. While further research needs to be completed on historic preservation in rural areas, the thesis is able to discern a few best practices to aid these communities.