URBAN RENEWAL THROUGH NOSTALGIA

by

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ABSTRACT

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Throughout my undergraduate education I have grown to love urban environments. Growing up in a small corner of the Midwest has driven in me a desire to reinvigorate the fabric and forgotten excitement of downtown living and entertainment. This thesis focuses on how architecture can become a foundation for downtown development by tying elements of a greater community together. For this thesis, architecture is about creating an identity through cultural bonds and traditions. It’s about realizing a past, present, and potential future growth of a city’s economic and social hub. Architectural renewal focuses on how parts and wholes come together to form something enormously meaningful and capable of establishing a revitalized spirit and yearning for urban life.
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It's been a very long time, if ever, that most citizens of the United States have enjoyed the trouble-free and relaxing way of urban living. For the Midwest this is even truer due to the slowdown of industrial manufacturing and the exodus of newer generations to the south and west coasts. For cities in this part of the country, downtowns are struggling to display their identity once again.

For most of us in the Midwest, we find our homes located on the fringes of larger cities. Most of us get into our cars in the morning to drive to work. We also often drive to the grocery store, the mall, and even to school. Unfortunately, our urban environments are becoming less dense and our highways are becoming more and more crowded to support the influx of commuter traffic. Cities around the Midwest are constantly changing; trying to catch up with the exodus of people to the suburbs. However, even more so in this part of the country, cities cannot afford to discourage growth of any kind; even if it is suburban sprawl.

I chose to do my thesis in the city of Lima, Ohio; partially because Lima fits many of the misfortunes of other Midwestern cities, but also because I grew up and worked no more than twenty miles from downtown. Lima possibly suffers more than most cities in this part of the country because it lacks the size of a large metropolitan area that might maintain viability for many businesses. It also suffered a litany of incalculable losses. Some of these losses included the Lima Oil Fields, Lima Tank Factory, and maybe most importantly, the Lima Locomotive Works. These industrial powerhouses employed and maintained a strong, economic community that can be seen in many of the existing buildings from that time period. The architectural character of these buildings also expresses a very vibrant, but short, past of economic wealth of the working men and women in the city.
So how can cities reinforce their downtowns to be the once robust and bustling centers they used to be? It isn’t an easy answer. However, architecture does play an important role in jumpstarting renewed urban growth and density. The downtown area of Lima currently consists of many older buildings separated by a small number of parking lots and very low profit margin businesses. This poses two distinct problems. First, the small number of parking spaces makes downtown businesses unable to fairly compete with the more suburban areas that typically have unlimited parking. Secondly, the large number of low profit businesses scattered throughout the city does not promote renovation or preservation of current buildings. Because most of the businesses in this area do not have the required overhead to improve the building conditions they reside in, it doesn’t encourage new tenants to occupy these spaces. Instead of renovating these historic buildings for new technology (air conditioning, computers, internet, etc), these often beautiful buildings are left to shoddy craftsmanship of the building owners and tenants.

Even though Lima remains very slim in the number of viable businesses, it does possess, in large, a steady population that works and eats in the downtown district every weekday. In fact, most businesses in the downtown area are within a five minute walk from the main core of the city. This core, or better known as the Lima Square, boasts early 20th century architecture, as well as more modern designs. In fact, the Lima Square is almost a perfect mix of architectural style and scale. However, the Lima Square is obviously
missing something because every time I drive by, the urban oasis is deserted. What troubles me is that during the working week, people drive out of downtown to get lunch! Why don’t people eat lunch downtown if they are so close, you might ask? Part of the reason is the lack of updated building space. Another reason is the city does not have a good sense of place or destination. Of course, there is the Square, but the Square is too general, especially in its overall deteriorating state. What the downtown really needs is a place where people go to hang out for a long sit-down lunch. Too many suburban fast food places are gobbling up what should be a higher class lifestyle of professional business men and women. What is lacking in downtown Lima can be jumpstarted again with architecture.
CREATING A DESTINATION

Now that I have laid the groundwork for why I approached my thesis in this manner, I can begin to describe in detail how I executed this task. First off, what I didn’t want to do was create a place where people go to only eat lunch. Of course, with all the rich architectural history, I felt a greater connection needed to exist in order to begin to tie some of the loose fabric of this downtown community.

Architecture can begin to help set a correct path for cities like Lima, Ohio. Since many buildings are unsuitable for many upstarts and technology based organizations, it leaves a very small portion of the business world, local commodities and banks, to occupy the downtown area. This really hurts the feasibility for restaurants and attractions that may want to move into the downtown area. What would be ideal for a city like Lima would be a new destination where restaurants can lease newly renovated or created spaces. There needs to be a place where sandwich shops can easily hook into plumbing, electric, and have a reliable source of heating and cooling. They also need to be in a place that relates to the people that live in the area. For example, a high class restaurant without casual dining probably would not survive or stimulate excitement about the new location in downtown. There needs to be a buzz in the community and an eagerness to go see the new place.

So if no ordinary place will work to bring the buzz back into the downtown, what will be successful? This is where I took a look at history. Obviously to me, the history of Lima was all about the
industrial age. Lima, to me, is all about the strength and hardworking grit of its people. It's about success and pride in what people do for a living. Likewise, I knew there was a great regard for the Lima Shay Locomotive in the community. The Lima Locomotive Works, which produced the Shay Locomotive, seemed to truly represent strength and pride of an entire community. The Locomotive Works also represented a city that was always trying to move forward. In addition, the Lima Locomotive works tied in with the once great buzz for the downtown area. I recently sat down with Downtown Lima director, Fred Barrington, and he mentioned to me he wished we could set up a crane in the square (referring to the cranes they used to make in Lima). I think Lima could use that sort of “buzz” to get people excited about going downtown again. Likewise, the Shay Locomotive could become the centerpiece for the downtown Square.
Before I go on announcing my conviction for why I think the Lima Shay and new architecture can stimulate a struggling downtown, I want to share some of my research into why the Lima Locomotive Works were so important to Lima.

The Lima Machine Works was established in 1869 and produced mainly agricultural and sawmill equipment. A year later, a logger named Ephraim Shay developed a locomotive for use on wood-railed tramways. In 1878, the Lima Machine Works built a locomotive to Shay’s specifications. The company later reorganized and became the Lima Locomotive Company and formed one of the largest locomotive producing factories in the world. An astounding 7,752 locomotives rolled out of the erection sheds on the

![Preserved Lima Shay Locomotive](image-url)
south eastern side of Lima. Unfortunately, nearly all of the factory buildings that once stood have been demolished. However, the citizens of Lima have continued to march forward by embracing a new high-tech power plant that is going to be built on the former site where so many quality locomotives were built.

When the Locomotives were in full production, most citizens enjoyed some of the first streetcars in the nation. They also enjoyed easy travel to and from other cities, such as Chicago, Columbus, Cleveland, and Fort Wayne. Lima really was a great destination in the not so distant past. Ever since the very early stages of my research into my thesis, I knew the Lima Shay Locomotive would play a very important role in how I thought about design. However, I had to take a closer look at the history of the locomotive to understand how the Shay Locomotive could help me create a destination and a sense of place in this struggling downtown environment.

A design that honors the past and looks towards the future was essential to capture the spirit of the citizens of Lima and create a sense of destination. A destination also doesn’t happen by chance or luck. It needs to have a greater meaning and liveliness to its working parts. Likewise, Lima has always been filled with ingenuity and imagination. The Square in downtown Lima is a place where people can come together, share the history, celebrate the present, and plan for the future. My design hungered for something that
expressed the movement of a vibrant city in the heart of America. An important inspiration became the motion of a glowing city trying to move towards the future. Movement relates to the people as well as the locomotives that accordingly resemble the spirit of the city. Downtown Lima is a historical place that is yearning to grow and embrace organizations and people spanning different ventures and aspirations, while maintaining their connections with the past. For me, a museum dedicated to the history of the locomotive roots in Lima brings a perfect connection to past and the beginnings of a new future for Lima and its downtown. Obviously, the nostalgia of trains and what they stand for in America spur a lot of pride in a small community. The design for a museum and related retail development could successfully incorporate this pride in its design.

The character of my museum design had to focus on connecting the people of Lima with the treasure of its bright history. It should also spawn new development in the area. For this reason, a strong connection to the place needed to be developed. An overall blueprint for the downtown that relates it to the locomotion of the museum was needed to help to tie in the building with the community. The museum also had to be part of a greater downtown population. The way the museum and related functions of the building converge on the downtown area had to be looked at in the context of the site and concept of the building. Establishing a connection to the happenings of the downtown area with the new structure had to take shape in the way of urban spaces. The Square in Lima already serves as a place for people to merge and celebrate the greater community. However, the Square is missing an appropriately scaled space for the community to come together and experience this mixture of old and new. Reaching out and grabbing a small piece of history can create an interaction between just one building and the rest of the downtown area. Being a part of this motion of people, ideas, and history is what the building is all about.

The history of Lima, Ohio and its locomotive venture sets the stage for a place where history can come alive and become part of the community. A building that reaches out and grows into the culture of the people develops a strong connection to history and enhances the spirit of the future. The building design can
become more than just another building in Lima; it can be a place that represents an entire culture and its heart.
REFLECTION ON THE SITE

I have spent my whole life living in and around Lima, Ohio. The culture of its people has greatly influenced the way I think, act, and socialize. Growing up in Middle America has made me part of a rich history of people and industry. I've been surrounded by the history of locomotives and the people that treasure and have pride in the work of the past. For my design, I really wanted to give back something to the people in my community. I wanted to display the pride we all have for our hometown and our past.

In the same spirit, I wanted to create a location in downtown Lima that reunites people with the downtown community. Since Lima is part of the Rust Belt, I felt the downtown location is an ideal place for rejuvenation of the Lima community. Currently, the downtown is a very uninviting place during the day. Only during lunch time does the downtown have the opportunity to become an active place where businessmen and women go and get lunch. Unfortunately, most of these business men and women take their
lunch back to their offices and don't spend much time in the downtown area, especially the Square. The
downtown lacks creativity and excitement that once ruled the square at the time where the locomotives were
being made. Fortunately, many current events in the Square, such as Square Fair and Rally in the Square
have proven to be very successful events on the weekends. I felt the downtown location provides a perfect
opportunity to engage the community with the museum. My museum can become a great place for people to
come and sit down for lunch, while being involved with the museum. It could also be a good place to come
and sit in a very industrial setting while eating chili or soup that was cooked in big steel pots. It could also
be a wonderful place to sit inside an atrium looking out into the square which is actually quite beautiful with
all the trees (especially during the fall). The downtown also has some charm in the buildings surrounding

Site Analysis of the downtown "Square"
the site. To have a place where people can gather, but also interact with the museum can help tie the area together, and hopefully create a destination for people outside the community. In addition, bringing back some of the charm of the train era can provide a great place for business people to come for meetings. It can also bring back the charm by possibly having services such as barber shops, shoe-shine stands, newspaper stands, and coffee shops to the surrounding area. The train business was very much a service related venture. Bringing some of that service related feel to the design can add to the charisma of the place. Possibly bringing a bus stop to the building could also make the museum an existing transportation station, too. It can also be a place where people who enjoy rebuilding scale replicas of the old locomotives can come and build or display their works. All-in-all, it can be a place where people come together and enjoy the past while bringing together a community for the future.

After realizing my building needed to take the function of being a museum for the Shay Locomotive and a place for people to gather for lunch and dinner, I could start focusing on design. Since I had gathered so much understanding of the surrounding community, I wanted to start thinking how the design could tie the community with the Shay Locomotive. I also wanted to figure out how design can stimulate the community to unite in a downtown atmosphere.

In the next chapter I will show my design process and how it relates to my prior research of the Lima community. My final design is not only derived from the research I conducted, but it is a representation of my own architectural style and creativity. What I have set out to accomplish is a design that unites a downtown place on a single building and use that to spur the growth of a struggling, but potentially lively, downtown.
DESIGNING FOR THE FUTURE

The first step for all of my design projects is usually some brainstorming on how spaces will function three-dimensionally. For this design, however, I had to first look at how spaces work two-dimensionally. Part of the reason why it was so important to look at the site two-dimensionally was to get an idea of how pedestrians will enter the space and how functions of the museum will interact with the Square. I also needed to remember that I wanted the original Shay locomotive inside my museum so I was going to need a way to get the large locomotive in! These are a few of the many ideas I jotted down while reading books and looking at pictures. Some of the influence on facades was a direct result of researching old train sheds and how they represent a certain look and feel of a train station.
Here I have started to think more in terms of how the spaces inside the building will function. After all of my site analysis, I knew the Lima Square needed a focal point since the site was on the north end of the square. It also needed to suggest the interior function of the building so people could see how the building relates to the Lima Locomotive Works. Finally, the design had to work functionally, especially as a street façade on the eastern side that mirrors some adjacent shops and food destinations.

I knew the building form should express the same linear element of the railroad and its manufacturing process. I wanted my building to express this linear element by dividing the building into retail and functional space. The linear element became a sitting point for one of the Shay locomotives. I also wanted the corridor to become a forced perspective if you are looking from the square to give you the feeling of looking down a long, narrow railway track.
Here I started to look at how the forms related to the adjacent building and also how the scale of the building was going to work in relation to the surrounding context. I also wanted to experiment with roof shapes to give the idea of an old train shed, but use a modern twist to it. An immense part of the difficulty with this project was making my building look respectful to the adjacent Cornerstone building (as seen on page 3). With the yellow color masonry and highly dimensional arches, it really posed a problem into how my building would look as it rubbed against its side. Ironically, I chose to highlight this great architectural building by using it to frame one side of my atrium space.
Here is a look at one of my study models. I was really trying to find the appropriate scale for my building, as well as see how my building could interact with the Lima Square.
I started to take a look at my design digitally. Here you can see the sweeping curve of the roof and how it gives the feeling of an old train shed, even in this abstract form. You can see I am still trying to find the right scale for the building, hence the car on the road!
Here is a look at my final floor plan. The gray areas are open gallery spaces and public spaces. The stairs in the center of the building are there for a very important reason. The Shay Locomotive is very noticeably identified by its awkward boiler location on the right side of the train. Therefore, I wanted to give the guests a profile view of the locomotive when they first walk into the museum so they see this interesting detail.
Here is the second floor plan of the Shay Locomotive Museum. The blue space in the upper left is a research space full with computers, drawings, and books for the many people that come to the current Lima museum to do research on the old locomotives.
Here is the final design for the Lima Shay Locomotive museum! An urban street has been created on the eastern side of the building to reinforce the pedestrian friendliness where all the current shops and food places are at. Limestone, brick, and dull steel have been used to give the museum an older and heavier feel, while maintaining a newer modern look and appeal. The large sweeping café on the front of the building acts as a great suggestion for entry into the atrium space. Notice how the existing Cornerstone building (the one on the left in yellow and orange) is accepted into the design scheme with the swooping roofline. It is also used as a great interior wall to accent the space and bring a part of architectural history into the museum.
Here is an image of the northern end of the Lima Square. The new museum serves as a great cap to the existing architecture, and welcomes future growth by fitting in with its surrounding context. The large open space in the Square is available for concerts or other activities in the Square. The trees help to buffer some of noise from busy Market Street. The suggested pathways that run north and south also suggest the idea of train tracks and provide a great place for pedestrians to safely cross the street.
A night rendering as you would see sitting at one of the current shops on Main Street. The arches are to suggest the old train signs that often spanned many rail lines. The also help to suggest a gateway into the Lima Square and remind people they someplace special.
A view from the eastern gallery looking down into the atrium space.
A view of the northern façade.

A view of where the Lima Shay Locomotive would sit inside the museum. During certain times, I suggest that they fill the museum with steam from the old locomotive. This could be something people eagerly come to watch.
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