

Rural revitalization throughout the midwest: Preserving our past to create a sustainable future

by

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DEDICATION

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To my friends, family, and faculty, I dedicate this thesis.

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GLOSSARY

Midwest- states within the Midwest Region of the United States according to the United States Census Bureau. These states include: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.
https://www2.census.gov/geo/pdfs/maps-data/maps/reference/us_regdiv.pdf

“ghost-town”- a once flourishing town wholly or nearly deserted usually as a result of the exhaustion of some natural resource. First coined in 1931.

“Teardown trend”- phenomenon that occurs when housing developers look for properties in established neighborhoods that can be torn down to rebuild larger, more modern housing.

“McMansion”/”Monster Homes”- residential properties that are overly developed on a smaller portion of land.

Heritage-Based Rural Development- helps build sustainable communities and strengthen regional economies through the conservation, use, and promotion of historic and cultural assets. These assets may include buildings, structures, districts, Main Streets, farmsteads, and landscapes, as well as regional arts, crafts, music, food, and events. This approach supports and complements other rural development efforts.

ABSTRACT

Rural revitalization has grown in popularity in recent years. Throughout the Midwest*, communities have adopted this practice in order to preserve their heritage. The benefits of this practice are social, cultural, economic, agricultural, environmental, and historical in nature. When restoring a community's commercial district and subsequent residential neighborhoods, it is shown that property values as well as tourism increase. Rural revitalization also leads to a decrease in suburban growth thus preserving valued farmland. A community can experience all these benefits by working to preserve its architectural and historical integrity. Proof of this statement can be witnessed in communities throughout the Midwest region of the United States.

This thesis will highlight the importance of rural revitalization as well as examine its practice throughout the Midwest where agriculture is the driving force of the rural economy. It will examine the social, cultural, economic, agricultural, environmental, and historical benefits that can be experienced when implementing this form of community development as well as examine case studies throughout rural Iowa that have been successful in their revitalization efforts.

CHAPTER 1. THE ROLE OF AGRICULTURE IN THE MIDWEST

Introduction

The history of the Midwest is deeply rooted in agriculture. As individuals migrated westward with the promise of land and prosperity, the farming industry grew. The growing industry attracted increasing numbers of individuals and therefore communities grew as well to accommodate the needs of farmers and agricultural workers. Rural communities that formed as a result of agriculture are rich in social, cultural, and architectural history.

The Development of Rural Communities: A Sign of Prosperity Throughout the Midwest



Figure 1 Main Street- Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin circa 1913

The United States possesses a history richly steeped in agriculture. Since the first settlers came to this continent, agriculture has played a leading role in the nation's economy.

So much so that: "...in 1800, approximately four of every five Americans were engaged primarily in agriculture." As a greater number of individuals moved to rural areas, small communities were formed. As communities grew, a greater amount of supporting infrastructure was developed to accommodate the needs of residents. Businesses in these areas were highly dependent on the goods produced by local farmers and as a result, supporting businesses and industries began to develop as well. Industries such as: milling, meatpacking, and tanneries as well as breweries and distilleries. All of which were dependent on agriculture for livestock,

hops, wheat, and barley produced by farmers. Even clothing industries depended in part on agriculture developing lines designed specifically for farmers. Not only did farmers consume most imports, but they also produced a bulk of the nation's exports (Danbom, 2006). In part, it was the growth of agriculture and its supporting industries that drew a great many individuals to the United States from around the world.

American prosperity became a dream for many, and immigrants began to pour into America in hopes of making a better life for themselves and future generations.

Settlement in rural areas was perhaps easier for some immigrants as friends and family members may have come before them creating a sense of familiarity through

language and culture. Individuals from Czechoslovakia for example, settled throughout the Midwest after coming to

America. Many Czech immigrants settled in Chicago at the turn of the century making it the city with the third highest Czech population (Oral Histories Chicago, n.d.). An example of a rural community with a strong Czech heritage is Chelsea, Iowa.

In 2014, this rural Iowa community celebrated its 150th anniversary with a two-day cultural festival. Festivities included a community picnic, Kolache baking contest, tractor pull, and fireman's dance, as well as various children's activities and live entertainment (Chelsea



Figure 2 Czech immigrants in Chicago, Illinois

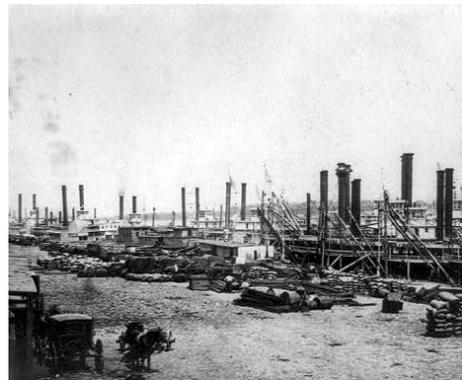


Figure 3 St. Louis Levee circa 1800

sesquicentennial celebration, 2014). Chelsea is just one example of a rural community that continues to embrace its heritage and sense of community. Many communities throughout the Midwest continue to celebrate their heritage in many ways be it through food, music, dance, worship, or cultural festivals.

As the agricultural industry increased, communities grew along with it, thus making the relationship between the two a very symbiotic

one. Though it seemed as though agriculture

was benefitting from such significant

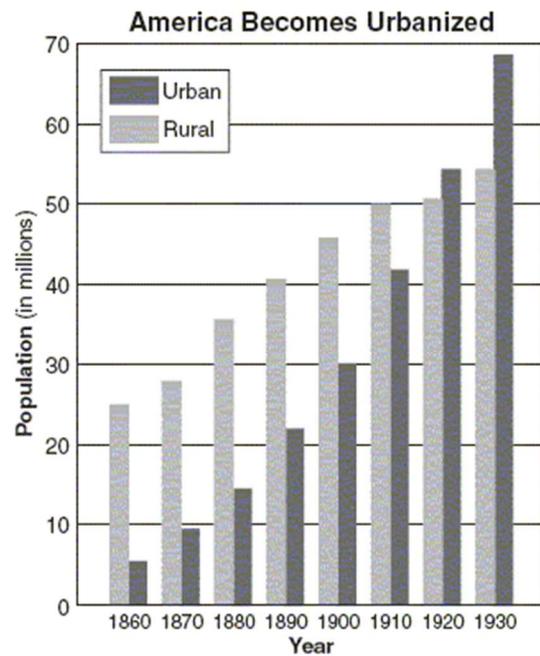
population growth in some areas, the increasing need for land and supporting infrastructure was already beginning to pose negative effects on rural areas.

Growing industry was encroaching on productive farmland and individuals who at one time worked as farm hands were drawn to greater opportunities in the cities. River towns especially, such

as: St Louis, Missouri, Chicago,

Illinois, and Detroit, Michigan grew rapidly and exponentially due to their shipping capabilities. By the 1860's, approximately 20% of both the Ohio and Illinois populous was considered "urban." Looking at census reports from the 1800's onward, rapid population growth of major "metropolitan" cities can be statistically proven. In 1800, there were roughly 6.1 people per square mile. By 1900, that number had risen to 21.5

Table 1 The American landscape becomes increasingly "urban"



Source: U. S. Census (adapted)

people per square mile. The 2000 census report showed that there were 79.6 people living on one square mile of land (United States Census Bureau, 2016). In 1790, census recorded a mere 24 urban locations throughout the United States. Ten years later, in 1800, the number had increased to 33. Slight increases were recorded every ten years but the most significant jump in urban populations was between 1820 and 1830 where 29 locations had a population high enough to be considered urban. 1840 was the first year the census bureau designated a populous as “urban” stating that there were approximately 100 urban areas when the census was taken (United States Census Bureau, 2016). The agricultural industry had indeed influenced the growth and development of major cities.

By the 1920’s the American landscape had changed drastically. Rural community populations continued to grow as agriculturally driven industries continued to prosper. Once small farming communities were now considered “urban” in nature. Farm income had more than doubled and land values had tripled (Danboom, 2006). Farmers were becoming increasingly on par with city dwellers as consumers as they produced less and less of their “needs” at home. In the years before farmers consumed roughly 60% of what they produced, but by the 1920’s that percentage had dropped to around 40%. This is because lucrative farm income, as well as the advancement of roads and automobiles, made it possible for farmers to travel into town to purchase the things they needed, and more importantly, *wanted*. Farm profits were also spent on more advanced machinery that allowed for quicker and easier crop and livestock production and in turn, higher profits. As late as 1920, most farmers throughout the Midwest relied solely on horsepower to run their farm machinery. All that changed in 1921 as the number of tractor manufacturers rose to 160. Tractor production continued to rise until the Great

Depression, dropping from 200,000 produced in 1930 to only 19,000 by 1932 (Ganzel, 2003).



Figure 4 man on plow circa 1930

Government assistance beginning in 1935 made it possible for many farmers to acquire “modern” machinery such as plows, planters, mechanical cultivators, and harvesters (Ganzel, 2003). As

machinery advanced and became more affordable, fewer hands were needed to carry out the day-to-day chores. Thus, more and more children were advancing to higher levels in school. Wealthier farmers were even able to send their children to college.

Though farm families benefitted from such advancements, there were also drawbacks to these modern inventions. One such invention was the automobile. Now that mobility was so convenient, teenagers and adults alike had easier access to town life. It was the attainability of modern conveniences such as running water, electricity, and the telephone that lured many inward from the country. Others left the family farm to pursue a higher education at the college level and in turn, careers that perhaps were not agriculturally based. When at one time it was assumed farms would stay in the family for generations, automobiles now made it possible for youth to leave farm life behind. Homesteads were increasingly sold off as farmers joined friends and family in town.

Though the automobile largely contributed to the changing face of the rural landscape, crop prices also influenced change. Throughout the 1920's farm prices fluctuated a great deal. In 1919, wheat went for \$2.19 a bushel, potatoes went for \$2.20 per 100 pounds, and cotton prices stood at \$.35 per pound (Danbom, 2006). By the end of the decade however, farm prices plummeted along with the rest of the economy with the stock market collapse of 1929. The Great Depression impacted the country as a whole and farmers were particularly affected by the devastation. Though its impact was felt first in urban areas, it eventually reached rural America. President Herbert Hoover had responded to the agricultural crisis by developing the Agricultural Marketing Act in May of 1929. The AMA subsequently led to the development of the Farm Board, which sought to stabilize farm prices by buying crop surpluses (Berkin, Miller, Cherny, Gormly, & Mainwaring, 2001). Though the government hoped this would alleviate strain on the farm market, it was short lived. By the end of 1931, the Farm Board itself ran out of money.

By 1932, farmers everywhere were feeling the effects of the Great Depression and did all they could to keep their farms. Horse and mule drawn machinery became common in order to produce the things they needed. As farmers produced only what they needed in order to save money, supporting businesses suffered as well. When at one time farmers easily obtained loans from local creditors, infrastructure loans were now a priority. Increasingly, farmers were no longer able to pay property taxes and therefore began losing their farms to the creditors that once loaned them money.

Throughout the 1920's and 1930's an average of 100,000 farm mortgages entered into foreclosure each year. Throughout the Midwest, particularly in the northwest corner of Iowa and the bordering Dakotas, farms were increasingly put up for public action. In 1932, 6% of farms throughout Iowa, North Dakota, and South Dakota were lost to bankruptcy or foreclosure (Wheelock, 2008). 1933 proved to be one of the most devastating years for farmers as 39 out of every 1,000 farms were lost to foreclosure, a figure of nearly 8% (Wheelock, 2008).

Government programs were developed with the intention to help turn the farm economy around. Early on in his administration President Franklin D. Roosevelt, a strong advocate for family farming, developed many aid programs for farmers in need such as the Agricultural Adjustment Act, the Resettlement Administration, and the Farm Mortgage



Figure 5 Iowa farm foreclosure circa 1935

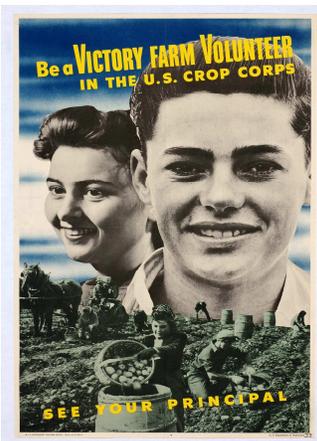


Figure 6 WWII propaganda Department of Agriculture 1943

Moratorium Act (Berkin et al., 2001). Many Midwest states implemented the Farm Mortgage Moratorium Act, Iowa being the first state to enact the moratorium in 1933 (Wheelock, 2008). However, loss of property as a result of the Great Depression coupled with the Dust Bowl was far too catastrophic despite Roosevelt's efforts. As a result, more than three million individuals turned from farming for a life in town (Berkin et al., 2001). Small farm towns, and bigger cities

alike, were becoming increasingly diverse.

The Changing Landscape: The Decline of Rural Communities and the Growth of the Suburbs

By the 1940's and the start of WWII, a great paradigm shift occurred. Many individuals who once worked primarily in the agricultural field, or within rural communities, moved to the cities to fill now vacant industrial positions. As the war came to a close, advancements in farm machinery meant returning soldiers were no longer needed as farmhands and therefore could build their careers elsewhere. Government subsidies

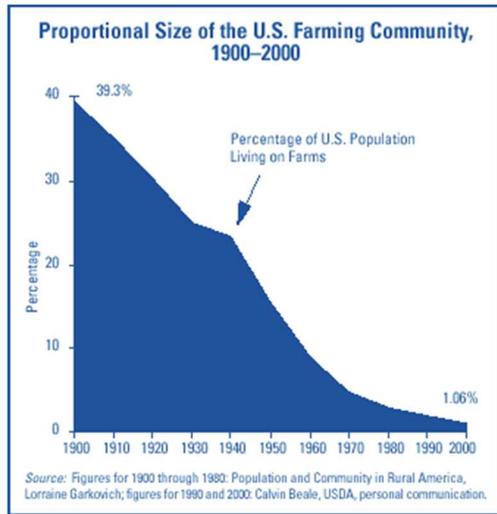


Figure 7 Cape Cod design for Levittown circa 1947

made it possible for returning veterans to purchase their own home and thus the suburbs were born thanks to developers like William Levitt. The cities had more to offer young families and as a result, rural populations began to decline.

The dramatic decrease in farm population could be attributed to many things: overproduction in response to WWI, the Great Depression, the Dust Bowl, decreasing birth rates among farm families due to mechanical advancements during WWII, as well as the overall age of farmers. Regardless of the reasons, the out-migration to cities was staggering. This attraction to town life resulted in a population decrease in rural areas from 30.547 million individuals (23% of the nation) in 1940 to 9.712 million in 1970, less than 5% of the American population (Danbom, 2006).

Table 2 continual decline of farming communities



Though farm markets picked up again for a short time during the 50's and 60's, farmers were about to experience another economic hardship with the farming crisis of the late 70's and early 80's. Small farmers were once again at the mercy of creditors as many of them only invested in large farm operations and many government decisions made it nearly impossible for farmers to keep

their heads above water. By 1986, farmers were facing financial difficulties similar to those experienced during the Great Depression.

By 2000, fewer and fewer individuals lived on farms and even rural communities were noticing yet another significant decline in population. In 2003, there were only 2.127 million farms operating throughout the United States, compared to 1800 where 80% of the population worked in some form of agriculture despite the growth of urban areas (Danbom, 2006). Given these statistics, it is clear that farms are disappearing from the rural landscape and where barns and farmhouses once stood, now stands housing developments, commercial districts, and expansive super stores. Rural communities steeped in rich culture, as well as architectural and historical significance are also fading in existence due to lack of local support.

One such example of a shrinking rural community is Toledo, Iowa. In 2000, Toledo census stood at 2,539. During the 2010 census there were approximately 2,341 individuals living in and around Toledo. The United States Census Bureau (2016)

estimated the population of Toledo would decline again in 2013 to 2,276 and will continue to decline in the following years.

Toledo has also witnessed a decline in downtown businesses as well. In 2011, the owners of Toledo's only downtown pharmacy closed its doors, despite being a staple of the community for the past 138 years. Tom Doyle, owner of Doyle's Family Pharmacy for the past 31 years, attempted to find a replacement in order to keep the business going. However, he states in an interview with DeWitte (2011) of the Cedar Rapids Gazette: "The young pharmacists probably aren't willing to work 60 hours a week, and do the deliveries..." Today, former customers now have their prescriptions filled by larger chain stores in the community such as Medicap and Shopko (DeWitte, 2011). These



Figure 8 one of the many vacant properties in Toledo, Iowa collapsed on September 2, 2014

chain stores are located in close proximity to the highway, thus drawing business away from the community's downtown district.

Though there is still hope for Toledo to make a comeback, other communities throughout history have not been so lucky. One such example is Quincy, a once thriving Kansas community turned veritable "ghost town" in the late 1940's.

Quincy, located in Southeast Kansas, was first settled in the late 1860's by farmers and ranchers and at the time was called Tailholt. In 1867, the community was changed to "Sheridan" with the establishment of the



Figure 9 Quincy before the "boom"

post office. In 1869, the community changed its name once again to the final “Quincy” but it did not become an official community until 1879.

Quincy continued to thrive and by 1904 it was considered a main shipping point for cattle due to its proximity to main rail lines. Its main street consisted of two churches, two grocery stores, a hotel, café, drugstore, bakery, blacksmith shop, barbershop, doctor’s office, various retail stores, and even a Ford dealership. As Quincy “relied heavily on the support of the farming population around it” it was severely impacted by the Dust Bowl of the 1930’s. Small farmers throughout the area were not able to produce enough crops to generate an income and thus lost their farms to foreclosure. They, like many others in search of work, migrated to larger cities such as Wichita and Topeka. The population of Quincy was also largely impacted by WWII as a growing number of residents moved to larger cities yet again for more stable work in factories and other forms of industry. In 1946, Quincy was no longer considered a hub for cattle export due to the closure of rail lines, and the town embarked on a steady decline. By the 1970’s Quincy’s business district had dwindled to a single grocery store. By 2012, the population of Quincy stood at a mere 15 and the last remaining business had long since fallen down Kruger, (2012).

As communities like Quincy face such a drastic decline in population and supporting businesses, they also lose countless elements of their rich heritage. Why do rural communities like Quincy, Kansas continue to disappear off the literal map as well as the face of the landscape? The next chapter will examine how the use of farmland has changed since the birth of the suburbs and how rural communities continue to be negatively impacted when farmland is used for non-agricultural purposes.

CHAPTER 2. THE CHANGING FACE OF THE RURAL MIDWEST

To reiterate, farming communities as well as more urban areas, began to grow rapidly during the late 1920's onward. Loss of property due to the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl, resulted in population increases as former farmers moved to these communities in search of work. Eventually, communities grew to accommodate the needs of their residents. One could find everything they needed in their community's business district. Not only did the business district drive the local economy, it was also considered the hub of community activity and fellowship.

After WWII, communities changed yet again as soldiers returned home to marry and start their careers and families. The family farm was becoming increasingly obsolete and rural communities were facing social, cultural, and economic decline. Historic structures within these communities were left empty and even the very landscape of the countryside began to change as an increasing number of individuals bought and built homes in the suburbs.

One of the greatest changes to the urban landscape came in the form of the interstate system, built in part to help transport goods and individuals, and in part to serve as a reliable and easily reconstructed transport system for troops and defense vehicles. Arguably, the interstate system was built more for the safety of the nation than for the convenience of civilians.

In 1956, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the federal Aid Highway Act with the belief that this form of infrastructure was a vital addition to the country's defense (Richards, 2006). Eisenhower believed that an advanced road system could be



Figure 10 the birth of interstate travel

more quickly and easily reconstructed than a railroad system in case of attack on American soil during the Cold War (The Economist, 2008). However, as the nation's economy improved, and the risk of nuclear attack subsided, newly developed roadways made long distance travel more feasible. More

advanced roadways also led to an increase in productivity as the transport of goods and services became more efficient. During the late 1950's, a 31% increase in annual productivity was a direct result of interstate construction. Due to larger populations and greater need for mobility, interstates were first constructed in the nation's 25 largest cities. By 1956, there were only 480 miles of road, nationwide, which were designated as "freeways" (Schwartz, 1976). During the 1960's, road construction contributed to 25% of the nation's annual productivity (The Economist, 2008). Suddenly, weekends were spent miles from home, drawing individuals and their spending money away from their rural communities. Mobility increasingly led to population declines in rural communities as individuals were drawn to urban areas. In the years before WWII, 232 American cities had a population of 50,000 or more. By the 1950's, that number had grown to 396 (Holcomb & Beauregard, 1981). Developers saw an opportunity with this population growth and thus began purchasing farmland bordering cities to create new residential

neighborhoods that epitomized the “American Dream.” These new communities became known as the “suburbs.”

As these new developments continued to grow, supporting infrastructure was constructed as well as new businesses to accommodate the need of residents. In the late 1970’s and 80’s, shopping malls located in the suburbs became the new location for social gatherings, pulling business away from rural main streets. As an increasing number of individuals flocked to the cities for shopping and other forms of entertainment,



Figure 11 mall culture of the 1980's

businesses in rural communities became increasingly obsolete resulting in the closure of many small businesses, which were at one time the backbone of a community.

Iowa State University
economist Kenneth E. Stone

reflected on this phenomenon stating: “within five years of a superstore’s (or shopping center’s) opening, small towns within 20 miles suffered a net loss in sales of 19.2%. Small towns further away, but still within the market, experienced losses of 10.1%” (Beaumont, 1994). It was because of this loss of business that main streets fell vacant, and in turn, architecturally and historically significant structures fell into decay.

As the suburbs continued to grow, the surrounding farmland also faced great change. The American Farmland Trust states that between 1982 and 2007 more than 23 million acres of America’s prime farmland has been “lost to development,” an area of land roughly the size of the state of Indiana (American Farmland Trust, n.d.a). Egan

(1989) wrote that, as of 1989, three million acres of farmland were converted to “other use” on an annual basis.

It is because of the loss of vital farmland as well as rural heritage that greater emphasis has been placed on the importance of rural revitalization. The effort is so great that individual states have developed policies and financial assistance to encourage planners to focus more on the redevelopment of the built environment rather than development of empty land. One of the leading forms of financial assistance to promote redevelopment of historic structures is the Federal Historic Tax Credit.

The Federal Historic Tax credit was designated to the rehabilitation of historic, income-producing structures. In order for structures to be considered historic they must follow a set of guidelines laid out by the Secretary of the Interior, known as the Secretary’s Standards For Rehabilitation. The Internal Revenue Service then defines

qualified rehabilitation

expenses the tax credit can

be spent on. Essentially,

every \$1 of tax credit

leverages \$4 of private

investment. As the chart to

the left shows, if \$200,000

Table 3 how private investments can contribute to the preservation of historic structures



worth of tax credit were set aside for the rehabilitation of a historic structure it would leverage \$800,000 in private investments totaling \$1 million budgeted for the project.

The Prosperity through Preservation campaign states that: “for every million dollars invested in historic property, 16 jobs are created and \$2.1 million in economic activity is

catalyzed” (Place Economics, 2014). As of April 2014, the Midwest states: North Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Wisconsin, Indiana, and Ohio all adopted the Federal Historic Tax Credit (National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2016). Taxes can also be established at the state and local level to influence the protection of green space.

One of the oldest tax policies is the “preferential taxation” which lowers the tax burden of green spaces or farmland thus reducing the occurrence of development. If land under preferential taxation is put into production other than for agricultural or forestry use, then the developer must pay a penalty as well as the back taxes that would have otherwise been owed. This can often be costly and prevents the overdevelopment of green space. In states such as Wisconsin, Michigan, and Minnesota, farmers are “eligible for a credit on their real property taxes if their land is located in an exclusive farm zone or subject to a land preservation contract.” These taxes can once again lower the financial burden farmers experience when land goes out of production (Stokes, Watson, & Mastran, 1997).

Where at one time there was a strong draw to life in the suburbs, community planners who focus on sustainability are now working to promote pilgrimages back to smaller communities and in turn reverse the effects of population decline in past decades. Roseland (2012) described:

By creating smaller, compact, transit-friendly and walkable communities, they [the communities] relieve pressure on our natural capital, reduce expenditure on physical capital, improve conditions for developing economic capital, attract human capital, strengthen our social capital, and enhance our cultural capital (p.

154). Through sustainability practices, planners are in a sense are encouraging individuals and business owners to return to their rural downtown roots where their very way of life was more centrally located. Because of this movement back to more rural areas and the preservation of these communities, downtown locations are again becoming a popular place to work and play.

As an increasing number of communities are placing greater significance on their respective histories and unique architectural and cultural characteristics, greater emphasis has been placed on the revitalization of their commercial districts and the subsequent benefits a community can experience. In the next chapter I will examine the practice of rural revitalization, whom the key players are in this form of community development, and how it is breathing new life into rural communities throughout the Midwest.

CHAPTER 3. RURAL REVITALIZATION: RECREATING A “SENSE OF COMMUNITY”

“People are becoming more and more aware of how the dominance of development and business is altering their lives and, in particular, their own heritage”- Robert Redford

The American landscape has seen a great many changes throughout the decades, change that has symbolized growth and prosperity. When suburbs first started appearing throughout the countryside after WWII they were considered a sign of progress and promise after many years of economic strife and loss. This shift from to the suburbs drastically impacted rural communities as residents and business owners moved to the cities in search of greater opportunities. In recent years however, residents of rural communities have made serious strides to bring new life to their communities. They have done this by revitalizing the aspects of their heritage; highlighting their unique social, cultural, economic, architectural, and agricultural history.

The practice of rural revitalization has grown in popularity in recent years as changing economic conditions throughout history have led to pockets of decay in rural communities throughout the Midwest. Structures have fallen into disrepair, creating eyesores in the community, lowering property values, and discouraging tourism. To prevent this from occurring, government programs at the national, state, and local levels have established programs to aid communities in their revitalization attempts.

Developed at the national level in 1974, the Community Development Block Grant provides development assistance for urban areas as well as rural communities. The program focuses on slum clearance as well as the conservation of preexisting housing, economic development, and historic preservation (Holcomb & Beauregard, 1981). These grants, along with other government programs, made it possible for financially struggling

communities to undertake revitalization efforts they may not otherwise been able to afford. As more states have recognized the benefits of rural revitalization, government funds have been delegated to many Midwestern states. Individual states then determine a percentage of funds allotted to qualified communities. For example, the Iowa Economic Development Authority program has allotted approximately 15% of funds to various downtown revitalization projects throughout the state Iowa Economic Development, 2016).

Reflecting on the importance of a community's history, heritage, and cultural diversity within the built environment, Palen and London (1984) stated: "The preservation of ethnic neighborhoods is not only to value the communities themselves but also to serve the edification of others in the plural community." (p. 33) Through the revitalization of Main Street, communities regardless of size hope to draw populations back from the suburbs by reinventing the downtown district as a cultural, social, and



Figure 12 Originally the Linseed Oil factory and warehouse in Sioux City, Iowa, the structure is now home to State Steel Supply's corporate offices

economic center to once again establish a "sense of community" among residents.

One such way communities can achieve this is through adaptive reuse. Adaptive reuse, is defined as: "the usage of a

building or site for a purpose other than

what it was originally constructed or

designed for" (Keener, 2014). This development tool implements rehabilitation practices

to ensure that a remaining structure is altered in a way to accommodate the needs of the

new business without compromising its architectural, historical, and cultural integrity.

Adaptive reuse is growing in popularity as a greater number of communities are looking for more sustainable revitalization practices. Through adaptive reuse, communities are able to cut out demolition and reconstruction costs as well as protect the environment from the effects of construction waste removal (Rypkema, 1994).

As stated previously, many programs have been developed at the national, state, and even local level to aid communities in the revitalization process. Though the Community Development Block Grant does provide financial assistance to communities looking to undertake revitalization projects, there are programs designed specifically for the revitalization of historic structures. One such program, and the leader in revitalization efforts, is the Main Street Program developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Developed in 1977, The Main Street Program was created to study failing business districts and the ramifications of urban growth. The main goal of the program was to learn why and how these business districts were failing as well as develop restoration strategies to save historic commercial buildings in the hopes of drawing individuals back to the original business district. The result was what became known as the Four Points Approach.

The Four Points Approach is a development tool designed specifically for communities who are looking to revitalize their business districts by capitalizing on their historic, cultural, and architectural assets. It also helps communities to address common issues that can

Table 4 how the Four Points Approach addresses components of a community in order to be used as an effective development tool



deter a community from embarking on a revitalization project. These four points are: organization, promotion, design, and economic restructuring. When implemented by communities these four points often help to enhance the real estate market by increasing the value of local businesses. The Main Street Program emphasizes the importance of community cohesiveness when working toward their revitalization goals. In a sense, the Main Street Program also works to recreate a sense of community, a concept that was almost lost as residents of rural communities relocated to urban areas.

The Main Street Program has been so successful in their approach because not only do they encourage communities to work together to achieve their goals, but they also work with community leaders and volunteers in the planning stages helping them to realize their business districts' unique history and architectural characteristics as well as teach them how to work together during every step of the process. The Main Street Program also serves as a teaching tool throughout the revitalization process, as it teaches communities the "self-help" model of community development. This model essentially teaches people or communities how to help themselves. In order for the self-help model to be effective, "individuals must have the necessary democratic skills, participants must have a reasonable expectation that their efforts have the same impact, and they also must identify their shared interests to develop a common set of goals" (Green & Haines, 2012, p. 17). It is believed that when communities adopt this approach, they are more likely to repeat it in the future because it gives them a sense of accomplishment and "ownership" over their success. The Main Street Program also emphasizes that "quality" is more important than "quantity." Though revitalization projects can take a great deal of time and effort, when done right it saves the community time and money in the long run.

Successful planning, budgeting, and execution also allows for excess funds to be invested into future revitalization projects (National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2013). Proof of their success can be witnessed in communities throughout the Midwest.

According to statistics provided by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Main Street Program has helped countless communities in their revitalization efforts. From 1980 to 2002, Main Street participants reinvested approximately \$9.5 million into their central business districts. More than 57,000 new businesses and 231,000 new jobs have been established due to the revival of downtown culture. In 2013 alone, \$59.6 billion was reinvested into Main Street revitalization projects. 246,158 historic structures were rehabilitated creating 115,381 businesses and 502,728 new jobs (Main Street America, n.d.). As of 2014, nine out of the twelve midwestern states have developed their own Main Street Program. These states include: Nebraska, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio (Main Street America, n.d.). Since its establishment, over 2,000 communities nationwide have benefitted from the Main Street Program. These communities have created their own unique program working on the same principles of the national program. These programs have collectively become known as Main Street America. (Main Street America, n.d.).

Though the Main Street Program focuses on the business district of the community, the revitalization of downtowns more often than not spreads to the residential districts as well. As stated above, when central business districts are improved, property values increase. This often encourages residential owners to revitalize their private property. An example of this occurring is the Rose Hill District in Sioux City, Iowa. Historic committee member Roger Caudron states that: “the Fourth

Street Historic District [commercial district] was the first district created in Sioux City and it was downtown. Subsequent districts have been established in residential areas as part of the city's comprehensive neighborhood development strategy over the years. Since that time, many homes have been renovated and listed on the Historic Register" (R. Caudron, personal communication, 2014). Bob Brotheridge, member of the Historic Preservation Commission in Galena, Illinois states that the preservation of residential structures does have a trickle effect in their community and contributes to lower instances of crime, "Mostly when someone restores a home, it seems to inspire others to do the same. Crime has not been much of a problem in this city" (B. Brotheridge, personal communication, 2014).

When Main Streets of rural communities undergo revitalization projects they can become a place for social gatherings once again. As an increasing number of attractions and businesses return to these communities and fill once vacant storefronts, suburban inhabitants are encouraged to return bringing additional businesses and revenue with them. Once again, downtowns become the economic driving force. In turn, residential neighborhoods undergo revitalization as well. In a sense, it is a cycle that can help restore once forgotten communities to their former glory. Main Street programs in states



Figure 13 this sign marks the entrance to Sioux City, Iowa's historic residential district Rose Hill

throughout the Midwest have proven how this form of community development can result in successful revitalization projects and improve community strength and economic gain. Sioux City, Iowa and Galena, Illinois are just two examples of how rural revitalization can bring new life to struggling communities.

As stated previously, many Midwestern states developed their own Main Street programs in response to the success that was achieved by the program at the national level. In 1985, Governor Terry Branstad established the Main Street Iowa program. He stated in: "Getting Results: The Economic Impact of Main Street Iowa, 1986-2012" that:

Iowa farmers have always applied the principles of good stewardship to the land. Through Main Street, property and business owners are applying those same principles of good stewardship to the historic buildings in their downtowns. In doing so, they have made their downtowns distinctive and economically competitive. The program has been a good investment for these communities and for the state of Iowa. Main Street works. (p. 2)

And work it has. Though it was originally developed to fill vacant storefronts within communities with a population between 5,000 and 50,000, its success quickly encouraged larger and smaller communities to apply for assistance. It was at this time that the Main Street Iowa program then divided into four categories to better assist communities of varying populations. Rural Main Street Iowa assists communities with a population under 5,000. Main Street Iowa focuses on slightly larger communities whose population between 5,001 to 49,999. Urban Main Street Iowa focuses on cities with a population of 50,000 or greater. The final category, Urban Commercial Neighborhood, focuses on Iowa's largest business districts such as Des Moines' 6th Avenue Corridor,

downtown Cedar Rapids, and the Hilltop Campus Village located in Davenport. (Place Economics, 2013).

Since Main Streets beginning, the state of Iowa has established 3,800 new businesses and has created 11,500 new jobs. \$1.1 billion has been invested in Main Street structures, including \$300 million in acquisition and over \$800 million in building renovation. Projects in Main Street districts have generated an average of 623 Iowa jobs and over \$19 million in paychecks every year since the program was established. Even with the recession and national economic hardship, Main Street rehabilitation projects have created more than 1,000 jobs each year and generated \$35 million in worker earnings since 2003. As stated previously, when communities revitalize private and commercial properties, property values increase. Because of this, local governments have gained \$10.8 million in property taxes each year. It has also been emphasized that with the revitalization of downtowns, the number of local businesses increases. It is this increase in local businesses that generated \$43 million in state sales tax revenues in 2012. As revitalization efforts result in positive change for a community, it is not uncommon for residents and business owners to invest in future projects. For every \$1 spent on the state program, nearly \$72 in private investment has been spent on the acquisition and rehabilitation of Main Street structures. Though it is clear Iowan's are working together to bring life back into their communities, the Main Street Iowa program attributes much of its success to the Main Street Program's Four Points Approach (Place Economics, 2013).

As of 2013, approximately 48 communities were participating in the Main Street Iowa program (Place Economics, 2013). An example of one such community is

Woodbine, Iowa, a Rural Main Street Iowa participant with a population under 2,000 as of 2013. Woodbine's involvement with the Main Street Iowa program has received many accolades for its revitalization projects. Recipient of the National Main Street Center award in 2014 and "Great American Main Street Community 2014," Woodbine has undergone an extensive revitalization of their Main Street district, beginning in the 1990's. It all started with an informal local group who saved a country school from demolition by moving it to a location downtown. A few years later the same group relocated the last remaining train depot. Maintenance work was then done on remaining historic main street structures to keep them from being condemned. The Main Street program then took hold and as a result, the historic gas station was renovated and turned into city office space with the help of grants, city budgeting, and community fundraising. The Main Street program also worked to save the wooden grain elevator constructed during the 1940's. Deb Sprecker, program director of the Woodbine Main Street Program states that: "[the preservation of the grain elevator] was a high profile project garnering public support and awareness of historic preservation at the local level. The CDBG Downtown Revitalization grant began around this time for downtown Woodbine, and this is when private dollars really start to begin leveraging our preservation work." Sprecker goes on to say that the revitalization efforts have had a very positive impact on property values in Woodbine. She states that downtown structures that serve both commercial and residential purpose are currently at no vacancy and property owners have had to compile waiting lists for those who are seeking residency in these revitalized structures. Many residents living on the outer rings of town began moving inward, retirees mostly, and even younger populations with families have been moving to Woodbine. Speckter

attributes this to available rental properties in the downtown district and increased job opportunities and tourist attractions such as an antique store, tool and die shop, auto



Figure 14 one of the 23 buildings in Woodbine, Iowa that underwent extensive revitalization thanks to Community Development Block Grants

repair, restaurant, development office, insurance office, pet groomer, computer repair, hair salon, brewery, coop art gallery, etc. Speckter states that the revitalization of downtown has also brought a dental practice to Woodbine, healthcare that the community had never had in the past. The revitalization of the central city has also meant the demolition of abandoned and dilapidated structures on the outskirts of town, an act

Speckter says has increased property values (D. Speckter, personal communication, 2014).

Another Iowa community that has benefitted from the Main Street Iowa program in recent years is Bonaparte. However, this rural community located in the south east corner of the state, gained recognition in a different way. Founded in 1837 this village grew to roughly 1,000 residents at its peak in 1846 (Stokes et al., 1997). The community attributed its success to industry and manufacturing due to its proximity to the Mississippi River. In 1903, Bonaparte experienced an extreme catastrophe when dam failure resulted in significant flooding. That same year a massive fire spread throughout the downtown district destroying many businesses. Due to these events, many residents left the community and the population dwindled to roughly 600 residents (Stokes et al.,

1997). Growth within the community became stagnant and by 1986, population stood at a mere 478 (Stokes et al., 1997).

It was at this time that Bonaparte had all but disappeared off the face of the landscape. Countless historic structures within the business district were vacant and had fallen into disrepair. Cognizant of the need to revitalize the downtown district before it was too late, four community members formed a for-profit corporation called Township Stores in order to raise money to buy four historic structures. Residents were also encouraged to buy shares at \$2,000 a share and within 10 days, the corporation had raised the money needed to purchase the buildings. They had also raised additional funds that would be needed in order to revitalize these properties. Coupled with loans from the bank, Township Stores were able to renovate structures and turn them into a grocery store, hardware store, office space, and residential structures. The opera house was also renovated to accommodate businesses. By 1989, nearly half a million dollars had been invested in Main Street revitalization efforts. Every dollar raised had been through residents and business owners within the community (Stokes et al., 1997).

When Bonaparte first began their efforts towards saving their community, their population was too low to qualify for designation as a Main Street Community at the National or State levels. Because of this, the village of Bonaparte established their own Main Street Program following the four points approach discussed earlier in this thesis. In 1988, the community had raised enough funds to hire an architectural historian who assisted community members with the necessary paperwork needed to be designated a historic district by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

The community also developed ordinances focused on historic preservation to maintain the visual appeal of the community. Several volunteer programs were also developed to enhance the overall look of the landscape. As a result, 500 trees were planted in order to further beautify the Main Street district (Stokes et al., 1997).

In 1990, Bonaparte officially became a National Trust's Main Street community, the smallest in the country. That same year, the community received \$46,000 from the Iowa Historic Resource Development Program (Stokes et al., 1997). With these funds, the community was able to repair sidewalks, replace broken street lights, restore lock walls along the river, restore the historic band shell built in 1926, construct fishing and boating areas, and plant a butterfly garden. Because of these revitalization efforts, more businesses moved to Main Street. As more businesses were developed, Bonaparte received additional funds to continue their revitalization efforts. As a result, the commercial district continued to improve.

As Main Street was once again generating revenue and attracting businesses, revitalization efforts then spread to the residential district. \$600,000 total in Community Development Block Grants were awarded thus allowing for the improvement of low to moderate-income housing (Stokes et al., 1997).

In 1994, Bonaparte then shifted their focus to the tourism industry. A bed and breakfast and a hotel were built to attract tourists and hunters to the community.

Bonaparte, recipient of the "Great American Main Street Award," (Amana Colonies, n.d.) continues to thrive due to its revitalization efforts. The village offers many businesses and tourists attractions. The official Bonaparte Main Street website describes the community as a, "...unique blend of yesterday's ambiance, today's

progress, and tomorrow's success, with a pinch of home grown ownership and a dash of community enthusiasm giving downtown a new flavor of potential for those with discriminating tastes" (Amana Colonies, n.d.).

These communities are just two examples of how the revitalization of historic main streets can not only spread to the revitalization of residential districts, but also how they improve the community as a whole.

While the revitalization of downtown districts is arguably the most important step in preventing individuals from leaving rural communities, a great deal of emphasis should also be placed on the revitalization of residential districts. Statistics have shown in recent years that an increasing number of historic residential districts are falling prey to what is known as the "teardown trend." This occurs when housing developers look for properties in established neighborhoods that can be torn down and much larger, more modern looking homes can be built in their place (Fine & Lindberg, 2002). These homes are often overly large for the lot size reducing green space and interrupting the original concept design of the neighborhood. These homes are often called "McMansions"* or



Figure 15 historic residential neighborhood in Decatur, Georgia experiencing the "teardown trend"

"Monster Homes" and when constructed, the architectural cohesiveness, heritage, and history of the neighborhood is lost. Homes in historic neighborhoods, developed in the first part of the 20th century are

often targeted for "the teardown trend" because of their size. Homes of this age are

in the front of the home thus eliminating space for neighbors to gather and socialize (Fine & Lindberg, 2002). Large, new homes are often also much more expensive and therefore property taxes increase. This also has a social impact on neighborhoods as it can lead to a form of segregation as lower income individuals can no longer afford to live in these neighborhoods and must move in search of more affordable housing. This reduces neighborhood diversity, which is a trait that younger residents may be drawn to.

Some communities have worked to reduce the occurrence of out migration through the revitalization of their business districts, and they have also worked to reverse or eliminate the teardown trend. Through community involvement in zoning decisions as well as the development of financial incentives and education programs, historical and architectural integrity of residential neighborhoods is maintained. Demolition moratoriums and the designation of historic districts can also lessen the effects of the teardown trend. In the end, there are many ways the community can come together and play an active role in revitalizing their communities.

The concept of rural revitalization is a fairly new one. In recent years where this form of community development has moved to the forefront, and greater importance has been placed on reversing the occurrence of rural decline. Through rural revitalization, communities have been able to recover from the negative impact of out-migration on many levels and in some cases, gained back their “sense of community.” In the following chapter we will examine the social, economic, agricultural, and environmental, and historical benefits behind the practice of rural revitalization.

CHAPTER 4. THE BENEFITS OF RURAL REVITALIZATION AND HOW IT IMPACTS COMMUNITIES THROUGHOUT THE MIDWEST

As countless rural communities throughout the Midwest have witnessed changes in population trends and the subsequent declines of their main streets and residential neighborhoods, greater importance has been placed on the practice of rural revitalization due to the social, cultural, economic, agricultural, environmental, and historical benefits of community development. When implementing the practice of rural revitalization, rural communities throughout the Midwest can become successful in not only bringing their main streets back to life, but they can also restore their heritage and sense of community as well as bring tourism dollars to maintain their revitalization efforts, and keep their communities going strong.

Social and Cultural Benefits

At one time, the downtown district was the hub of activity. It was where grocery stores, barbershops, soda fountains, libraries, movie theaters, parks, department stores, and even car dealerships could be found within blocks of each other. Everything one could want and need was centrally located and easily accessible by car or foot, often times located only blocks from the residential district. The downtown district was also a place for social gatherings where residents would come together, strengthening its sense of community.

Small business owners depended on their customers and each other to stay in business. Stokes et al. (1997) stated: “For Main Street to survive and thrive there must be a viable mix of business, a strong organization and commitment from business owners, and a market strategy that is responsive to customer’ needs” (p. 258). Before the birth of the suburbs, business districts thrived as residents shopped locally. The very design of

buildings located in the central business district combined with a rich history and cultural diversity gave communities a sense of identity (Young, 2012). The social aspects of a community are what hold it together. Therefore, there are countless social and cultural benefits to urban revitalization.

As discussed earlier in this thesis, the development of the suburbs has had an impact not only on historic business and residential districts but also on individuals who leave the central city location for the suburbs. The development and move to the suburbs was once considered a sign of progress and prosperity. Today, suburban living may be less than ideal to some. Young (2012) stated that: “People are growing frustrated with suburban isolation, lack of transportation choices, increased sprawl, long commutes, increased air pollution, and higher living costs associated with living in (and expanding) the suburbs.” (p. 13) All of which can have social ramifications for individuals.

Suburban life not only affects commuters, it also affects the social lives of the handicapped and elderly. At one time, businesses were more centrally located and therefore easier to get to. Now long distances and confusing road ways make it difficult for elderly and the handicap to get from place to place thus instilling a sense of isolation and reducing their ability to be independent (Beaumont, 1994).

The suburbs were developed during a time where land was cheap and easily accessible, therefore property lots were larger thus creating greater distances between neighbors and places of business. Just the opposite is known of smaller, more compact communities. Residential and commercial districts were designed in a way where individuals could easily get from work or school to home or to social gatherings in a matter of minutes by car or by foot. This form of community planning and development

is known as “Smart Growth” and is based on the concept of more sustainable community design (Young, 2012). These “walkable” communities save a significant amount of time thus allowing for residents to spend increased amounts of time with friends and family in a more central location.

As rural communities work to revitalize their central business districts and adopt the practice of adaptive reuse, individuals young and old return to the communities in



Figure 17 The Plaza in Kansas City, Missouri is a prime example of the social benefits of a walkable community

numbers as the suburbs do not often possess the same cultural, ethnic, and racial diversity they are seeking. Younger populations have also begun to flock back to these areas because of attractions a revitalized downtown has to offer. The

Fourth Street Historic District in downtown Sioux City is an example of

how the business district, as well the Sioux City Historic Preservation Commission, came together to not only preserve historic structures, but also implement adaptive reuse in order to bring a variety of businesses to downtown. “The Fourth Street Historic District became the centerpiece for the creation of a cultural and entertainment district in Downtown Sioux City. The district became the home for fine restaurants, retail, housing, and bar businesses” (R. Caudron, personal communication, 2014). Through Main Street revitalization efforts and the implementation of adaptive reuse, once abandoned structures that at one time served many uses have become microcosms of living, retail, and recreational space. Saving these structures has not only made main streets an

interesting and attractive place to live, work, and play for many age groups, but it has also saved the vital pieces of a community's history.

Economic Benefits

Cost is a determining factor when it comes to community development and the debate over which is more cost effective, revitalization or new construction, is ongoing. When one hears the term "revitalization" it is believed that it may be a more expensive form of community development. Statistics prove otherwise.

When communities embark on revitalizations projects, it opens up a great amount of job opportunities for individuals with different education and skill levels such as construction, wood working, masonry, roofing, painting, glass work, and architectural history, not to mention supporting businesses such as lumber yards. As stated previously, the Main Street Program reported that in 2013, \$59.6 billion was reinvested into revitalization projects throughout the United States. As a result, 115,381 new businesses were created which in turn led to the creating of 502,728 new jobs (Main Street America, n.d.). According to Young (2012), "these positions can be sustained indefinitely even if only 2-3% of the local building stock is rehabilitated annually." (p. 34) In fact, rehabilitation and revitalization projects can be even more economically advantageous than new construction as every million dollars that are spent on such projects creates, on average, roughly 10 additional construction jobs, almost five additional supporting jobs, and can generate roughly \$107,000 more annually for the community (Young, 2012).

The economic benefits are also recorded at the state and local levels. To reiterate, since the establishment of the Main Street Iowa program in 1985, the state has created 11,500 new jobs within its Main Street districts. Roughly 4,000 businesses have either

been created within these commercial districts or have moved from other locations. Local governments also reported substantial gains of \$10.8 million in tax revenue due to the revitalization of historical structures located throughout Main Streets. As more individuals return to revitalized communities, more money is made through tourism and sales tax. Approximately \$43 million was raised throughout Iowa in 2012 thanks to Heritage Tourism and individuals who shopped locally (Place Economics, 2013).

Individual communities have also reported the economic benefits achieved through revitalization of their Main Street. Woodbine, Iowa for example has witnessed a positive impact on property values. Deb Sprecker, program director of the Woodbine Main Street Program, stated that downtown structures that serve both residential and commercial purposes are currently at no vacancy. She also stated that through the revitalization process the downtown district has witnessed an increase in job opportunities, many of which are tourism based. Further signs of economic strength are the current establishment of a dental practice and healthcare clinic that were not available to Woodbine residents previously.

When communities are successful at carrying out downtown revitalization projects, it is not uncommon for residential districts to follow suit such as the Rose Hill District in Sioux City, Iowa. This “beautifies” the entire community and can lead to an increase in property values, which can lead to few instances of property neglect and abandonment. More individuals are likely to become property owners and are encouraged to maintain rental properties on a more regular basis reducing the occurrence of “slum” properties.

Historic homes and businesses are a strong link to a community's past. The cohesiveness of historic architecture is also visually appealing and can attract individuals to a community. Historic structures such as these are also commonly quite a bit smaller than structures in the suburbs and can thus be more affordable to maintain. Donovan D. Rypkema emphasizes the economic benefits of revitalization in *The Economics of Historic Preservation: A Community Leader's Guide* stating that, "...dollar for dollar, historic preservation is one of the highest job-generating economic development options available" (Rypkema, 1994, p. 11). He further supports the idea that historic preservation and revitalization is an excessively effective economic development strategy regardless of community size. While he indicates that it may be more feasible in larger communities where there are more industrial and cultural attractions, he also states that this practice can be just as effective in small rural communities as "historic buildings and the legacy they represent can be the building blocks of another form of economic development" (Rypkema, 1994, p. 17).

Revitalization of rural main streets can often lead to cultural economic development as well. This form of economic development that can lead to an increase in cultural tourism, also known as Heritage-Based Rural Development. Smaller communities that work to revitalize their business districts by focusing on its unique cultural, architectural, and historical characteristics can often capitalize on this practice. Once forgotten and decaying structures can be turned into coffee shops, bars, and restaurants as well as cultural museums. Saving existing cultural icons within the community such as movie theaters can also increase tourism.

One such example of an Iowa community that has capitalized on their unique heritage and architecture is the Amana Colonies located in Amana, Iowa. Listed as a



Figure 18 The Amana Colonies, located in Amana, Iowa, have capitalized on their rich German heritage through food, shopping, cultural activities, and cohesive architecture

National Historic Landmark since 1965, (Amana Colonies, n.d.a) this original German settlement emphasizes their agricultural and cultural heritage as well as its overall architectural feel and history. Stokes et al. (1997) stated that:

“It makes good economic sense to plan

for tourism and to regulate development in order to assure that the environment remains attractive” (p. 13). This is especially the case in the Amana Colonies where architecture plays an integral role in the tourism industry. While maintaining its heritage, the Amana Colonies have also developed cultural events to further attract tourists. Popular attractions include arts and crafts events, family events, food and culinary events, music events, historical events, live theater productions, as well as wine and beer tasting events (Amana Colonies, n.d.b). By maintaining its architectural integrity while developing a tourism base the Amana Colonies have become a leading Iowa tourist attraction.

The Amana Colonies are just one example of how a community can bring in tourism dollars by revitalizing their main street and focusing on their unique heritage. By revitalizing these communities and focusing on their unique cultural characteristics and diverse business districts, communities regardless of size can often pull themselves out of economic struggle (Rypkema, 1994). When businesses within a community benefit from revitalization it encourages individuals to restore or renovate existing structures and open

their own businesses, thus further solidifying a tourism economy. It is because of this that cultural tourism can be considered an economy stabilizer.

As historic buildings and small businesses seem to go hand in hand, the result is a high rate of small businesses located throughout the Midwest and nationwide.

Approximately 75% of all net new jobs in smaller, more rural communities are created due to small businesses (Rypkema, 1994). In fact, he argues that, “cultural tourism, including visits to historic places, is an international growth industry.” However, these communities must maintain their historic, cultural, and architectural integrity in order to keep their residents. A strong economy based on industry and tourism can make this an easy feat.

Some may believe that revitalization projects can only be done when the economy is strong but according to Rypkema (1994) that is not necessarily the case. He stated that if projects are modest in scale they are cheaper to carry out. In other words, small projects can still make a big difference not only to the community and property owner, but to supporting businesses as well. One way a community can work to boost the local economy without undergoing extravagant and costly projects is by encouraging community members to shop local.

A 2008 study conducted in Michigan by Civic Economics highlighted the extent to which shopping within one’s own community can boost revenue. According to Civic Economics, \$73 out of every \$100 spent in a locally owned business stays in the community opposed to every \$43 spent in non-locally owned businesses. Money that is reinvested into the community can lead to an increase in job opportunities, higher wages, increased charitable donations, and additional revenue for government services that can

in turn be reinvested into community programs such as local Main Street programs (Lindberg, 2011).

Agricultural and Environmental Benefits

As the nation's history is rooted in agriculture it only makes sense that through the practice of rural revitalization, a strong agricultural economy can be preserved. Previously, Egan stated that approximately three million acres of farmland have been developed for "other use" since the 1980's (Egan, 1989). It was also stated that developers argue that farmland is only used for development when it can no longer be used for agricultural purposes. Though we must ask ourselves how suburban development impacts the environment as well as agricultural production.

The Agricultural Council of America reported in 2014 that more than three million people farm or ranch in the United States, and that family farms make up 99% of the farming community. The ACA also stated that over 22 million people are employed in the agricultural field nationwide. As of 2014, 938.28 million acres or 41% of land in America is designated farmland. Due to large areas of farmland put into production, farmers are able to raise livestock and crops greatly contributing to the world's food supply. The top five agricultural commodities are: cattle, dairy products, broilers (poultry), and corn and soybeans. It is America's strong agricultural background that makes food more affordable for those living in the U.S. than in any other developed nation. In 2004, American's spent an average of only 2% of their income on meat and poultry.

Food production in the United States is high enough that it can help sustain individuals on a global scale. American farmers produce approximately 46% of the

import of food contributes to 25% of fossil fuel use and air pollution (Cassidy & Patterson, 2008).

As rural communities decline and individuals move to the suburbs in increasing numbers, farmland and green space is greatly reduced. Decreased farmland reduces agricultural production and contributes to an increasing need to import food and other goods and services. Supporting infrastructure is then needed to support the transport of goods and services. Greater transport by truck and train increases carbon emissions and enhances America's dependence on foreign oils. It also increases growth pressures on the environment as natural resources are depleted to make way for housing, businesses, and supporting infrastructure. Through the revitalization of rural communities, individuals are encouraged to remain in their communities thus preserving farmland and in a sense, reducing the need to transport goods and services long distances. Everything one could need would once again be more centralized.

The revitalization of rural communities not only saves the agricultural landscape, but the very protection of farmland can economically benefit the community that developed as a result of agriculture. The American Farmland Trust stated that "Although farmland loss is tied to economic factors, keeping land for agricultural use actually benefits a community financially. Even if agricultural land is taxed at a lower rate, farming generates more in taxes than it costs in services. On the other hand, converting agricultural land to residential subdivisions costs local governments more in services than new houses generate in property tax" (Stokes et al., 1997, p. 36).

Through farmland preservation and rural revitalization, rural communities are better able to compete with outlying "big box stores" and shopping malls. But the

benefits go further beyond that the rehabilitation of rural commercial districts can “...enhance the town, but also protect the countryside.” (Stokes et al., 1997, p. 17).

Historical Benefits

Rural revitalization is a practice that is focused on revitalizing the built environment focusing on the importance of the unique architectural, cultural, and historic integrity and characteristics of a community. Therefore, there are significant historical benefits to this practice. “Protecting buildings and landscapes conserves tangible and visible links with a community’s past, preserves places that are important parts of a community’s identity, and retains important resources that may provide historical information about how an area was settled, developed, or declined” (Stokes et al., 1997, p. 42).

To highlight these benefits we will reiterate the importance of identity and a sense of community. Every community has a rich and unique history and heritage that can be capitalized upon in order to ensure its economic survival. This is done through the preservation of the built environment. When historic structures are preserved, it can instill a sense



Figure 19 Wilton Candy Kitchen located in Wilton, Iowa has been in business since 1860 and has been owned by the same family since 1910

of pride and accomplishment in community members and therefore encourage them to embark on revitalization projects to ensure the life of their community. Previously, the economic benefits of revitalization were discussed touching briefly on cultural tourism and heritage-based rural development. The two go hand in hand and are essential for the survival of smaller communities that may lack other forms of revenue. To expand greater

on the definition of heritage-based rural development: “[Heritage-based rural development]...helps build sustainable communities and strengthen regional economies through the conservation, use, and promotion of historical and cultural assets” (Lindberg, 2011, p. 3). Historic structures and entire districts can be considered as historical and cultural assets as well as farmsteads, and landscapes. Regional arts, crafts, music, food, and events are also seen as cultural assets and can draw tourists to a community. To further support this form of development and cultural tourism, Lindberg stated: “to survive and prosper, rural communities need a sustainable economic base and the regular investment of human and financial capital.”(p. 2)

One way communities can achieve this is by purchasing vacant historic storefronts. Communities that have adopted this practice in the past have proven how advantageous of a move it can be. Not only does it save a piece of history, but it also encourages the establishment of new businesses, encourages property owners to revitalize residential districts, and can also beautify the community as a whole thus encouraging tourism.

A sustainable economic base thus helps preserve our rural heritage. The preservation of this heritage is so important because approximately 80% of the landmass of the United States is defined as “rural” by the federal government. (Lindberg, 2011) Referring back to chapter one, America started as a rural population and communities themselves were born from agricultural settlements. In fact, until the 1920’s, most Americans lived in rural settings. As these areas are impacted by the decline of farming populations, many historic structures such as country schools and churches fall vacant, thus further erasing a part of rural history (Stokes et al., 1997). Even though subsequent

generations have moved to more urban settings, many can trace their heritage back to rural communities, especially in the Midwest. It is because of this that rural communities must be revitalized in order to keep their rich histories alive.

Historically, a life in the suburbs was the very epitome of success and prosperity. Individuals were drawn to the suburbs as rural communities struggled to recover from historical events such as the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl. As communities declined, individuals sought refuge in the suburbs. Though at one time the suburbs greater served the needs of individuals, from an economic and community development viewpoint, revitalization is increasingly becoming a more advantageous practice.

Conclusion

The revitalization of rural communities comes with many benefits that are social, economic, agricultural, and historic in nature. Through the revitalization of rural Main Streets focus is given to unique social, cultural, economic, agricultural strengths. Architecturally and historically significant structures are given new life, and once again play an integral role in the cohesiveness of the community and the vitality of the commercial district. Cultural events once again take place within the community further establishing a tourism base which in turn creates greater economic security for the community as a whole. Arguably these benefits alone are reason enough for struggling communities to undertake the practice of rural revitalization. However, knowing where we came from and the sense of pride one gets from preserving ones history opens windows to the past that may have otherwise been lost forever with the loss off these rural communities. They are the backbone of our history, and through rural revitalization, they can play an instrumental role in our future, and for generations to come.

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