A Case Study of the Edwards House: How a Community Fought to Preserve Their Cultural Heritage

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In loving memory of Lorraine Wilk Wegrzyn
for her style, class, love and charm.
Thanks for believing in me.

And to the Friends of the Edwards House:
Your battle to save the Edwards House was not in vain.
May we use those lessons to help other communities
preserve their cultural heritage.
## CONTENTS

Chapter One: The Problem...................................................................................................8

Chapter Two: Research......................................................................................................11
   Summary of Literary Review.........................................................................................11
   Historic Preservation and Economics...........................................................................13
   Historic Preservation and Sustainability......................................................................15
   Historic Preservation and Government........................................................................17
   Historic Preservation or Urban Renewal? Why not Both?...........................................19
   Historic Preservation and Ethical Considerations.......................................................21
   The Knowledge Gap......................................................................................................25
   Stakeholders..................................................................................................................26

Chapter Three: Visual Solution..........................................................................................27
   Deliverables...................................................................................................................27
   The Edwards House.......................................................................................................28
   Demolition.....................................................................................................................51
   Artifacts from the Edwards House...............................................................................70
   Art for Exhibition..........................................................................................................78
   Other Suggestions........................................................................................................118

Chapter Four: Conclusion.................................................................................................120

Bibliography......................................................................................................................121

Glossary of Terms ............................................................................................................124

Appendix...........................................................................................................................125
FINAL SIGNATURES

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“Architecture is one of the most fragile of all the arts. A building made of stone and steel is much less likely to survive than a poem, a symphony, a painting or a book.”

— Wayne Wood
Chapter One: The Problem

This is a love story, not your Romeo-and-Juliet type of love story, but a childhood memory that lingers like a home on Christmas with the smell of baked goods. As I left my grade school day after day, I saw her looking majestic and beautiful. Whenever my family drove down Maple Avenue, she was always there: the signature of my hometown.

I am writing about the beloved Edwards House mansion in Downers Grove, Illinois, a high-style, architecturally significant, Queen Anne style mansion. Once a single-family residence from 1890, this area was later zoned for business. In high school, I took driver’s education classes on the third floor of the Edwards House, which let me explore the mansion’s widow’s walk, carved woodwork, numerous fireplaces, built-in china buffet and stained glass.

Alas, the bank sold the mansion to a developer who wanted to construct condominiums. Our citizens grew alarmed. “More than 700 current and former Downers Grove residents signed a petition opposing the development.” (Background Information and Media Reports) The village council was split: five commissioners wanted the condominiums; the other two wanted to preserve the Edwards House, as did a large portion of our community.

The battle was on. The residents of Downers Grove banded together to save the house. Friends of the Edwards House fought for one year, looking at the possibility of moving the mansion to another location. Like many efforts to save historic places, this was a grassroots effort. After all, historic preservation is not new. It has been around since a group of ladies sought to protect George Washington’s plantation from being turned into a hotel. Unfortunately, some of the village commissioners did not value the town’s cultural heritage.

Speaking about the destruction of the ancient city of Palmyra by ISIS in 2015 and 2017, Dr. Salam al-Kuntar said, “Even in the twenty-first century we have little appreciation of culture. Culture comes at the bottom of priorities of all governments. People underestimate how much damage to cultural heritage affects people and their identity in self-awareness. The destruction of the beloved places, the loss of the homeland with all this cultural heritage; that’s what makes a homeland a homeland.” (al-Kuntar)
In the end, the architecturally significant Edwards House was demolished despite the hard work of residents who tried to save the historic structure. Why then, with all the information available in the form of books, journals, websites and videos concerning historic preservation, did the citizens of Downers Grove fail to save this historic gem?

This paper will examine what went wrong and ask what steps can be taken to stop this from happening to other communities. It will also address the following questions:

- What are the economic benefits of historic preservation?
- How does demolition impact sustainability?
- Why did the village council fail to see the benefits of both urban renewal and historic preservation?
- What about gentrification?
- How can we help other communities?
- Why should historic preservation matter?

The following chapters will answer these questions and include a review of literature, a visual solution and a conclusion.

My hope is to help other communities safeguard their cultural heritage. Historic preservation and urban renewal can coexist. It does not have to be one or the other. If truth be told, once these historic buildings are gone, they are gone forever, and they cannot be replaced without spending vast amounts of money. (“Friends of the Edwards House”)
“Historical preservation is not about saving grand, old buildings. It is about the places that really played a role in the community’s history. It is the places that matter to the people who live there.”

— Rhonda Sincavage
Chapter Two: Research

SUMMARY OF LITERARY REVIEW

THE HISTORIC EDWARDS HOUSE

In July 2014, the Chicago Tribune reported that a historically significant Victorian mansion could be demolished in Downers Grove, Illinois, a western suburb of Chicago. The Edwards House, a Queen Anne style mansion and the adjacent property, once on the market for $1.25 million, were now under contract. The year before, an architectural survey done by the Lakota Group reported that “the Edwards House cannot be replicated. If you lose this house, you lose part of Downers Grove's history.” (“Save 942 Maple”) Unfortunately, even a house listed with the National Register or as a national historic landmark cannot stop it from being demolished. (Tyler, Ligibel and Tyler 151) However, sometimes public pressure can stop demolition, so the citizens of Downers Grove formed Friends of the Edwards House to save this beloved mansion. Mayor Martin Tully reminded everyone that the village had saved the 1846 Blodgett House from demolition after a developer bought the property.

In the meantime, plans were made to relocate the mansion, and Friends of the Edwards House created a flier to make the public aware of the plight of the Edwards House. (See photo page 11.) The group also produced a video that showed how residents felt about saving the mansion. Resident Christine Martin said, “Historic homes are getting torn down all over the county. The Edwards House has oak and pine parquet floors, Eastlake hardware, crystal doorknobs and pocket doors. We fought for months to save the house, but the village council would not help us. In the future, residents and local government must come together to protect historic homes. Residents must stand up and fight for their architecture and the history of their town.”

Sadly, the Edwards House was demolished on June 6, 2015. David Olsen, a former village commissioner and Illinois State Representative said, “Losing the Edwards House is a tragedy for Downers Grove.
Our town motto is ‘Preserving the balance between tradition and progress,’ but we lost our way. Hopefully, this will serve as a wake-up call. We must allow neighborhoods to preserve their history. We lost an icon of Downers Grove history.”

The next month the village planner created a subcommittee on historic preservation that would work with the architectural review board to review zoning, increase the number of landmark houses and historic districts, inform homeowners about the incentives of historic restoration, and build community awareness of historic restoration. (Mannion 1) To date, Friends of the Edwards House has landmarked many homes. At last, residents felt the village council was listening to them. Unfortunately, losing the Edwards House was a big price to pay. After all, historic preservation has not hurt America. It has revitalized communities across America.
HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND ECONOMICS

According to Wayne Wood, hippies and yuppies are moving back to old neighborhoods because of the nostalgia of stained glass and hardwood floors (Wood), but it is not only these generations that are interested in historic neighborhoods. Millennials want “charm and authenticity” in the neighborhoods where they live and work. (Meeks 14) “Authenticity comes from several aspects of a community—historic buildings, established neighborhoods…. It comes from the mix—from urban grit alongside renovated buildings…. The creative class equates ‘authentic with being ‘real.’ as in a place that has real buildings, real people, real history.’” (qtd. in Ryberg-Webster and Kinahan 127)

So, what are people looking for?... In 2014, an architectural firm did a survey of six American cities to determine what people liked about their homes. The answer? Fifty-seven percent said they liked historic buildings more than modern buildings. (Meeks 15-16) Historic places like the French Quarter and Miami’s Art Deco attract tourist dollars. In fact, tourism brings in millions of dollars, not just for big cities, but for small cities, too.

The small city of Galena, Illinois, once home to Ulysses S. Grant and eight Union generals during the Civil War, saw a steady decline after the lead-mining industry dropped in the 1850s. After the war, Galena’s population dropped from 14,000 to below 4,000. In the 1970s, the townspeople rejected urban renewal for historic preservation. The new mayor, committed to tourism and historic preservation, turned Galena into a boom town. By 2003, Galena and Jo Daviess County had over one million visitors per year! (Pospisek 17)

According to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, 65 million Americans, especially millennials, believe in saving historic places and many of them are preserving such places in their own communities. (Meeks 19) Urban philosopher Jane Jacobs said “...older buildings provide critical and necessary space for entrepreneurs, small businesses, and a diversity of residents to thrive.” (qtd. in Meeks 25) Unfortunately, Americans who value historic sites and structures, realize that we have lost many significant places that are irreplaceable. Therefore, “it is our duty as a society and as members of our own
local communities to protect and preserve our heritage....” (Tyler, Ligibel and Tyler 11)

Friends of the Edwards House agrees with this. Resident Tom Nybo said, “Maple Avenue is one of the last streets in Downers Grove that’s still intact. We need to keep the integrity of certain aspects of this town. My parents moved here because of the architecture. Once they’re gone [historic houses], they’re gone. You can’t replace them. You can’t rebuild this type of architecture.” (Rhodes, “Residents Seek Protection 1”)

Historic preservation is often a grassroots effort. It began when Ann Pamela Cunningham organized the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association to preserve George Washington’s plantation. (qtd. in Cho 235) The public has toured Mount Vernon since 1859. “Today, Mount Vernon is the most popular and visited historic estate in the United States, teeming with life, scholarship, interpretation, and roughly one million visitors a year.” (Meeks 136) After Mount Vernon, historic museums formed across America to commemorate presidents, patriots and authors. Then, in 1931, Charleston, South Carolina became the nation’s first historic district. The reason is obvious: tourism brings in millions of dollars to every state. After downtown areas and neighborhoods are revitalized, property values increase and from a viewpoint of sustainability, “resources are not wasted during removal of one building to make way foranother.(qtd.inNewmanandSaginor624)

The good news? People are moving back to cities, and they covet historic properties. Today, generous tax credits have turned boarded up buildings into restaurants, pubs, art studios, colleges, condominiums and theaters. If listed on the National Register, private owners are eligible for a 20% federal investment tax credit for rehabilitation. (Zahirovic-Herbert and Chatterjee 371) Not to mention, dilapidated buildings on main streets are making a comeback thanks to the Main Street Program created by the National Trust. Pioneer Square in Seattle went from deteriorated Romanesque Revival buildings to a new start as a historic district when citizens saw the potential of what could be accomplished through rehabilitation. Within a decade, building valuations increased by 600%! (Tyler, Ligibel and Tyler 159) Today, historic preservation is used for urban regeneration. “It has grown... [into] a broad movement engaged in battles to preserve ‘Main Street’, urban districts, and indeed whole towns.” (qtd. in Meeks 42) Louisville, Detroit and Chicago are leaders in preservation-based developments.

New York is another example. In 1965, New York City designated Brooklyn Heights as its first historic district. Today, it is one of the wealthiest neighborhoods in New York that has high-incomes and more educated residents than other areas. (McCabe and
Ellen 134) This study shows that after a neighborhood is designated “historic,” household incomes rise and poverty rates decline. In addition, there was no increase in rents and a rare incident of racial turnover. In fact, designation as a historic district helps stabilize declining neighborhoods. The Landmark Preservation Commission of 1965 “identifies historic preservation as a tool to spur neighborhood upgrading, attract additional residents and stabilize property values.” (McCabe and Ellen 135) Finally, the study recommends that cities ensure affordable housing options within or around historic districts to help low-income populations. Sadly, demolition by neglect leads to the destruction of many historic sites and buildings. In 2008, more than 500 communities across America experienced significant teardowns according to the National Trust. (Newman and Saginor 622) And yet, the Edwards House was in good condition. Christine Martin said, “The Edwards House is amazing. This is not a house that’s in decay. I hope it doesn’t come down because it’s a waste.” (Rhodes, “Residents Want Historic” 1) According to Friends of the Edwards House website, “The Edwards House wasn’t dilapidated or dangerous, as incorrectly reported; it was extensively renovated in the late 1990s, and recently used as office space...” (Newman and Saginor 629) This was the fate of the Edwards House, which was in foreclosure. In other words, the bank wanted its money back.

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY**

Historic preservation and environmental preservation are sometimes at odds with each other. “Preservationists advocate that older buildings are inherently green and promote their preservation on the basis of energy conservation.” (Avrami 105) Life cycle assessment studies show “the energy savings and reduced carbon impact” of rehabbing existing buildings. (Avrami 106) Douglas E. Gilbert, former chair of the Oak Park Historic Preservation Commission and a member of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust said, “By preserving a building you save the cost of demolition and the waste of demolition. This makes us more sustainable and less wasteful.” (“Friends of the Edwards House.”) Daniel Vivian, chair of Historic Preservation at the University of Kentucky, says the greenest building is the one already built. Rhonda Sincavage agrees with him: “Historic preservation is the original green: Restore. Recycle. Reuse. Historic houses have high quality, durable materials.”
A Case Study of the Edwards House: How a Community Fought to Preserve Their Cultural Heritage

Carolyn Grace Klima | 16
Architect Stephen Mouzon believes that older buildings are green by design. If they were not, people would freeze to death in the winter or suffer heat stroke in the summer. Thick walls, high ceilings, awnings and porches all contribute to this. (Meeks 242)

As good stewards, we must be accountable and save energy. At Taliesin West, Frank Lloyd Wright’s winter home, a solar garden produces 50% of the electricity for this historic landmark. (qtd. in Meeks 249)

Better yet, “Four out of every five existing buildings will be renovated over the next generation while two new buildings are added.” (Tyler, Ligibel and Tyler 301)

Finally, it is worthy to point out that not only was the Edwards House needlessly demolished, but so was a 250-year-old bur oak that stood before the mansion. Irene Hogstrom, a landscape architect said, “The bur oak before the Edwards House was older than the USA. Unfortunately, the tree was cut down due to poor decision making. This was a heritage tree or legacy tree. In most communities you would pay a fine for cutting down this tree. There are no protections for heritage or legacy trees in Downers Grove, so it was a huge loss to the community.” (“Friends of the Edwards House.”)

HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND GOVERNMENT

Wayne Wood says conservative governments are patriot and civic-minded while liberal governments want more control: they tell you how to restore a house, and you must get permission to tear it down. (Wood) Likewise, when courts lean conservative, they favor property owner’s rights, but liberal courts believe in the government’s right to regulate the use of private property. (Tyler, Ligibel and Tyler 132)

Now the Village of Downers Grove leaned conservative. Referring to the Edwards House, Tom Casey, president of the historic society said, “We regret that we could potentially lose this home. We’re all for preservation of any historic structure. We support preservation, but we also support property rights. The historic society has no authority to say what should be done with the property.” (Rhodes, “Residents Seek Protection” 2)

Mayor Tully agreed with him. He said the village must respect private property rights. “Asking the government to take more power to determine what happens to your property may not be the answer.” (Rhodes, “Residents Want Historic” 2)
ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE

Some people believe historic properties belong to the community at large because it is part of their cultural heritage. People have cited Stonehenge as an example, as well as Civil War battlefields and other historic homes and buildings. If truth be told, there has always been a long-standing debate over property rights. Some people think homeowners have the ultimate right to do as they please with their property while others think historic properties belong to the community. “The theoretical right to use your land as you wish, provided only that you do not harm others, has given way in practice to a recognition that the public itself has rights, in its cultural heritage as well as in the protection of its landscape and natural resources.” (qtd. in Lee 138)

Nonetheless, Downers Grove was a conservative community that respected property rights. However, there is another perspective. A church in Indiana bought three historic properties they planned to tear down to build a parking lot. Preservationists in the city and state fought this demolition for nine years. Finally, the city commission voted to allow demolition, so the preservationists sued the commission and won. And yet, the historic properties continued to deteriorate until the church offered to sell the buildings to the preservationists. Now these historic buildings are being rehabilitated. (Lee 121-122)

Now to a major criticism of historic preservation. Some people think historic preservation is simply gentrification by another name. First, as already pointed out, care should be taken by city governments to ensure that low-income people have access to affordable housing. Second, Rhonda Sincavage said, “Historic preservation gets a bad rap in that it gentrifies neighborhoods, but historic districts tend to be the most diverse neighborhoods in the city.” (Sincavage) In fact, in the few studies that empirically question the relationship between preservation and gentrification, the findings actually reveal minimal neighborhood change. Coulson and Leichenko conclude that ‘preservation does not lead to gentrification, or any other kind of neighborhood turnover.’” (qtd. in Ryberg-Webster and Kinahan 125.)

Pastor Kenneth B. Smith from Chicago knows the benefits of historic preservation for even minority communities. He said, “We already know what one block of restoration can do for a neighborhood. It creates a ripple effect.” (Lee 100) Smith believes in sharing his heritage with others. Historic preservation can preserve what matters most to communities of color. It can help “introduce history and values of preservation to historical African-American colleges and universities; it can encourage the development of local government
policies that are sensitive to low-income and elderly minorities; it can help local communities discover that preservation can contribute to affordable housing and revived commercial districts, and it can change the widely held perception that historic preservation belongs exclusively to the elite and the affluent.” (Lee 103)

HISTORIC PRESERVATION OR URBAN RENEWAL? WHY NOT BOTH?

Like other towns and small cities, the Village of Downers Grove wants to bring more business to the community as well as revitalize its main street, but why did the village council demolish the Edwards House to build condominiums? They could have saved the Edwards House and made the developer contribute to the cost of relocation.

Mayor Tully said, “The past village council and the community did not step up earlier and more earnestly to be good stewards of our community heritage. Saving the Edwards House could have worked, and it should have worked. The loss of the Edwards House is a wakeup call to our community.” (“Friends of the Edwards House.”)

Bottom line: “Preservationists, according to Patricia Gay, know that building renovations generate jobs and improve property values, that new middle-income and upper middle-income residents support local businesses, that state and federal incentives for historic renovation work, and that new homeowners bring hope and commitment to previously hopeless neighborhoods.” (Lee 18)

Therefore, a recommended decision to make should not be a choice between urban renewal and historic preservation, but a choice to use both.
CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

A new business that enters a community usually wants to build rapport with residents, so they will purchase their goods and services. Unfortunately, the developer of the condominiums in Downers Grove would not push back the demolition date to save the Edwards House. As a result, the historic house was demolished on June 6, 2015.

The previous April, three Downers Grove commissioners who voted to change the zoning and allow the condominiums were thrown out of office. (Friends of Edwards House.) Contrast this to Walmart. In 2013, Walmart bought land that was part of a Civil War battlefield in Fredericksburg, Virginia, but the National Trust and preservationists asked Walmart executives to stop construction of a new store since the battlefield was sacred to our nation’s heritage. (Meeks 77) In the end, Walmart not only moved the location of their store, but they donated the land to the state of Virginia. So pressure on the developers and city officials could have changed the outcome of the Edwards House.

ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF GOOD WILL

The National Trust and American Express formed Partners in Preservation, a competition using social media to raise funds for historic preservation. A different city is chosen each year to search for specific restoration projects. Even if a site does not win, it still gets the benefits of social media advertising, and finalists can win $5,000 while the most popular projects can win $100,000, out of the $1 million budget.

“What we want to do is identify sites that have specific, tangible restoration projects that are ready to go,” said Tim McClimon, vice president for corporate social responsibility at American Express and president of the foundation. “We want them to have projects that can be completed in 18 months, and we want them to have projects that the community can identify with.” (qtd. in O’Connell 1)

Like Walmart, American Express cares about preserving history and cultural heritage in local communities.
BEWARE COMMISSIONERS

Sadly, when developers want to throw their weight around, they sometimes sue commissioners to get their way. “Recognizing that a local government’s approval process can be cumbersome, time consuming, and expensive, some developers are finding increased leverage by threatening lawsuits against commissioners who don’t give quick approvals to their project proposals.” (Tyler, Ligibel and Tyler 134) This can happen when commissioners want urban renewal, but residents oppose them to preserve a historic building. So, it is important to have an approval system that is transparent for the public and the development community.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

HUMAN BEINGS AND VALUES

Erich Matthes argues that historic preservation is an ethical issue, not an economic one. He believes that our relationship to the past reflects our ethical lives and relationships, and he has a point. As Wayne Wood points out, “Architecture is one of the most fragile of the arts. A building made of stone and steel is much less likely to survive than a poem, a symphony, a painting or a book.” (Wood)

Furthermore, “It is difficult to understand how human beings could have values at all if they did not have conservative impulses. What would it mean to value things, but in general, to see no reason of any kind to sustain them or retain them or preserve them or extend them into the future?” (qtd. in Matthes 786)

Historian Rufus Fears said we use the lessons of the past to make decisions today and to look into the future. (Fears, “Hammurabi” 1) During the French Revolution parts of Notre Dame cathedral were damaged by revolutionaries. It was dedicated to the Cult of Reason, and then to the Supreme Being. During the Russian Revolution, churches were closed, and Russian priests suddenly disappeared.

Annette Baier says that “intervening generations that fail to preserve what was given to them by a previous generation are blameworthy for the failure to ‘pass
on the public benefits they themselves inherited.” (qtd. in Matthes 787) Furthermore, Simon James argues that “a failure to treat historically significant objects with respect indicates a lack of humility.” (qtd. in Matthes 787)

To this point, Bill White, a Downers Grove commissioner said, “The Edwards House could have been saved. The leadership of our community failed to appreciate and understand how saving this house would have benefited people, and the cost of saving it would have been small with the overall benefit to the community. The former village council didn’t see that saving the house was in the public good.” (“Friends of the Edwards House.”)

FIGHTING THE HORRORS OF THE MODERN AGE

Diane Barthel brings another perspective to light. Historic preservation in Great Britain was a response to the disillusionment caused by the Industrial Revolution: the rising of a new class of powerful capitalists and the suppression of the working class. As a result, writers and artists of the Romantic Period turned to the medieval period, especially Gothic architecture for inspiration because it reflected truth and nobility.

Let us go back historically. After the collapse of the Roman Empire, urban places declined. It was the church in western Europe that brought order through canon law and education. Monasteries reproduced ancient manuscripts. In fact, the first universities were attached to cathedrals: they were not only places of religious learning, but of secular learning, which is why you find the seven humanities sculpted into church architecture. (Cook, “The Urban Context” 7) Gothic architecture in northern France brought heaven down to earth through stained glass, arched vaults and towering columns. “...they saw in the Middle Ages a source of values that represented alternatives to the emergent industrial capitalist social order. In Gothic architecture they saw the highest expression of the human quest for the infinite and delight in the finite.” (qtd. in Barthel 89)

In an age of pilgrimage and crusades, the church through architecture brought order and stability into people’s lives. The same is true today. When we look at an architecturally significant, Queen Anne style house like the Edwards House, it gives us a sense of order and stability. “In a survey of forty years of scientific literature into ‘place attachment,’ psychologist Maria Lewicka concluded that
“development of emotional bonds with places is a prerequisite of psychological balance and good adjustment.... It helps to overcome identity crises and gives people the sense of stability they need in the everchanging world.” (qtd. in Meeks 4)

“[William] Morris in particular saw preservation as part of a battle against an increasingly commercialized and despiritualized world. ‘Is it absolutely necessary,’ he wrote in 1887, ‘that every scrap of space in the City [London] should be devoted to moneymaking and are religion, scared memories, recollections of the great dead, memorials of the past, works of England’s greatest architects to be banished from this wealthy city?’” (qtd. in Barthel 90)

Once again, history repeats itself. The Edwards House was sacrificed for a complex of fifty-five condominiums.
MORE THAN NOSTALGIA

Perhaps the most passionate defense for historic preservation comes from Thomas Bender. In his mind, historic buildings are artifacts, illustrative of a whole way of life. When my mother worked on an archaeological dig for Northwestern University, artifacts were handled with the utmost care. They were brought back to the laboratory to be sorted, washed and cataloged. Why such tender care? Because artifacts tell a story.

Professor Bender writes, “The purpose of historic preservation is not to save buildings for themselves, but rather as artifacts illustrative of a whole way of life. The preservation of elite buildings by great architects is laudable but almost beside the point. We preserve them, if we do, simply because we are not cultural vandals.... A civilized people, if it is to remain so, needs as part of its life and dreams these rare and magnificent manifestations of genius.” (Bender 2)

Back in the seventh century A.D., Pope Gregory the Great wisely advised the church to not get rid of everything pagan if it was part of their culture. Instead, if there was a pagan festival, the church should relate it to the life of a saint and make it Christian, rather than destroying their cultural heritage. (Cook, “The Stave Churches” 11)

A common complaint from critics of historic preservation is: We do not need another house museum. (Wood) But Bender addresses this: “What we want and need in our cities is a sense of where we are in time— as individuals and as a people. This does not imply that the city should become a museum. A museum freezes time and kills history.... But what should remain apparent, even to the most casual observer, is the layering process that is history: the generational mixing of old and new. History is thus not only living, but also graphic.” (Bender 2)

Is it any wonder that people are happier in historic surroundings? Daniel Vivian asked, why do people feel better in historic surroundings? New research shows that people are happier and drawn to a historic neighborhood. (Vivian)

Again, Bender writes, “We want to preserve memories of the past as we confront the possibilities of the future, and the value of these memories is not mere nostalgia. If we have a developed sense of history, these memories provide a baseline for critical understanding — something we need if we are personally and collectively to take possession of our city.” (Bender 2)

Rufus Fears states, “History doesn’t repeat itself, but men and women repeat history.”
(Fears, “The Day the Stock Market” 29) So, if we are to progress as a civilized people, we must examine our past and not destroy it.

Is it any wonder that Downers Grove residents took it personally when the Edwards House was demolished? Their cultural heritage was destroyed; and thereby, a part of their lives. After all, a home is more than your physical address: it is the surrounding neighborhoods with its shops, restaurants and theaters. Therefore, we must raise awareness in our communities, so our cultural heritage is preserved.

In summary, a review of literature indicates that there are many benefits to historic preservation. For example, we have seen that historic preservation has not only revitalized cities, but it has turned declining cities into boom town like Galena, Illinois. Research also shows that tourism brings in millions of dollars to each state each year. In addition, generous tax credits have transformed boarded up buildings into new restaurants, shops and theaters. Another benefit of historic preservation is that historic buildings stabilize declining neighborhoods, and that there is rare incidence of racial turnover. In addition, large companies like American Express and Walmart are becoming sensitive to historic preservation. For example, American Express and the National Trust raise funds for historic preservation and Walmart has recently donated land that was part of a Civil War battlefield to the state Virginia, after finding out that they were planning a building project on historic land. And finally, new research shows that people are happier in historic neighborhoods. Being attached to places gives people a sense of stability in an ever-changing world.

**THE KNOWLEDGE GAP**

With all the information available through books, journals, websites and videos regarding historic preservation, Downers Grove still lost an architecturally significant house like the Edwards House. Going forward, how can we educate other communities on the benefits of saving their cultural heritage?
STAKEHOLDERS

The stakeholders are communities across America. Historic buildings and houses are destroyed every day. It is my goal to educate the public about the importance of preserving their cultural heritage. In the following section, I have created a visual solution to help communities avoid the destruction of cultural icons like the Edwards House.

Plans fell through to move the Edwards House
Chapter Three: Visual Solution

What matters the most in real estate? Answer: Location, location, location.

And what matters the most in historic preservation? Education, education, education. After all, how can people value something they do not understand? So, in order to preserve more historic houses and buildings, and to avoid the demolition of another “Edwards House,” I have created an art exhibit to showcase the art and architecture of the Edwards House.

My purpose is to educate communities and local governments about the need for historic preservation through visual art. I will not wait for another historic house or building to become victims of the wrecking ball. I will place my exhibit in heavy traffic areas, such as libraries, art museums, house museums, art galleries, farmer’s markets, local colleges, historic open houses, historic house walking tours, schools, etc. Then, I will showcase the architecturally significant Edwards House with a photo exhibit, followed up by a display of art, primarily made from discarded artifacts left over from the demolition of the historic home.

DEVELOPER

PHOTO EXHIBITION

To set the context for my thesis artwork, I created a photo exhibition of pictures of the Edwards House while it was in pristine condition, as well as during demolition. The photographs reveal the Edwards House in excellent condition, showcasing her woodwork, stained glass and architecture while other pictures show an architecturally significant, Queen Anne style house being needlessly torn down. The exhibit is meant to shock the viewer into action and to motivate others to preserve historic buildings.
THE EDWARDS HOUSE

Front yard of the Edwards House with the 250-year-old legacy bur oak that was chopped down
Entrance to Dining Room
Front Hall
Woodwork
View from Top of Stairs
Vestibule
Men’s Parlor
Stained Glass
A Case Study of the Edwards House: How a Community Fought to Preserve Their Cultural Heritage
Carolyn Grace Klima | 36
Dining Room
Dining Room
Built-in China Buffet
Door to Widow’s Walk
Widow’s Walk
Door Hinge
Crystal Doorknob
Bedroom
Exterior molding and brackets
A Case Study of the Edwards House: How a Community Fought to Preserve Their Cultural Heritage
Carolyn Grace Klima | 46

Detailed painting
Stairway to Attic
Third-floor Attic
Attic

A Case Study of the Edwards House: How a Community Fought to Preserve Their Cultural Heritage
Carolyn Grace Klima | 49
A Case Study of the Edwards House: How a Community Fought to Preserve Their Cultural Heritage
Carolyn Grace Klima | 50

View from Front Porch
DEMOLITION

Photographing Demolition From Parking Garage
Demolition workers first demolished the chimney, and then broke the windows.
History vs. Machine
Removing Radiators
Radiators for Resale
Removing Pocket Doors
Pocket Doors for Resale
Loading Pocket Doors
Hauling off Pocket Doors
Citizens Watching Demolition
CAT claw removing window
Commencing Roof Demolition
Roof Demolition
Attic Demolition. Note the beautiful staircase spindles.
Second-Story Demolition
A Case Study of the Edwards House: How a Community Fought to Preserve Their Cultural Heritage
Carolyn Grace Klima | 67
A Quote of Irony:

“Preserving the balance between tradition and progress.”
— Downers Grove Town Motto
History in a heap of rubble: only the foundation remains.
ARTIFACTS FROM THE EDWARDS HOUSE
Entry Doorknobs and Key Plates
I photographed artifacts from the Edwards House to make commemorative artwork.
A Case Study of the Edwards House: How a Community Fought to Preserve Their Cultural Heritage
Carolyn Grace Klima | 73

Eastlake Hardware
Doorknob backplates with several layers of paint hiding decorative patterns.
Restored Backplate to Brass Doorknob. I removed four layers of paint.
Restored artifacts, of significant value to antique dealers.
Finials from Exterior Staircase on back porch.
ART FOR EXHIBITION
The Edwards House, oil and acrylic on canvas.
WOOD SCULPTURE

The first studio craft project designed for the Edwards House exhibit is a wood sculpture of the Edwards House (2016) made from dried driftwood. On one side of the unique, natural piece, I painted a portrait of the Edwards House using acrylic paints. The driftwood was sanded and gessed where the design was applied. After completing the painting, a layer of shellac varnish was applied to the whole form for protection and color harmony. The driftwood symbolizes the 250-year-old bur oak that stood before the house, but was cut down to build condominiums. The oak was a legacy tree older than the USA. Many towns would have fined the developer for cutting it down.
For another project, I built a wooden base to support a finial from the Edwards House that was part of the widow’s walk. A construction worker gave me the finial during demolition.
A Case Study of the Edwards House: How a Community Fought to Preserve Their Cultural Heritage
Carolyn Grace Klima | 82
Original Finial from Widow’s Walk. I made a wood base to commemorate the finial.
3-D resin print finial
3-D Print of Finial
Another studio art project made for my thesis exhibit is a clay relief inspired by the elegant wood-carved banister in the Edwards House.
Elegant Post. (Glaze Fired, Clay Body with red iron oxide stain)
**Smokey Blue Decorative Bowl.** (Coil construction)

Ceramic bowl design was a round backplate mounted in back of a crystal doorknob in the Edwards House.
Smokey Blue Decorative Bowl
(Underglazed, bisque ware)
Smokey Blue Decorative Bowl
(Glaze Fired)
The following images are inspired by the stained glass in the Edwards House.

_Fleur-de-lis_ decorative platter
(Bisque ware with underglaze)
Fleur-de-lis decorative platter
(Bisque ware with unified glazes and underglazes)
Artist at work
Fleur-de-lis decorative platter (with colored frit prior to glaze firing)
Fleur-de-lis decorative platter (Finished piece)
Additional reliefs were made from a plaster mold inspired by a radiator in the Edwards House. The following reliefs are pieces created from that mold.

Original “Radiator Design” (Plaster Mold)
Radiator 2 (Sculpey clay)
Radiator 2 (Sculpey clay with spray paint)
Radiator 1 (Hot glue and acrylic paint)
Radiator 3 (Leather hard stage)
Radiator 3 (Glaze fired finished piece)
Radiator 5  (Glass mold)
As for the content of this design, the large organic shape in the center represents the Edwards House that was demolished. The small ones are other historic houses facing the same fate. The red negative space symbolizes “sacrificial blood” that was shed to save the destruction of other historic treasures.
PHOTO COLLAGES

Pristine collage
Demo collage
“I’m smiling at all my hard work.”
Collaboration with Heather Birkeland

The following pages contain my artwork that Heather Birkeland modeled using the program Maya.

Radiator 4 in Maya by Heather Birkeland
Radiator 4 (3-D Print)
Elegant Blue designed by Heather Birkeland in Maya.
Elegant Blue design in computer before printing.
Elegant Blue. (3-D Print)
My partner in 3-D printing.
Different views of the post in Maya software.
Elegant Post Clear being 3-D printed in resin.
Elegant Post Clear (3-D resin print)
A Case Study of the Edwards House: How a Community Fought to Preserve Their Cultural Heritage
Carolyn Grace Klima | 117
OTHER SUGGESTIONS

Additional methods of preventing the demolition of historic houses in the future and working in tandem with my artwork involve the following suggestions:

WEBSITE AND BLOG

The creation of a website with a blog that showcases historic homes and buildings in different communities. On this blog different houses can be promoted each month, as well as houses that may be threatened with demolition. Promote guest speakers at local restaurants or libraries to educate people on the economics, sustainability and ethics of historic preservation.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Integrate social media with a town’s website, but not using a “hit or miss” approach. At least three to four personas can be created to help identify a town’s target market. According to Wayne Wood, hippies and yuppies love historic buildings and houses, and Stephanie Meeks says millennials crave “charm and authenticity.”

- Target social media and your blog based on your personas, and then develop content pillars to reach your target audience. The content should resonate with the personas so you can promote the benefits of historic preservation.
- Measure social media marketing campaigns based on traffic to your website, as well as the social media click rates and the number of likes, followers and re-tweets, etc.

ELECTED OFFICIALS

Hold elected officials accountable. Find out their position on urban renewal, historic preservation and sustainability. Check out what they say against their voting records. If they are against historic preservation, then make your voice heard. If they will not listen, vote them out of office. “Pamela Plumb urges us ‘to integrate historic preservation into the very heart and psyche of our nation as a public policy, a good life policy.’ She said, ‘To accomplish this, we must become more engaged in politics... We must roll up our sleeves.”’ (Lee 21)

LANDMARK PROPERTIES

Landmark historic properties. Work with homeowners. Though this will not stop homes from being demolished, there is pride in owning a historic home as well as tax incentives to rehab it.
DESIGNATE HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Work with your local government to designate historic districts. Property values are higher in historic districts and their surrounding neighborhoods.

NETWORK

Network with historical societies. There is strength in numbers. Host open houses for historic homes or make a list of historic homes in the area so visitors can go on walking tours to appreciate your town’s architecture. For example, have a tour of Sears’ homes in the spring; host a ghost walking tour at Halloween or an open house with cider and cookies at Christmas.

Obviously, the works created for the visual solution, and the additional suggestions offered in this section are not exhaustive. However, urban renewal and historic preservation can work together. It does not have to be an either-or situation. Remember, “It is essential for preservationists to continually educate the public about the values of their historic heritage and the role of historic districts in preserving community character.” (Tyler, Ligibel and Tyler 294). As Stephanie Meeks so aptly points out, “Demolition should always be the last resort: when a building is gone, it is not coming back, and all its rich historic potential cannot be replaced.” (Meeks 85)
CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION

SUMMARY

After I gave my thesis defense on saving the Edwards House, my thesis committee said I hit a “home run” on my presentation. The images of the mansion and the community’s hard fought battle to save her are conveyed in these pictures and brochures. As my professor stated, “These photographs helped the audience see the economic, social and psychological benefits and possibilities of historic preservation.”

It is my desire to take this exhibition wherever doors open for me. Historic preservation has not only changed Galena, Illinois, but also Prairie Avenue in Chicago, where the richest of the rich once lived. The latter area declined into a slum surrounded by light manufacturing. Now Prairie Avenue has made a comeback. Though less than ten mansions survive, new condominiums were recreated in the style of the past; old warehouses and factories are now elegant apartments. Shops, restaurants and new business have revitalized the area, thanks to historic preservation and urban renewal.

CONCLUSION

When I photographed the demolition of the Edwards House in the summer of 2015, I had no idea I would use these photographs to help other communities. As painful as it was to watch the demolition, it is my joy to share the photos with you. As the saying goes, “A picture is worth a thousand words.” You can see the Edwards House was an architecturally significant Queen Anne style house that should not have been demolished.

I am thankful that I was part of the fight to save the Edwards House. Many people in our community came together to save her. Studies in place attachment theory are correct: certain homes and buildings ground you and give you a sense of identity. The people of our community took the battle to the village council and lost. Now it is my sincere hope that you do not lose a historic house or building in your community. It is my desire that the lessons of the Edwards House can help preserve the historic houses and buildings in your hometown.

Will you join me in the fight?
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A Case Study of the Edwards House: How a Community Fought to Preserve Their Cultural Heritage
Carolyn Grace Klima | 122


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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

➢ Adaptive reuse: the renovation and reuse of pre-existing structures (such as warehouses) for new purposes. – Merriam-Webster.

➢ Architecturally significant: a measure of the impact or importance of a building. The functional or aesthetic design of the building, and/or the methods used to construct the building can all add or detract from a building’s architectural significance. – The Mortgage Group.

➢ Content pillars: content pillars are the guard rails in how you will tell or share your brand’s message/story in the way you want it to be communicated. – Steve Ziemba, College of DuPage.

➢ Demolition by neglect: a term used to describe a situation in which a property owner intentionally allows a historic property to suffer severe deterioration, potentially beyond the point of repair. Property owners may use this kind of long-term neglect to circumvent historic preservation regulations. – National Trust for Historic Preservation

➢ Gentrification: the process of repairing and rebuilding homes and businesses in a deteriorating area (such as an urban neighborhood) accompanied by an influx of middle-class or affluent people and that often results in the displacement of earlier, usually poorer residents. – Merriam-Webster.

➢ Heritage structure: any building of one or more premises that requires conservation or preservation for historical, architectural, aesthetic, cultural, environmental or ecological purposes and includes land adjoining such building as may be required for fencing or covering or in any manner preserving the historical, architectural, aesthetic or cultural value of a building. — Directorate General Central Public Works Department, India.

➢ Personas: created characters that represent a certain demographic for the market you are trying to penetrate. – Steve Ziemba, College of DuPage.

➢ Sustainability: the quality of not being harmful to the environment or depleting natural resources, and thereby supporting long-term ecological balance. – Dictionary.com

➢ Urban Renewal: the process where an urban neighborhood or area is improved or rehabilitated. The renewal process can include demolishing old or run-down buildings, construction of new, up-to-date housing, or adding in features like a theater or stadium. Urban renewal is usually undergone for the purpose of persuading wealthier individuals to live in that area. – Business Dictionary.
APPENDIX

I want to give a heartfelt thanks to Friends of the Edwards House, especially Tom Nybo and Christine Martin, for allowing me to use and reproduce their interior and exterior photographs of the Edwards House. Without their assistance, this project could not have been possible.

Friends of the Edwards House
Dear Carolyn Grace,

We, as Friends of the Edwards House, are so pleased with your fine choice of a thesis. Your artwork representing the home is beautiful and will be appreciated by many. Your work also contributes significantly to our work in preserving historically significant buildings, by keeping the memory of 942 Maple Avenue alive!

Friends of the Edwards House gladly grants permission to you, Carolyn Grace Klima, to use and reproduce our photographs (images) and brochures for your thesis in the form of databases and publications.

Again, congratulations on your achievement. You are a talented young lady, and we wish you all the best for a bright future.

Yours in Preservation,

Christine Martin
Co-Chair
*Friends of the Edwards House*

Tom Nybo
Founder
*Friends of the Edwards House*

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