FINAL DEPARTURE?
ADAPTIVE USE OF AMERICAN RAILROAD STATIONS

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the railway system was at the center of transportation and urbanization in the United States, serving as one of the primary factors in the economic growth and geographical expansion of the nation. However, by the mid-twentieth century the railroads had begun to see a decline in use and the once prosperous railroad companies succumbed to major budget deficits and loss in profits. Railway stations, as the architectural manifestation of this railroad age, fell into disrepair and neglect. The demolition of New York City’s Pennsylvania Station, while the most infamous case, was but one of the many urban stations demolished. The fervent preservation efforts initiated in the 1960s and 1970s have since subsided. However, railroad stations remain significant to the architectural and cultural history of the United States. Through adaptive use these structures can be functional in contemporary society and preserved for future generations. To determine the feasibility of adaptive use, I examine the economic, political, and social changes that have occurred since the 1970s that affect adaptive use of railroad stations in the United States. The fundamental issue addressed is how to incorporate our nation’s cultural heritage into an ever-changing urban society. In considering the successes and failures of past adaptive use projects across the
nation, this paper proposes suggestions for current and future action that will integrate these buildings into the contemporary urban fabric. While this project focuses on railroad stations, it is applicable to the ways in which architecture functions as a product of cultural heritage.
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INTRODUCTION

The stunning growth and dramatic decline of the railroad system in the United States is unparalleled to any other in the world.1 In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the railroads were the primary form of transportation and played an enormous role in the industrialization of the country and the colonization of the western United States. By the 1960s, the automobile eclipsed the railroad as the primary form of transportation and the railway age had come to its end, leaving the country with the architectural remnants of its prosperous reign. Railroad stations form a significant part of the architectural, cultural, and economic history of the United States; thus, how to protect and preserve these stations has been a pressing issue since the initial decline of the American railroad system in the mid-twentieth century. It is my contention that through adaptive use these structures can once again be functional in contemporary society and preserved for future generations.

To determine the feasibility of adaptive use, I examine the economic, political, and social changes that have occurred since the initial preservation efforts of the 1970s. I examine strategies for adaptive use by focusing on specific case studies including the Central Railroad of New Jersey Depot in Whitehouse Station, New Jersey (Bradford Gilbert, 1892), the Milwaukee Road Depot in Minneapolis, Minnesota (Charles Frost, 1899), Union Station in Indianapolis, Indiana (Thomas Rodd, 1888), Saint Louis County Union Depot in Duluth, Minnesota (Peabody & Stearns, 1892), and Michigan Central Station in Detroit, Michigan (Reed & Stem, Warren & Wetmore, 1913). This paper is by no means a comprehensive study of the adaptive use of passenger rail stations in the

United States but rather, is intended to provide key examples of new initiatives for adaptive use, such as intermodalism and sustainability, and to highlight the numerous funding sources and preservation programs currently available for this endeavor. The fundamental issue to be addressed in the preservation of these historic rail stations is how to incorporate this aspect of our nation’s cultural heritage into an ever-changing urban society. In considering the successes and failures of past adaptive use projects this paper proposes suggestions for future action to protect the historical integrity of the structure while integrating these buildings into the contemporary urban fabric.

Architecturally and culturally, the railroad station is a significant building type in American history. The design of the railroad station responded to the needs of both the railway and the society it served. In his pioneering study, Carroll Meeks points out that the railroad station had no functional precedent.\textsuperscript{2} The station represented the design challenges posed by the Industrial Revolution. Nineteenth century engineers utilized iron and glass and were able to vault increasingly larger spans. Architects worked in varying styles, often turning to Greek and Roman influences to meet the challenges presented by large interior spaces. The majority of Europeans and Americans alike viewed the railroad as a symbol of progress and civilization. To demonstrate the wealth and prestige of the railroad company, owners spent enormous amounts hiring noted architects and architectural firms such as McKim, Mead & White, Peabody & Stearns, H.H. Richardson, and Daniel Burnham. The station became a symbol of the success of the railways and of the progress of the areas in which they were located. As towns and cities grew, railroad companies poured more funding into newer and larger stations, replacing

temporary or smaller structures no longer able to accommodate the growing traffic. These grand stations stood as a testament to the flourishing railway system, until they too, like the railway companies, began to deteriorate.

The railroad station was the locus of activity for the entire railway system. It was the station that served as the gateway to the country, to the city, to the rural town. The station also functioned as a unique socio-spatial location, a place that at once was both public and private, where passengers encountered one another in this permeable space. At these points of departure and arrival was a bustle of activity, where people were constantly coming and going, meeting loved ones and encountering strangers, where freight arrived or departed, where newspaper and grocery stands provided goods to both regular customers and to hundreds of unfamiliar faces a day. The design of the station served to reinforce these interactions, as well as occasionally limit them, as is the case with immigrant waiting rooms, racially segregated waiting rooms, and gender-based waiting rooms. Though the waiting rooms encouraged limited interaction, passengers of all kinds rushed past one another in the large open areas of the station like the concourse. It was through these stations that travelers entered the city and gained their first impression of the area.

The 1920s marked the beginning of the decline of the American railroads, as the automobile emerged as an alternate form of transportation. The manufacturing of automobiles using the assembly line method increased production of cars, making automobiles more affordable to the general public. As the automobile gained in popularity, railroads continued to decline. The Great Depression of the 1930s furthered the negative impact on the railroad stations, as companies could not afford their upkeep
and thus, neglected to maintain these structures. During World War II, the railroads saw
a brief resurgence with the transportation of troops and a public that could not afford the
rising gasoline prices. Out of this resurgence came the optimistic view that passenger rail
would once again be the dominant form of transportation in the United States. In the
post-World War II era, however, the suburban population continued to grow and with it,
the use of the automobile. The development of the Interstate Highway System and
commercial aviation during the 1950s and 1960s issued the final blows to the railroad
industry. Despite new streamlined railcars promoted by the railroad companies, with
exciting names like the *Super Chief* and the *California Zephyr*, the railroads continued to
see major budget deficits and loss in profits. By the 1960s, the postal service, which had
previously helped railroad companies break even, terminated their use of rail in favor of
ground and air transportation. The stations that had once been the pride of the towns and
cities in which they were built now deteriorated from deferred maintenance and neglect
as railroad companies struggled financially.\(^3\)

The decline of the railroads and the demise of their once grand stations are best
exemplified in the now infamous demolition of Pennsylvania Station in New York City.
Historic preservation legislation was initiated in New York City from the attempts to
rescue McKim, Mead & White’s Penn Station from its impending architectural grave.\(^4\)

Protests began at a 1962 meeting of the American Institute of Architects where a number

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\(^4\) The terminal was demolished to make way for a new Madison Square Garden with a station below street
level. For a full account of the events leading up to the demolition of the building, see Anthony C. Wood,
*Preserving New York* (New York: Routledge, 2008) 275-321. It is important to note that the demolition of
Penn Station did not initiate the preservation movement in New York City. In fact, efforts had begun as
early as the 1890s, with the preservation of Fraunces Tavern and the Dyckman House. It was, however, the
catalyst for legislation regarding preservation in New York City. For more on the emergence of historic
preservation in New York, see Randall Mason, *The Once and Future New York* (Minneapolis: University of
Minnesota Press, 2009).
of architects reacted strongly against the proposed demolition and formed the Action
Group for Better Architecture in New York (AGBANY), chaired by Norval White.\(^5\)
Despite the support the group received, the City Planning Commission voted to demolish
the building in 1963, to which Ada Louise Huxtable wrote:

> Until the first blow fell no one was convinced that Penn Station really would be
demolished or that New York would permit this monumental act of vandalism
against one of the largest and finest landmarks of its age of Roman elegance […]
Any city gets what it admires, will pay for, and ultimately, deserves. Even when
we had Penn Station, we couldn’t afford to keep it clean. We want and deserve
tin-can architecture in a tin-horn culture. And we will probably be judged not by
the monuments we built but by those we have destroyed.\(^6\)

The community activism that grew out of the demolition of Penn Station was a catalyst
for the signing of the New York City Landmarks Law on April 19, 1965 and the
establishment of the Landmarks Preservation Commission in New York City.

Yet Penn Station, while the most infamous, is but one example of the many
midsize to large metropolitan passenger stations that were demolished between the 1950s
and 1970s. These same stations had once been said “to typify the inventive spirit of the
age.”\(^7\) In 1875, an article in *Building News* stated that “railway termini and hotels are to
the nineteenth century what monasteries and cathedrals were to the thirteenth century.
They are truly the only real representative building we possess […] Our metropolitan
termini have been leaders of the art spirit of our time.”\(^8\) From the moment these
buildings were constructed, their significance to the architectural, cultural, and social
spheres were immediately recognized by contemporaries. On the occasion of the second

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\(^5\) The group picketed the station and succeeded in attracting the attention of the media and of high-profile
figures like the architect Philip Johnson and art critic Aline Saarinen. AGBANY and supporters carried
signs reading ‘Don’t demolish it! Polish it!’ and ‘Save your great station.’


\(^7\) Meeks, *The Railroad Station*, 35.

\(^8\) *Building News*, 29 (1875): 133.
reprint of his landmark book, Meeks wrote: “In the eight years that have intervened since this book was first printed, the decline of the railroads has been swift and the destruction or vulgarization of stations has been deplorable. What began as a history has become an obituary.” This lament was one of the many voices across the nation of those concerned over the fate of the nation’s railroad stations. The combination of maintenance costs, the increasing value of urban real estate, and the opportunity to sell air rights above railroad stations were the determining causes for demolition of these structures. The government’s urban renewal projects, begun in 1949 as “urban redevelopment,” also resulted in the demolition of numerous structures in the urban environment. The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 promoted the use of the automobile and threatened historic or architecturally significant structures in the path of proposed roads.

Federal involvement in the preservation sphere eventually came with the passing of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA). In this act, the government recognized that historic properties were being lost or substantially altered with “increasing frequency” and that:

in the face of ever-increasing extensions of urban centers, highways, and residential, commercial, and industrial developments, the present governmental and nongovernmental historic preservation programs and activities are inadequate to insure future generations a genuine opportunity to appreciate and enjoy the rich heritage of our Nation.

The passing of NHPA established the National Register of Historic Places, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the State Historic Preservation Offices. Other

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9 Epigraph to 1964 edition of Meeks, The Railroad Station.
10 Potter, Great American Railroad Stations, 49.
11 With the passing of the 1954 Housing Act, “urban renewal” became the preferred term; however, despite the name change, extensive redevelopment still occurred and entire sections of neighborhoods were demolished.
government legislation that promoted preservation include the Tax Reform Act of 1976 and the Economic Recovery Act of 1981, both of which allowed tax incentives for investors willing to restore and renovate historic buildings for adaptive use. It was under these programs that buildings such as Union Station in St. Louis, Missouri were refurbished to accommodate hotels and retail, and others, such as Pennsylvania Station in Pittsburgh, were adapted for residential purposes. With the Tax Reform Act of 1986, however, the benefits available to outside investors were weakened and adaptive use projects were no longer as viable.

In 1974, a selected inventory of historic railroad stations was prepared by the Educational Facilities Laboratories (EFL) in preparation for a conference on the adaptive use of these structures. This conference was held in Indianapolis, Indiana on July 22 and 23 of that same year. The inventory and conference were sponsored by the EFL and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and co-sponsored by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the National Park Service, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the U.S. Department of Transportation. The EFL and NEA published a report in relation to the conference called *Reusing Railroad Stations*. The report advocated for the preservation of historic railroad stations and called to action private industry, foundations, individual communities, and the government. This interest in the preservation and adaptive use of railroad stations was fueled by the notion that railroad stations form an integral part of the historical and social fabric of the nation. The development of the railroad and its stations paralleled the growth of the United States and was, indeed, largely responsible for the economic expansion of the nation in the post-

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Civil War period and into the twentieth century. The efforts by the EFL and NEA sparked an enormous response from people involved in transportation, conservation, real estate development and urban management and resulted in a second publication on the adaptive use of railroad stations.\textsuperscript{14} This second publication featured more practical aspects of adaptive use, such as funding organizations, market analyses, and federal programs in order to provide necessary information to those interested in adaptive use projects. These publications highlighted success stories—stations that had been repurposed and contributed both economically and aesthetically to their surrounding neighborhoods—and at the same time, it was a call to arms. For each successful rehabilitation, dozens of stations were demolished. The goal of EFL and the NEA was to protect these stations and have them serve once again as major centers of activity, whether for commercial, entertainment, or transit purposes.

The thousands of stations across the country that were demolished or were in serious threat of demolition were viewed as obstacles to those looking to develop the land and as eyesores to many who lived in surrounding neighborhoods. The conflict between preservationists and developers began in the 1950s and continues to this day. Preservation organizations have encountered many obstacles in their attempts to protect historic structures, with much resistance coming from developers unsympathetic to preservation. Though this battle continuously ensues, there are more tools available to preservationists today than there were decades ago. In the following sections, these tools, such as levels of historic designation, financial incentives for historic preservation, and national and local preservation programs, are outlined and analyzed. The suitability of

the railroad station for adaptive use is addressed in Section One. Railroad stations have a
very specific design: large, open spaces; high ceilings; and the long train shed. It is this
design that makes stations especially strong candidates for adaptive use. The
transportation function of the rail station is another important aspect of adaptive use since
intermodalism, the combination of more than one mode of transportation, has proven to
be an important component in city planning in recent years, with cities incorporating
historic rail stations within their transit systems. The materials and design of historic rail
stations are also in line with the rising interest in sustainable forms of architecture.
Sustainability and preservation have become linked in the twenty-first century and many
preservation organizations, such as the National Trust for Historic Preservation, are
actively promoting the relationship between the two areas.

To understand how the preservation of historic rail stations has changed since the
mid-twentieth century, it is necessary to explain the varying levels of historic designation
and preservation agencies, as well as the economic incentives available to communities.
Section Two outlines the levels of historic designation: federal, state and local.
Understanding the benefits and limits of such designation is essential because varying
levels determine the type of renovation or restoration allowed, the ability to delay or stop
adverse actions, and eligibility for tax benefits. Since the 1970s, the tax benefits
available and the amount of funding institutions have drastically changed. Section Three
outlines the financial benefits in effect today and the various types of preservation
programs in existence. National programs such as the National Trust for Historic
Preservation, state programs like the New Jersey Historic Trust, and local preservation
groups are all resources to help fund preservation and adaptive use projects.
Section Four provides a series of case studies to demonstrate how levels of designation, financial incentives, preservation programs, and contemporary concerns may be incorporated into successful rehabilitation and adaptive use of historic railroad stations. The Central Railroad of New Jersey Depot in Whitehouse Station, New Jersey is representative of small community depots that have been adapted for another purpose, in this case, for use as a branch of the county library. The Milwaukee Road Depot in Minneapolis, Minnesota and Union Station in Indianapolis, Indiana provide contrasting examples of mid-size urban stations repurposed as multi-use facilities. While the Milwaukee Road Depot has been deemed a success, Indianapolis Union Station has struggled to find an appropriate use. The Saint Louis County Union Depot in Duluth, Minnesota serves as a case study of the incorporation of intermodalism within a larger strategic design plan. Finally, Michigan Central Station in Detroit, Michigan represents those stations threatened with demolition today. This study presents the resources available today to help towns and cities, particularly cities like Detroit, protect their historic passenger rail stations and make them viable in today’s society.
I. SUITABILITY OF HISTORIC RAIL STATIONS FOR ADAPTIVE USE

Architecturally speaking, railroad stations are ideal for adaptive use. Unlike other nineteenth century building types such as prisons, asylums, or even college dormitories, railroad stations have a comparatively open floor plan: the expansive spaces of the concourse, ticket lobby and waiting rooms; high ceilings; and the long, open train-shed. In contrast, other building types typically have compartmentalized floor plans with numerous rooms separated by masonry walls. This requires more resources to adapt to a functional use or limits the type of use suitable for the structure. The railroad station can be suited for entertainment, cultural, commercial, and of course, transit purposes. In fact, many of the most successfully adapted stations still retain transportation services, whether commuter rail, light rail, or bus. Intermodalism has become a major consideration in the adaptive use of rail terminals as a result of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) and the subsequent legislation, Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century of 1998 (TEA-21) and the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act of 2005 (SAFETEA-LU). Funding from this legislation has been utilized to renovate a number of historic rail stations for multimodal transit purposes.

A significant factor in the preservation of railroad stations during the 1970s was, in fact, the potential for continued use of transportation. One of the major players in the continued preservation of stations was Amtrak, a government-run organization established under the Nixon administration.16 The Board of Directors of the Association

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of American Railroads requested public subsidies to preserve passenger rail service and the public-owned pool of passenger equipment. Yet outright subsidies to the failing railroad companies would have burdened the federal government. An alternative proposal by the Department of Transportation called for creating a semi-public corporation, Railpax (later renamed Amtrak, a combination of the words “America” and “track”). When Amtrak began service on May 1, 1971, more than half of the passenger rail routes operated by freight railroad companies were eliminated.\(^\text{17}\) Even still, Amtrak was able to keep many stations open and running, despite the fact that many of the stations were, and still are, not owned by Amtrak. However, Amtrak encountered several problems from its beginning in 1971. Since the railroads had been declining for years and companies could not invest in new equipment, Amtrak inherited outdated and/or poorly maintained equipment. Furthermore, many of the stations and maintenance facilities had also fallen into disrepair.

Of the five hundred and twenty-nine stations utilized by Amtrak, one-hundred and fifteen are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.\(^\text{18}\) An additional ten stations are located within Historic Districts though the stations themselves are not historically designated. Even though Amtrak does not own the majority of the stations it occupies, it established the Great American Stations Project in which Amtrak develops partnerships with public officials and local communities to rebuild and revitalize the stations it serves. The project website states that “a well-planned train station is one of the best investments


a community can make as it seeks to expand greater tourism and business opportunities. Whether used by tourists or local residents, stations are proven to be fertile economic ground." While Amtrak has received its fair share of criticism, a subject on which there is no room here to discuss, the present-day work in rehabilitating historic stations reinforces that these structures are significant to the cultural history of the United States.20

In addition to Amtrak, new proposals for passenger rail call further attention to the nation’s historic rail stations. The Obama administration is currently proposing federal funding for high-speed rail, and if the plan comes to fruition, the opportunity for returning or increasing passenger rail service to historic stations across the country becomes a possibility.21 The 2012 budget presented by President Obama includes $8 billion for high-speed rail as part of a six-year $53 billion rail plan.22 The goal is that 80% of Americans would have high-speed rail access by 2035. If plans are carried out, high-speed rail would revive passenger rail travel in the United States and perhaps open up more funding sources for cities looking to preserve their historic railroad stations. The current proposals for a high-speed rail system in the United States make the preservation and adaptive use of railroad stations an especially pertinent topic.

21 Only certain historic rail stations would be able to accommodate high-speed rail on account of the track and grade requirements for high-speed trains. The Duluth Union Depot is an example of a historic rail station undergoing strategic design plans to accommodate high-speed rail.
Proponents of high-speed rail, such as the nonprofit US High Speed Rail Association, emphasize the energy efficiency of a national high speed rail system which will significantly reduce carbon emissions by reducing congestion and dependency on cars and oil. Thomas Friedman, columnist for the *New York Times*, believes we have entered a Climate-Energy Era, one in which climate change, population growth, and globalization burden natural and cultural resources. Along with these factors, or as Friedman would argue, because of these factors, our country is also experiencing an economic recession. Increasing attention is being paid to sustainable architecture or “green building.” Sustainability can be used to enhance preservation by seeking to minimize the negative environmental impact of buildings through moderating the use of materials, energy, and space and by enhancing efficiency.

Sustainability has become an increasingly strong factor in the preservation world. Continued use of existing structures reduces the amount of demolition and construction waste deposited in landfills and conserves the embodied energy of the building, that is, the amount of energy already expended to create the structure. Historic buildings are often inherently energy conserving, featuring natural lighting and ventilation, durable construction of local natural stone, and deep porticoes and overhangs for solar shading. Even though the head houses of rail stations were often dressed in historical styles, they utilized the newest technology and materials and were, as Carroll Meeks states, the nineteenth century’s contribution to architectural forms. Adaptive use of railroad stations

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as a sustainable form of architecture retains the innovative architectural forms of the nineteenth century and allows the structure to remain viable for the future. Organizations like the National Trust, the American Institute of Architects, and the Association for Preservation Technology are making strides to promote this relationship between preservation and sustainability.

In 2009 *Traditional Building* magazine hosted a roundtable entitled “The Changing Architectural Practice in the Age of the Lean: Are sustainability and preservation driving forces in the market, for now and the future?” The magazine invited a number of leading preservation architects to examine these issues. Bruce D. Judd of the Architectural Resources Group states that his clients are becoming increasingly interested in sustainability. He argues that “the greenest building is the one already built,” or, in other words, “the best thing one can do regarding sustainability is to reuse an existing building.” He also points out that many historic buildings are inherently energy conserving, with thick walls, operable windows, natural lighting, and transom windows, among other features. In utilizing these properties, sustainable architecture and preservation go hand-in-hand. Jean Carroon of Goody Clancy cites the available literature that stresses that “focusing on existing buildings is absolutely essential to reducing carbon emissions and addressing climate change.” While Carroon emphasizes the environmental benefits of sustainability and preservation, Jack Pyburn of Lord, Aeck & Sargent states that in times of economic stress, existing buildings sustain a higher level of market activity than new construction. He claims that “sustainable design

and construction may play a similar role in relieving our present economic doldrums. Preservation and sustainability are, and will continue after this current recessionary period to be, significant forces driving the design and construction market.”

Though these particular architects agree that sustainability and preservation can positively impact the economy and can be less detrimental to the environment, in many cases new construction still prevails over preservation.

The cultural benefit of preservation should be highlighted in addition to the economic benefit. Adaptive use of historic structures protects cultural values and provides a sense of history and a sense of place to towns, cities, and the nation as a whole. Railroad stations in particular are significant to the historical, architectural, and cultural history of the United States. Contemporary trends toward intermodalism and sustainability can help make historic rail stations both relevant to and functional in the twenty-first century. Adaptive use both preserves the historic structure while making it viable in the modern world. Viewing adaptive use in this way, as both preservation of the past and adaptation for the future, will produce projects that are more relevant to their surrounding neighborhoods by taking into account the history of the area as well as the needs of the current population and potential for advancing economic development.

II. LEVELS OF HISTORIC DESIGNATION

Understanding the levels of historic designation is crucial in recognizing the rights and privileges to owning historic property. A listing on the National Register of Historic Places does not automatically protect a structure from demolition or substantial renovations. Designation alone is not effective in protecting a historic structure but merely serves as an initial phase in the historic preservation process. Below, the description, advantages, and restrictions of each level of designation are discussed. Outlining the levels of designation in this section sets the foundation for utilizing the types of assistance available at national, state, and local levels summarized in Section Three.

**Federal Designation**

The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 is the most significant legislation for preservation. NHPA created the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), established the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and initiated the Historic Preservation Fund. The NRHP is part of the National Park Service’s (NPS) “national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America's historic and archeological resources.”30 When a property or site is recommended for inclusion on the NRHP it must meet several criteria: the structure must be at least fifty years old (exceptions are made in certain circumstances); it must retain its historical character, that is, not have had substantial renovations; and must be significant either culturally, historically, architecturally or archaeologically. The identification of a property as a historically significant resource requires a Section 106

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review, a review process completed by federal agencies in which historic properties are identified and evaluated in terms of their historic significance. This process also determines eligibility for tax credits and grants. An assessment is made of a proposed action’s effect on that property (renovation, demolition, etc.) and adverse effects are resolved either through an agreement and/or advisory comments from the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP). The ACHP is an independent agency of the United States government that promotes the preservation, enhancement, and productive use of the nation’s historic resources and advises the President and Congress on national historic preservation policy. The ACHP has a significant role under Section 106 and consists of twenty-three members from various agencies and local and state governments. All but two of the members are appointed by the President of the United States.

In an article entitled “Promoting and Protecting Rail Stations Through Historic Designation Programs,” Amtrak points out that an NRHP listing is “purely honorific, and as such, places no constraints on private property owners. A property could be designated one day and demolished the next—there is no legal protection delaying or barring demolition or unsympathetic renovations to a NRHP property.”31 For example, the Nashville Union Station and Train Shed (Richard Montfort, ca. 1890s) was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1975 (fig. 1). The Romanesque Revival station served as a major transfer point for the Louisville & Nashville (L&N) and the Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis lines. The shed spanned a width of 200 feet, making it the largest single-span, gable roof structure constructed in the United States at the time (fig. 2). The L&N transferred ownership of the station to the General Services

Administration in 1979, which then transferred ownership to the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County in 1985. A group of private investors converted the station into a hotel the following year. Due to the combination of a poor economic climate and the high-yield bonds used to finance the project, the hotel went bankrupt within a few years but was bought out by another investment group. In 1996, a fire damaged both the station hotel and shed. As a result of the damage, the roof of the shed was subsequently removed and the area was converted into a parking lot, which was deemed unsafe by engineers in 2000 and demolished the following year. The demolition of the shed led to the withdrawal of the National Historic Landmark designation for the Nashville Union Station and Train Shed on July 31, 2003.\textsuperscript{32} Historic landmark designation alone was not enough to enforce the restoration of the shed. Since the station had been designated a local landmark by the Metro Council in 1999, the head house remains on the NRHP.

\textit{State Designation}

State preservation programs are crucial to the national-state-local historic preservation partnership by providing active participation in the Section 106 process and enabling local legislation to act.\textsuperscript{33} Though state historic preservation programs predate the 1966 NHPA, the passing of this legislation established national standards and guidelines for programs within a new operational framework and linked the states together in a common effort.\textsuperscript{34} In the 1980s, the SHPOs initiated amendments to the

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{34} Prior to the NHPA, state historic preservation programs were widely scattered. Lyon and Brook, “The States,” 81-82.}
NHPA that confirmed their central role in the designation process by creating Certified Local Governments (CLGs) to share responsibility with the federal government. The creation of CLGs enhanced the formal structure of preservation programs in each state. The Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) assists State Historic Preservation Offices by paying in part the costs of staff salaries, surveys, National Register nominations, educational materials, and comprehensive preservation studies including historic structure reports.\(^{35}\) As SHPOs further develop and hire specialized professionals, such as historians, architectural historians, architects, and archaeologists, the funding needed for adequate compensation is generally not met by the HPF. Many SHPOs try to form networks that provide matching nonfederal funding from nonprofit organizations, universities, or regional planning agencies. CLGs are an additional resource to the SHPOs because they can assume certain state responsibilities, such as environmental review.

Like federal designation, a listing on the State Register of Historic Places is honorific and does not provide legal restrictions on renovations or use of a historic property. The State may be viewed as a partnership entity with the federal programs, with the SHPO acting as federal functionaries of historic preservation.\(^{36}\) Criteria for the State Register are modeled after the federal register: the structure or site must be significant either culturally, historically, architecturally or archaeologically; it must be at least fifty years old, with certain exceptions; and it must not have had substantial renovations. Being listed on the State Register enables the property owner to take


advantage of certain financial benefits provided by state organizations, such as matching
grants and low-interest loans.

The state is involved in planning, infrastructure, and land-use in a much more
direct way than the federal government. It is the state that controls planning and land-use
regulations, zoning, and building codes essential to the historic preservation process.
Since state preservation plans and planning has changed since the late 1960s, a more
comprehensive state planning process was deemed necessary by the mid-1980s. The
development of state preservation plans was a process that lasted for more than a decade.
By 1997 all of the states had approved state plans centered on the goal of engaging local
government and public participation. This relationship not only strengthens statewide
historic preservation efforts but engages the public in a more direct way.

One example of the benefits of state designation may be found in the example of
the Central Railroad of New Jersey (CRRNJ) Terminal located in Liberty State Park in
Jersey City, New Jersey (fig. 3). The terminal complex ceased passenger operations in
1967 after CRRNJ declared bankruptcy and the site was purchased by the State of New
Jersey with federal and state funds. The eclectic Victorian-style head house draws from
both the French Renaissance Revival and Richardsonian Romanesque. The red-brick
head house, with its steeply pitched hip roof and a large central pavilion flanked by wings
extending to smaller pavilions at either end, forms the core of the complex linking the
ferry and train concourses. The terminal, built in 1889 by Peabody & Stearns, holds
great significance to both the State of New Jersey and the nation as a whole as it is
located across the river from Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty. Between nine to
twelve million immigrants entered the country through this station in the period between

37 Lyon and Brook, “The States,” 91.
1890 and 1915. The immigrant waiting room and rest rooms were located on the ferry concourse, a wooden structure with simple, low-pitched gable roofs. This waiting room contrasted drastically with the waiting area of the head house which featured a skylit hall spanned by three large wrought-iron tresses and walls veneered with glazed cream-colored English brick (fig. 4). The complex was technologically advanced and featured electrical lighting and heating, both powered by the company’s own power plant north of the terminal.

Even though the terminal was purchased by the state after CRRNJ declared bankruptcy, the complex was deserted and fell into ruin. It was added to both the federal and state registers in 1975 and the following year local residents Morris Pesin and Audrey Zapp advocated for the preservation of the terminal and the development of Liberty State Park. A massive clean-up campaign and restoration situated the terminal as the cornerstone in the development of Liberty State Park. The complex now houses a visitors’ center and museum with permanent and rotating exhibitions in the main waiting room; various arts and music festivals take place in the train concourse and on the grounds of the complex; and the “Blue Comet” Auditorium, used for interpretive programs about the facility, is located on the first floor in the area that was formerly a ladies’ waiting room and part of the ticket office. The terminal remains connected to its history of immigration as the departure point for ferries serving Liberty Island and Ellis Island. The ferry service and the events held at the terminal generate substantial revenue for the daily operating costs of the building. Through its designation on the State


39 Ibid.
Register, the terminal is eligible to receive state funding. In 2002, as part of a campaign to improve the state’s parks, forests and historic sites, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection funded a new HVAC system for the terminal. In this case, designation at both the federal and state levels opened up more opportunities for funding. That same year the terminal was the site of the Jersey Central Railroad Heritage Festival, a celebration of former CRRNJ workers, the railroad industry, and the terminal itself.  

The terminal is an example of the benefits of heritage tourism; the complex and the surrounding park attract millions of local, national, and foreign visitors each year.

**Local Designation**

Local governments have the ability to determine what they will seek to preserve and what is important to the community, whether that means individual buildings or whole neighborhoods. However, their authority is contingent upon delegated state power and the money for preservation provided by the local governments comes from a variety of sources: public, private, and nonprofit.  

The 1980 amendments to the 1966 NHPA, discussed above, decentralized federal historic preservation programs and placed decision making on local governments, exemplified in the CLG program. A local government participates in the CLG program only when the SHPO and NPS certify that the local government has adopted a preservation ordinance, established a preservation commission, and is carrying out a preservation program meeting federal and state

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standards. The use of regulatory approaches to preservation at the local level has increased radically since the 1980 amendments.42

Historic preservation ordinances provide the highest form of protection for historic resources. Local preservation ordinances determine the type of renovation or restoration allowed; they contain the ability to delay or stop adverse actions; and they determine eligibility for tax benefits. Many towns have established Historic Preservation Commissions (HPCs) to control the designation process at the local level and to establish these ordinances.43 Unlike advisory planning boards, the determinations of these commissions directly impacts use of a designated property. Historic rail stations may be protected from demolition under the preservation ordinance. For example, the Old Colma Railroad Station in Colma, California, a small, single-story timber structure built in 1881, was threatened with demolition by the construction of the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) facilities. The structure was saved from demolition due to the town’s preservation ordinance and was subsequently restored by the Colma Historical Association for use as a historical museum.

When dealing with historic properties at the local level, involvement by local residents plays a greater role than at the federal or state level. The surrounding neighborhood is affected the most by their historic sites; thus, building local preservation constituencies should be a priority preservation issue in efforts to bring related interests and related populations together and to determine a broader vision for the entire

43 Nominations for historic structures or sites are sent to the HPC or the commission itself conducts surveys and submits nominations for review. The review process ensures that the nominated historic resource fulfills the criteria of evaluation, as established by the SHPO. Depending on the local ordinance, certain cities and towns may not require owner consent prior to designation. The owners of the designated property must secure a “Certificate of Appropriateness” from the commission prior to the granting of any construction permits.
neighborhood as a potential source of solutions to problems affecting residents, such as crime, violence, etc.\textsuperscript{44} Smaller cities and towns often rely on local residents to call attention to their historic structures and initiate the historic designation and preservation process.

In 1988 the Southern Pacific Railroad Company announced plans to raze their depot located in Woodland, California, about twenty miles northwest of Sacramento (fig. 5). The depot, built in 1911, was a two-story timber structure with Colonial Revival and Craftsman elements and featured an extended colonnaded platform to shelter passengers. Historically, the depot is significant as the site from which 418 Yolo County residents of Japanese descent were sent to internment camps during World War II. Famed photographer Dorothea Lange captured this event in a series of photographs.\textsuperscript{45} The structure had fallen into disrepair once passenger service to this station ceased in April 1982. Local preservationists, along with representatives from the Sacramento Valley Historical Railways, the Yolo County Historical Society, and the City of Woodland, formed the Woodland S.P. Depot Committee with the aim of coordinating the preservation of the depot.\textsuperscript{46}

The committee was successful in convincing the Southern Pacific to donate the depot to the Sacramento Valley Historical Railways under the provision that the structure be moved from the railroad’s main line. In 1991 the depot was relocated 200 feet

\textsuperscript{44} Cofresi and Radtke, “Local Government Programs,” 129. Cofresi and Radtke state that the preservation movement is all too often seen as a middle-class, special-interest endeavor, with little concern for the broader implications of preservation.

\textsuperscript{45} These photographs are located in the collection, “War Relocation Authority Photographs of Japanese-American Evacuation and Resettlement, 1942-1945,” at the Bancroft Library of the University of California, Berkeley.

southwest of the original location to property purchased from Southern Pacific by the Woodland Committee by means of a Community Development Block Grant and matching funds raised by the committee. The following year the depot was relocated and set on a new foundation. This endeavor was financed by a private citizen and in addition, many local businesses donated materials and labor for the foundation; the restoration of the structure was completed by volunteers. Without this effort from local preservationists, residents, and businesses, the station would have been demolished.

III. PERSERVATION PROGRAMS AND FINANCIAL BENEFITS

Beginning in the mid-1990s, preservationists placed a greater emphasis on the economic benefits of historic preservation. Various states, including Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Oregon, Rhode Island, and Virginia initiated studies of the economic impact on the state from the SHPO programs. These studies not only include certified tax rehabilitations, but also examine taxes generated and wealth created, the effects of heritage tourism, historic sites maintenance and management, and Main Street programs and state incentives citing employment and economic growth.\footnote{Lyon and Brook, “The States,” 113.} In New Jersey, the Rutgers University Center for Urban Policy Research (CUPR) created a comprehensive model for states across the United States to determine the effects of historic preservation.\footnote{David Listokin and Michael L. Lahr were the principal investigators for this research study. Center for Urban Policy Research, \textit{Economic Impacts of Historic Preservation} (Trenton: Task Force on New Jersey History, 1997); New Jersey Historic Trust, \textit{Partners in Prosperity: The Economic Benefits of Historic Preservation in New Jersey} (Trenton: New Jersey Historic Trust, 1998). David Listokin and Michael L. Lahr were the principal investigators for this research study.} In addition, Rutgers University worked with the National Trust Community Investment Corporation, a subsidiary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, to determine the economic effects of both the federal and state Historic Tax Credit programs.\footnote{Historic Tax Credit Coalition, “First Annual Report on the Economic Impact of the Federal Historic Tax Credit,” \textit{Rutgers University, Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy}, March 2010, accessed March 24, 2011, http://policy.rutgers.edu/reports/HTCimpact/HTCeconimpact.pdf.} The results of this study indicate a number of economic benefits: historic rehabilitation creates thousands of local, high-paying, high-skilled jobs every year; it stimulates the local economy and drives investment to low-income neighborhoods; the cost of the Historic Tax Credit program pays for itself with the amount of federal taxes generated from these projects; and finally, historic rehabilitation reduces waste and saves energy, making it a sustainable choice.
In addition to federal and state historic tax credit programs, historic preservation projects receive support from a growing network of preservation organizations, in both the private and public sectors. These organizations exist at the national level, with an organization like the National Trust; at the state level, with organizations like the New Jersey Historic Trust or Preservation Virginia; and finally, at the local level, with city or county groups. Combining resources from varying organizations, in addition to the financial incentives and funding options, makes historic preservation a more viable option today than in the nascent preservation movement. Below are a number of financial incentives and funding opportunities available for adaptive use projects, in addition to relevant preservation organizations. Amtrak’s Great American Stations website is an excellent resource for communities looking to preserve their historic rail stations. The website lists a number of funding opportunities and organizations that are applicable to the preservation and adaptive use of historic rail terminals. Passenger rail stations in particular have the added benefit of qualifying for funding from the Department of Transportation (DOT) and transportation legislation. The incentives and organizations listed below are not comprehensive, but rather, are meant to demonstrate the wide range of support available for adaptive use projects.

Though funding opportunities and preservation resources are far more numerous today than in the 1970s, these programs are some of the first affected by budget cuts in today’s economic climate. The 2012 federal budget received a 23% reduction in preservation funding, equaling a reduction of $18.5 million. Even with these reductions, however, SHPOs will be given a $3.5 million increase and the ACHP will receive $6.1

million in funding (up from $5.9 million in 2011). When dealing with the preservation of historic rail stations, the type of adaptive use is a critical factor and may open up new sources of funding. For example, adaptive use projects involving the development or expansion of transit service may apply for funding from the DOT, which has a budget of $129 billion for 2012.\textsuperscript{52} Within that budget, $4.1 billion is proposed for communities looking to increase transportation choices and access to transportation service. While the existence of preservation funding may be tenuous, the lesson to be learned is that there are a number of varied opportunities for funding both within the preservation sphere and beyond.

**Federal Level**

One program that has been active in funding the adaptive use of rail stations is the National Trust for Historic Preservation. From its creation in 1949 until 1995, the National Trust was a federal program.\textsuperscript{53} In fact, the National Trust was instrumental in framing the NHPA. In 1995, the National Trust decided to phase-out federal funding for the organization over a three-year period in favor of reliance on private-sector funding. As a private-sector organization, the National Trust partnered with the government to launch the Save America’s Treasures (SAT) program in 1998, though it has since been eliminated from the 2012 federal budget. SAT has provided grants for the adaptive use of a number of railroad stations across the country including Lincoln Railroad Station in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania (2002), Livingston Depot in Livingston, Montana (2003), Dennison Railroad Depot Museum in Dennison, Ohio (2005), and the Baltimore & Ohio Department of Transportation, “Fiscal Year 2012 Budget Highlights,” Department of Transportation, accessed July 15, 2011, http://www.dot.gov/budget/2012/fy2012budgethighlights.pdf.

Railroad Station in Wheeling, Wyoming (2009). This grant program was administered by the National Park Service in partnership with the President’s Committee on the Arts and Humanities, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The goal of the program was to foster pride in American heritage; to educate Americans and raise concern for preservation problems facing buildings, sites, and objects that represent America’s diverse cultural legacy; and to stimulate broad-scale involvement in the program, including organization of grassroots preservation projects, participation in community preservation, and educational initiatives.  

Despite the success of SAT, the program was eliminated by Congress on the grounds that it was said to support mainly state and local preservation efforts but not projects of national significance. This claim is false, according to the National Trust, which states that eligible projects must be listed on the National Register, thus being of national importance. Most devastating is the significant amount lost in non-federal and private matching funds for projects. Every SAT grant recipient was required to find a dollar-for-dollar, non-federal match. SAT was a program that served as a model in the “leveraging [of] private-sector financing and creating productive and sustained partnerships with large corporations, foundations, and individuals that provide matching funds.\[54\]


contributions.\textsuperscript{57} With the removal of the SAT program, other avenues of funding must be explored by those seeking to fund adaptive use projects for historic rail stations.

Of particular relevance to the preservation of railroad stations is federal funding for transportation projects. Adaptive use of historic rail stations is often most successful when the project retains a transit function. Within the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 is included a provision, Section 4(f), that states that transportation projects may only be approved if there is “no prudent or feasible alternative” to using environmentally sensitive areas, including historic properties.\textsuperscript{58} Section 4(f) applies to DOT projects, such as highway and bridge construction, urban transit projects, airport development, and river crossings and lighthouses. This provision is meant to protect historic structures that are in the path of proposed transportation projects. While Section 4(f) protects historic properties, of particular interest to this study is the efforts by the DOT to work with communities on Transportation Enhancements (TE). To be eligible for federal funds, a project must be one of the twelve TE activities and relate to surface transportation.\textsuperscript{59} Of those twelve activities, three may be directly applied to historic railroad stations:

1) \textit{Historic preservation}: preservation of buildings and facades in historic districts, restoration of historic buildings for transportation-related purposes, and access improvements to historic sites;

2) \textit{Rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings}: restoration of railroad depots, bus stations and lighthouses and the rehabilitation of rail trestles, tunnels, bridges and canals;


3) Establishment of transportation museums: conversion of railroad stations or historic properties into museums with transportation themes, the construction of new museums, and the purchase of exhibit materials.  

Funding from the federal government for the TE program comes in the form of reimbursement, that is, the project sponsor is expected to pay the full cost up front and will later be reimbursed up to 80% of the project cost through the state DOT.  

Most states require that TE project sponsors provide at least 20% of project costs. Though varying from state to state, reimbursable costs usually include “project feasibility, planning and engineering plans, environmental reviews, land acquisition and construction.”

The TE program is a provision of much larger legislation regarding transportation. The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) encouraged intermodalism and planning and land-use transportation linkages and set aside funds for improving passenger rail service. The multi-million dollar projects funded by this legislation are in service of highway and mass-transit interests. Though TE funding may be trivial in comparison to these major projects, it is of incredible significance to the rail preservation movement. Funding from this legislation has aided numerous and diverse preservation projects. The President Street Station in Baltimore, Maryland (1849-50), recognized as the oldest surviving city train station in the United States, received a $450,000 grant in 1993 for the building’s transformation into the Baltimore Civil War Museum. In 2003, Union Station in Ogden, Utah received a $199,000 grant for its preservation projects.  

60 A fourth, conversion of abandoned railway corridors to trails, relates to railroad properties (tracks) but not directly to the passenger stations themselves. For more on TE, see the National Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse website: http://www.enhancements.org/index.asp.
62 Ibid.
conversion into a multi-use facility (fig. 6). The building now houses the Utah State Railroad Museum, a firearms museum, a classic car museum, art gallery, research library containing a collection of historic Ogden photographs and documents, dining facilities, and various retail shops (fig. 7). This legislation has funded dozens, if not hundreds, of rail station restorations and adaptive use projects, mostly small to mid-size stations. The funding is only available, however, to those who submit proposals to their state DOT and are approved for funding. This legislation is an incredibly valuable resource for the preservation of historic rail stations.

The 2012 budget for TE has been reorganized under the DOT’s Livability Initiative, the goal of which is to “enhance the economic and social well-being of all Americans by creating and maintaining a safe, reliable, integrated and accessible transportation network that enhances choices for transportation users, provides easy access to employment opportunities and other destinations, and promotes positive effects on the surrounding communities.” Proposed funding under this initiative is $4.1 billion in 2012 and $28 billion over six years. This funding would be applicable to historic rail station adaptive use projects that would retain or reinstate transit services.

The most commonly known financial incentives for historic preservation are the federal historic tax credits. The Federal Historic Tax Incentives Program is administered by the NPS and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) in partnership with the SHPO. The tax incentives are meant to encourage the preservation of historic places that contribute to the area’s unique character. These incentives also “generate jobs, enhance property

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65 The federal income tax credit for historic rehabilitation is contained in Section 47 of the Internal Revenue Code.
values, and augment revenues for State and local governments through increased
property, business and income taxes.\textsuperscript{66} The current tax incentives for preservation were
established by the Tax Reform Act of 1986 and include a 20\% tax credit for the certified
rehabilitation of certified historic structures and a 10\% tax credit for the rehabilitation of
non-historic, non-residential buildings built before 1936. A certified historic structure is
a building that is listed on the NRHP or is located in a registered historic district. A
certified rehabilitation is one that conforms to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for
Rehabilitation (DOI). The IRS requires that the building be used for income-producing
purposes (offices, commercial use, rental housing); the rehabilitation must be substantial,
exceeding $5,000 or the adjusted basis (purchase price minus the cost of land, plus the
improvements already made) of the building; and rehabilitations must be completed in
two or more distinct stages of development.

\textit{State Level}

In addition to the federal historic tax credit, a number of states also offer tax
incentives. As of 2011, only thirty-one states have instituted laws creating tax credits for
historic rehabilitation. Tax credits vary from state to state, though there are a number of
basic elements followed in most programs, as outlined by the National Trust:

- Criteria establishing what buildings qualify for the credit;
- Standards to ensure the historic and architectural character of the building has
  been preserved;
- A method for calculating the value of the credit awarded, reflected as a percentage
  of the amount expended on that portion of the rehabilitation work that is approved
  as a certified rehabilitation;

• A minimum amount, or threshold, required to be invested in the rehabilitation;

• A mechanism for administering the program, generally involving the SHPO and, in some cases, the State Department of Revenue or the State Department of Economic Development.\(^{67}\)

The success of state historic tax credits in stimulating rehabilitation activity varies from state to state, as do the requirements. Generally, the effectiveness of these credits is influenced by the limit or cap on the amount of credit, both an annual aggregate cap and individual project capping, and a lack of transferability to another person or entity, for example, to partners or shareholders.

Preservation organizations in individual states, in addition to the publicly funded SHPOs, also provide sources of funding for historic preservation. Most of these organizations are listed on the websites of the National Trust and individual SHPOs. Statewide preservation organizations are typically non-profit and supported by voluntary memberships. New Jersey, for example, has a number of preservation organizations, including Preservation New Jersey, Main Street New Jersey, the Archaeological Society of New Jersey, the New Jersey Historical Commission, and the New Jersey Historic Trust. Statewide organizations like these are important resources for preservation projects. The New Jersey Historic Trust has established “stable sources of funding to support activities that contribute directly to the preservation and use of New Jersey’s heritage resources” and supports “effective collaboration among all state-level preservation related endeavors to maximize public benefits from these efforts.”\(^{68}\)


Trust has a number of funding programs, including the Garden State Historic Preservation Trust Fund, which provides matching grants for preservation planning and capital projects to rehabilitate historic property; the Revolving Loan Fund, which provides low-interest, long-term financing for rehabilitation; and the Emergency Grant and Loan Fund for the stabilization of historic property. There are two other sources of funding but they are specifically targeted to certain organizations: the Cultural Trust Capital Preservation Grant Program, which provides grants for historic properties owned by organizations with a history or humanities mission, and the 1772 Foundation, which offers matching grants up to $15,000 to nonprofit organizations. The Trust has provided funding for the rehabilitation and adaptive use of a number of historic rail stations, including the Demarest Railroad Station (J. Cleveland Cady, 1872), the Tenafly Railroad Station (Daniel Topping Atwood, 1872), and Hoboken Terminal (Kenneth Murchinson, 1907).

**Local Level**

As with statewide preservation organizations, individual cities and towns usually have organizations that may serve as additional resources for historic preservation. These organizations are instrumental in compiling NRHP applications for individual buildings and sites or for historic districts. More often than not, however, these local organizations do not have the same financial resources as national or state programs. In urban areas, a significant source of local funding for historic preservation comes from the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) which is a part of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The program funds local community development activities, such as affordable housing, anti-poverty programs, and infrastructure
development. CDBG funds can also be used for the preservation and adaptive use of historic properties in low-income areas. CDBG funding has been reduced by 6.7% ($300 million) in the 2012 budget but remains an option for local preservation projects. For adaptive use of historic rail stations, CDBG funds would be useful for cities interested in using historic preservation and heritage tourism as an economic development tool or for projects within a larger, mixed-use development designed to revitalize an economically distressed neighborhood.

For cities looking to retain transportation services at their historic rail stations, there are two funding opportunities in addition to the DOT’s Livability Initiative. The first is the Transportation, Community, and System Preservation (TCSP) Program which provides grants for projects that improve the efficiency of the transportation system, reduce the environmental impacts of transportation, reduce the need for costly future public infrastructure investments, and ensure access to employment, services, and centers of trade. The city of Las Cruces, New Mexico received a TCSP grant of $187,000 to preserve their Mission Revival style railroad depot, built in 1910 for the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad Company, for use as a railroad museum exhibiting the history of Las Cruces and the impact of the railroad on Southern New Mexico (fig. 8). Passenger service to the station ceased in 1988 and the building stood vacant for several years. The depot was purchased by the city of Las Cruces in 1992 and was renovated with TCSP funds to accommodate exhibition space and offices for the railroad museum. The active tracks west of the depot, used for freight service, are owned and still owned and operated by the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad Company.
The second funding opportunity is the Urbanized Area Formula Program (Sec. 5307) which provides funding for transportation related planning, especially for projects where national passenger rail and commuter rail operate out of the same station, thus sharing waiting areas and platforms. Funding from a $4 million Sec. 5307 grant for the Lorain County Transportation Center in Elyria, Ohio allowed for the restoration and preservation of the New York Central Railroad Station, built in 1926 by Fellheimer & Wagner (fig. 9). The two-story red-brick structure features classical elements including a tripartite division of the façade into base, shaft, and capital and two-story window bays topped by decorative sandstone panels depicting images related to travel. The station was purchased by the Lorain County government for use as a transportation hub for Lorain County Transit, Greyhound, and Amtrak, as well as space available to the public for rent. The total budget for the project is $7.6 million; thus, the Sec. 5307 grant provided just over half of the required funds to complete the transportation center. As with state programs and funding, local resources vary widely. Utilizing all levels of resources is necessary for counties, cities, and private developers to fund adaptive use projects.

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69 Sec. 5307 is only applicable in areas with a population of at least 50,000 inhabitants.
IV. CASE STUDIES

The levels of historic designation and varying forms of financial support are fundamental in the historic preservation process. Utilizing the support currently available and taking into account contemporary trends in adaptive use is a significant part in protecting historic rail stations from unnecessary demolition. Yet identifying potential funding sources and determining the economic benefits of historic preservation is only part of the process. It is necessary to analyze how stations have been repurposed, whether successfully or not, in order to suggest future steps to be taken for stations threatened with demolition today. Retaining the historical significance of the structure is fundamental to the preservation process and linking the past with the present is vital to a successful and meaningful project.

The following case studies range from small town depots to large urban stations. Smaller stations are typically repurposed as single-use facilities, such as a banks, restaurants, galleries, or offices. Serving as a case study for small stations is the railroad depot in Whitehouse Station, New Jersey, which is currently used as a branch of the Hunterdon County Library System. The second case study consists of a comparison of two multi-use projects, the Milwaukee Road Depot in Minneapolis, Minnesota and Union Station in Indianapolis, Indiana, to analyze the achievements and shortcomings of this type of adaptive use. The third case study, the Saint Louis County Union Depot, in Duluth, Minnesota, demonstrates how contemporary trends in historic preservation can be incorporated into an existing adaptive use project. The final case study examines a large urban station, the Michigan Central Station in Detroit, Michigan. This station has been vacant for over two decades and but is one of many threatened with demolition.
today. Though great strides have been made in the preservation of historic railroad stations, this case study serves as a reminder of the steps still to be taken.
Central Railroad of New Jersey Depot, Whitehouse Station, NJ

Whitehouse Station is a small village located in Readington Township, New Jersey. Originally called White House, this village received its name from Abraham Van Horne’s Inn, which, not surprisingly, had plastered white walls. The inn was the center of the small village, which included a grist mill, three stores, three taverns, a Reformed Dutch Church and about a dozen residences. When the Somerville & Easton Railroad arrived in the township in 1847, the center of town moved little more than a half mile away to the station. A modest depot was erected in 1848 to shelter passengers waiting for the train. In 1849, the Somerville & Easton line merged with the Elizabethtown & Somerville line to become the Central Railroad of New Jersey (CRRNJ). The presence of the railroad helped develop the area rapidly. An observer noted in 1868 that “Any one riding along the N.J. Central R.R. will be astonished at the rapidity with which villages and towns are springing up, and at the increasing population of places which had hardly a name before the railroad was opened.” By the end of the nineteenth century, the area was home to a lumber yard, saw mill, creamery, bakery, barbershop, two grocery and dry goods stores, a millinery store, stable, doctor’s office, and funeral home.

As the bustling village continued to thrive, it outgrew the original mid-nineteenth century depot. The present station was built in 1892 to replace the timber structure which the Hunterdon County Democrat had claimed to be “a disgrace to that growing village

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and not fit to confine a good rat dog in.”

The Richardsonian Romanesque style depot was designed by Bradford Gilbert, a noted architect contracted by multiple railroad companies. The single-story building features a heavy, rough-cut stone exterior; a polygonal porch at the front of the building; and deeply recessed arched window and door openings (fig. 10). At the height of railroad travel to the area between 1915 and 1930 nearly thirty trains passed through the station daily. Freight trains imported coal and oil from Pennsylvania and food from wholesalers in Jersey City and Newark and exported locally produced agricultural products. Passenger train service allowed for a trip to and from New York to be completed in one day. The village continued to grow around the railroad station, which was at the heart of the neighborhood.

By the 1970s, however, the CRRNJ was in severe financial trouble, like many railroad companies across the United States. In 1979, the company was absorbed into Conrail. The depot at Whitehouse Station fell under the ownership of New Jersey Transit (NJ Transit) when the company assumed all commuter rail service in New Jersey from Conrail. The station was shuttered during the 1970s when passenger rail service to the station ceased. In 1979, then-mayor Teresa Martin went to the County Library Board with a proposal to renovate the abandoned rail station for use as a branch of the County Library System. After two years of negotiations between the township, county, and NJ Transit, Hunterdon County signed a twenty-five year lease with NJ Transit at the cost of

74 Hunterdon County Democrat, October 18, 1873. Quoted in Elaine Anderson, The Central Railroad of New Jersey’s First 100 Years, 1849-1949 (Easton, PA: Center for Canal History and Technology, 1984) 58.
76 Conrail, or the Consolidated Rail Corporation, was created by the federal government in 1976 to take over certain (potentially profitable) bankrupt rail lines such as the Penn Central Transportation Company. Once Conrail began to turn a profit, it was turned over to private investors in 1987. By the end of the following decade, two eastern rail competitors of Conrail, CSX Transportation and the Norfolk Southern Railway (NS), jointly acquired Conrail and split its assets between them. Operations under CSX and NS began in 1999.
one dollar. In reference to a similar agreement made in 2008 to preserve the historic Waldwick rail station, NJ Transit Executive Director Richard Sarles says of the twenty-five year lease, “This is a win-win for the community and for NJ Transit because the lease enables a preservation effort that financial constraints would not permit us to undertake.”\(^7\) Thus, NJ Transit is able to retain ownership of the property but is not entirely responsible for the restoration and renovation of the structure.

Remodeling the Whitehouse Station building for library purposes was estimated at $50,000 by Stephanie Stevens, co-chairperson of the library committee; however, joint efforts by citizens, local businesses, and external funding helped keep costs down.\(^7\)Local service organizations such as the Women’s Club and Rotary Club held fundraisers including dinners, arts and crafts shows, flower shows, and auctions; the library committee solicited contributions from local residents and merchants; and NJ Transit committed $8,000 for exterior renovations and parking facilities. The Hunterdon County Library System contributed over $10,000 for interior renovations and provided furnishings including bookcases, book inventory, and a circulation desk (fig. 11). The township allocated $15,000 in revenue sharing funds to the restoration project.

In addition to the funding from the sources listed above, the restoration of the building and its renovation into a library required the cooperation of local residents, businesses, and the County Library System. Several local businesses supplied materials, such as ladders, scrapers, and paint. Professional laborers volunteering their time


charged only for raw materials, earning little to no profit on the project. The restoration of the building and its renovation into a library took a total of seven months and the library opened on December 17, 1981. The building was listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places in 1984. Instrumental to this project was the efforts made by local residents and businesses in transforming the station into a library for their own use.

When Whitehouse Station was still a rural area, the depot was at the center of the village as a link to the outside world. Today, as a result of the efforts by residents, it remains at the center of the township, this time as a center of learning. According to the Whitehouse Station librarian Karen Konn, the library offers the resources of the entire Hunterdon County Library System even though the building itself is small.\(^{79}\) Patrons can request resources through the countywide online catalog and have them sent to the Whitehouse Station location. The library is now in its second twenty-five year lease with NJ Transit, renewed in 2005. Passenger rail service to Whitehouse Station along the Raritan Valley Line was reintroduced in 2007. Passengers wait alongside the building and may purchase their tickets aboard the train. In 2009, NJ Transit funded the replacement of the slate roof on the station building and work was completed in 2010 by Northeast Roof Maintenance.

When dealing with smaller stations especially, it is often the local constituency that has the power to guide the project. Whitehouse Station provides an excellent example of a historic rail station that was repurposed in a joint effort by both the county and township to serve the needs of the township residents. The adaptive use of small stations into neighborhood resources, such as libraries, arts centers, or daycares, often ensures that the building will continuously contribute to the development of the town.

\(^{79}\) Karen Konn in discussion with the author, Whitehouse Station, NJ, June 2, 2011.
Today, Whitehouse Station Library still relies on the service of volunteers and the building remains beloved by residents. The structure is not only historically significant to the area but now serves as a local educational resource.
In contrast to the adaptive use of smaller rail stations, mid-size urban stations often fare better with multi-use projects. The Milwaukee Road Depot is significant historically to the industrial development of Minneapolis and today remains a vital part of the downtown area, which also includes sports arenas, theaters, the Minneapolis Convention Center, Hennepin County Medical Center, and the University of St. Thomas. The adaptive use of the station includes two Marriott hotels, rentable space for public and private functions, a bar and restaurant, an indoor water park, a seasonal ice-skating rink located in the renovated train shed, an interpretive history center, and an underground parking garage, all of which make it a vibrant part of the downtown area (fig. 12).

The city of Minneapolis developed around the Falls of St. Anthony along the Mississippi River. The waterfalls provided enough power to fuel both the saw- and flour-milling industries, making Minneapolis one of the most important milling complexes in the nation in the late-nineteenth century. The rapidly growing milling industry spurred the demand for railroad service. The St. Paul & Pacific Railroad opened a track between St. Paul and St. Anthony in 1862, establishing St. Paul as the region’s urban center. The first rail line in Minneapolis was constructed two years later by the Minnesota Central Railway. In 1867, the Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad purchased Minnesota Central and became the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific Railroad in 1874 (later shortened to the Milwaukee Road). By the 1870s, the industrial district became the core

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of the city’s economy and the railroads provided a link between the mills and their markets. 81

The Milwaukee Road built its first Minneapolis freight house and depot in 1879. By the following decade, the burgeoning city and industry required a larger facility to replace the earlier Italianate structure. In 1899, Charles Frost built the Renaissance Revival Milwaukee Road Depot (now called The Depot) in the Mill District (fig. 13). The building features a rusticated ground floor with arched doorways, a heavy cornice, terra cotta wreath ornamentation, and a tower. The tower was originally capped with an elaborate cupola but it was removed after extensive storm damage in 1941. The interior of the building features carved wood ceilings, detailed plaster walls, and marble floors. The long-span, truss-roofed train shed, stretching approximately 625 feet behind the station, is one of the only examples of its kind remaining in the nation (fig. 14).

When train service to the station ceased in 1971, the building remained the Milwaukee Road Company offices until 1978 when it was eventually abandoned. The Depot was placed on the NRHP that same year, but remained vacant for two decades. In 1979, the building was designated a local historic landmark and the city of Minneapolis purchased The Depot from the Resolution Trust Corporation in 1992, along with the surrounding seven-blocks in efforts to redevelop the downtown area. 82 Exterior restorations were authorized by the Minneapolis Community Development Agency and completed in 1996 by Shea, a Minneapolis-based marketing and design firm. In 1998 the building was sold by the city to the CSM Corporation to renovate the space, with the goal

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82 The Depot had been part of several private redevelopment plans but ended up in the hands of the Resolution Trust Corporation, a federal agency set up to liquidate assets, primarily real estate assets, after the Savings and Loan crisis of the 1980s.
of creating usable space for a variety of functions while still retaining the structure’s historical character. The adaptive use of the space involved collaboration between Shea, the CSM Corporation, Elness Swenson Graham Architects, and the city of Minneapolis.

The project utilized both private and public funding costing a total of $55 million. Public funding derived from local, state and federal programs: the Minneapolis Community Planning and Economic Development Department provided staff support for the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission, which worked with developers to ensure the integrity of The Depot was not compromised; the state provided financial support through Petrofund, the Metropolitan Council, and parking revenue; federal funding was issued by the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA). The adaptive use of The Depot was completed in 2001 and received a number of preservation awards including Project of the Year from the American Institute of Architects Minnesota Chapter and the Preservation Award for Adaptive Reuse by the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission and Minneapolis Chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

The adaptive use of The Depot into a multi-use facility is part of the ongoing redevelopment of the Mississippi waterfront (fig. 15). The Depot is located one block away from the present-day Mill City Museum, which is built into the ruins of the Washburn A Mill, now a National Historic Landmark. By the early twentieth century, the milling industry at the falls became obsolete with the rise of steam power and later,

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electric power. As industry and railroads left the waterfront, residential, commercial and recreational properties developed in their place. The adaptive use of the depot has become part of a larger effort in this district to preserve the history of early Minneapolis. The historic Mill Ruins have been preserved within a neighborhood park adjacent to the 1883 Stone Arch Bridge, a National Historic Engineering Landmark. Mill Ruins Park features interpretive signs to provide information about the ruins, the falls, and the Stone Arch Bridge. The important link between industry and the railroads contributed to the development of Minneapolis as a thriving city. The buildings that had once been part of a flourishing local economy are now contributing to the current local economy by providing spaces for entertainment, commerce, and cultural and historical exhibits.

However, adaptive use projects of this nature are not always as successful. Indianapolis Union Station was one of the early adaptive use projects for rail stations, begun in 1979, and has struggled to find appropriate uses ever since. The Romanesque Revival structure was built in 1888 by Pittsburgh architect Thomas Rodd (fig. 16). The red brick building on a Missouri granite foundation features arched doorways and windows, as well as a 185-foot clock tower, which was one of the tallest points in the city. Indianapolis Union Station is considered the first of its kind, uniting passenger and express freight services of four competing railroad companies in a single downtown terminal. The initial project for adaptive use of the station included a festival marketplace in the eastern half of the train-shed, with specialty stores, bars, and a food

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85 The A Mill was shuttered in 1965 and nearly destroyed by a fire in 1991. The Minnesota Historical Society established a museum within the ruins to display the development of the milling industry in the city. Some of the surrounding Mill buildings were also outfitted for new purposes, such as the Whitney Hotel and North Star Lofts.

court, and a hotel in the western half of the shed. Four tracks were retained in the western half to hold several Pullman cars that had been gutted and rebuilt with new interiors to contain two hotel rooms each (fig. 17). The head house served as the grand entrance into these spaces and also housed an upscale restaurant. The project was completed in 1986 with funding from the Federal investment tax credit program for historic structures and from private investment groups. This adaptive use project was considered by preservationists as an excellent example of city and private developers working together to save a railroad station, something that is often critical for urban stations.

During the renovations, EFL, in their report *Reusing Railroad Stations*, predicted that this venture had potential to “become this country’s most outstanding example of historical restoration and imaginative adaptation.” Yet the venture was met with financial troubles only a decade later. The festival marketplace encountered high maintenance costs and declining patronage and was eventually shuttered in 1996. The opening of Circle Centre Mall in 1995, just a block north of Union Station, drew patronage away from the marketplace. One of the factors in the failure of this adaptive use project is what Erik Ledbetter of *Railway Preservation News* terms the “Pioneer Effect.” With the adaptive use of the station, it was made safe to reinvest in the downtown area and a revitalization boom did ultimately occur. However, since Union Station was the first project in this effort, it had to wait for other redevelopment and attractions to draw visitors to the downtown area. Once Circle Centre Mall opened, the

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89 Ibid.
festival marketplace could not compete with the size of the mall or the variety of shops. The city was forced to take ownership of Union Station. In Minneapolis, the Milwaukee Road Depot was part of a larger effort to revitalize the downtown economy and did not compete with other attractions in the area, such as the sports arenas, theaters, or museums. Rather, it contributed to the attractions in the area by offering other forms of entertainment and also provided lodging and parking for patrons of the downtown area. In Indianapolis, the retail at Union Station simply could not compete with the retail at Circle Center Mall and since retail shops occupied the entire eastern half of the building, a significant source of revenue was lost for the city.

Indianapolis has since struggled to provide an appropriate use that will contribute to the local community while retaining the building’s historical significance as the second-largest Midwestern transportation hub. Between 2002 and 2010, the Indianapolis branch of the Mexican Consulate was located in Union Station, though it has since relocated to another building in order to provide more space and better transportation for its clients. The paradox is evident—even though the consulate was located in a transportation facility, it needed to move location to provide access via public transportation for its clients. The Mexican Consulate occupied only 2,357 square feet on the ground floor of Union Station and the Consulate’s clients had to wait in a hallway outside the Consulate, not in one of the former waiting areas of the station (fig. 18). By moving its location to the former Pierson Printing Co. building in 2010, the Consulate was able to quadruple in size. The new building is also located on a bus line, a major convenience for the majority of Mexican nationals who arrive via public transportation,
according to Kurt Faulkner of the Garcia Construction Group Inc, the contractors for the new Consulate.  

When first built, Union Station, like many large urban stations of the period, featured an immigrant waiting room in the basement of the building with an entrance separate than that for the other passengers. Railroad companies played a significant role in attracting immigrants to the US and transporting them throughout the country in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. From the 1850s on, when the railroad had established lines to Indianapolis, the city attracted foreign immigrants, mainly Germans. The temporary location of the Mexican Consulate in Union Station connected the intertwining histories of the railroads and immigration to the contemporary city, reflecting the changing demographic of Indianapolis.

Most recently, the station remains home to a hotel and restaurant, and now also houses a charter school. The head house is used intermittently for private functions such as weddings or corporate events and is unfortunately shuttered when not in use. Amtrak service is currently located south of the station, sheltered under the concrete shed built between 1919 and 1922 to replace the original iron train shed. Though the building was rescued from demolition, initial attempts at adaptive use were unsuccessful. The current presence of the charter school is the latest solution in the attempt to make the structure viable within its community.

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91 The concrete shed was moved south of the station as part of a rail relocation effort in 1979.
Saint Louis County Depot, Duluth, MN

For a variety of reasons, adaptive use projects are often most successful when the station retains transportation services in addition to any commercial or cultural ventures. First, city stations are well-suited as viable transportation hubs given that they often hold a primary location within the city; second, if the station is renovated for commercial or cultural purposes, transit passengers provide a ready base of patronage; and finally, retaining transit service connects to the historical significance of the station and links it to contemporary forms of transportation.92 In this sense, retaining some form of transit service furthers the significance of adaptive use of the railroad station by highlighting the building’s original function. This allows the building to serve in a similar capacity, albeit with other forms of transit such as light rail or buses.

In Duluth, the historic Saint Louis County Union Depot has recently undergone a Passenger Rail Terminal Study initiated by the state with the hopes of returning rail service between Duluth and the Twin Cities.93 The building is currently home to the Lake Superior Railroad Museum, dedicated to the history of the railways in the upper Midwest, as well as the Duluth Art Institute, the Duluth Children’s Museum, the Duluth Playhouse Theater, the Minnesota Ballet, and the Arrowhead Chorale. This adaptive use project, like that of Indianapolis Union Station, was one of the early efforts in rail station preservation. The station is one of the finest American examples of French Norman revivalist architecture, with twin conical towers and a steeply pitched roof (fig. 19). It was completed in 1892 and designed by Peabody, Stearns & Furber for the Northern

Pacific (later Burlington Northern) and St. Paul & Duluth Railroads. There were a number of alterations to the original structure over the years, including a dropped ceiling in the main lobby added in 1945, the demolition of the large train shed on the east side of the building, and the removal of the original slate roof and a pair of intricately designed chimneys in 1953. Union Depot ceased passenger rail service in 1969 and the building was placed on the NRHP two years later. The facility became the property of Saint Louis County when it was purchased from the Burlington Northern by the Area Cultural Corporation in 1971. From 1973 to 1977, the depot underwent various renovations including the removal of the dropped ceiling in the main lobby and the restoration of the station’s immigrant waiting room. Duluth Union Station is one of, if not, the only stations that has retained its immigrant waiting room and uses it to display stories of immigrants to the Minnesota region as well as artifacts such as trunks, dolls, and flags.

The initial adaptive use project in the 1970s received approximately thirty percent of its funding from government grants, thirty-five percent from foundations, and thirty-five percent from businesses and individuals. At the time, Duluth was the only known station restoration to have used available funding for historic preservation. A $200,000 federal grant was issued by the state through the Upper Great Lakes Development Authority. An additional $201,000 was awarded by the Historic Preservation Division of HUD. The railroad museum also received federal funding from the National Economic Development Authority in the amount of $350,000, about eighty percent of the estimated

95 It is significant that Duluth Union Station retains its immigrant waiting room since many of these immigrant rooms were renovated for other purposes when immigration was severely restricted after World War I. Others, most often located in the basement of the station, were demolished for facilities such as parking lots, as was the case in St. Paul Union Depot.
96 Educational Facilities Laboratories, Reusing Railroad Stations, 30. For the following information regarding the funding of the Duluth restoration, I follow the report from the Educational Facilities Laboratories throughout.
cost for the museum. The tenants of the restored depot, including the railroad museum, the Duluth Art Institute, and the Duluth Playhouse, have transformed the historic station into the St. Louis County Heritage and Arts Center. These organizations generate the revenue required for daily operating costs.

Though the St. Louis County Heritage and Arts Center was a valuable addition to the area for many years, both economically and culturally, a 2005 study for the Depot Foundation found that the Depot’s value to the community and to the tourist industry was not as successful as in the past. As a result of the study, four concerns were analyzed: the station’s place in the city, public circulation, organizational framework, and museum programming. The reintroduction of passenger rail service to the station was declared the common thread between all these concerns. The Passenger Rail Terminal Study was sponsored by Explore Minnesota and the Federal Highway Administration in conjunction with the Minnesota Historical Society and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (fig. 20). The consultant team of Miller Dunwiddie Architecture, LHB, Inc., Kimley-Horn and Associates, and HDR Decision Economics developed a track design for the Depot site for the proposed Northern Lights Express (NLX), a high-speed rail line from Minneapolis to Duluth. The design includes two new track rails, to be shared by NLX and the Northern Shore Scenic Railroad (NSSR), and an updated accessible platform. According to the rail study, the existing tenants will remain at the station, combining the successful transportation museum with “an active multimodal transportation facility.”

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100 Ibid, 5.
The city of Duluth projects that these transportation services will reinvigorate the structure and the surrounding area.\textsuperscript{101}

The study also includes strategies for energy efficiency, which, as discussed Section One, is a growing interest in the field of historic preservation. For the existing building, the study consultants recommend that consideration be given to LEED-EB strategies for the existing building. Key concerns include the building’s exterior envelope, internal HVAC systems, electrical systems, water usage and site storm water management.\textsuperscript{102} Currently, the building’s exterior remains in good condition and the windows and roof do not need to be replaced. The combined efforts of intermodalism and sustainability make Saint Louis County Union Depot an excellent example of a contemporary adaptive use project. The project both connects to the original function of the depot as a transportation facility and reinstates the original intention of the depot to bring increased traffic and economic prosperity to the city of Duluth.

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid, 14.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid, 27.
**Michigan Central Station, Detroit, MI**

In Detroit, Michigan Central Station has been vacant for over twenty years. Of the stations still threatened with demolition today, it has become the poster child (fig. 21). Completed in 1913, the Beaux-Arts style building was designed by Reed & Stem and Warren & Wetmore, the architects of Grand Central Station in New York City. It was added to the National Register in 1975. The building consists of two parts: the depot itself and an eighteen-story tower, used for office space by the Michigan Central. At the time of its construction, more than two-hundred trains left the station each day. But with declining use of passenger rail service in the mid-twentieth century, maintenance costs exceeded profit and Michigan Central attempted to sell the station. Like a number of stations at that time, the introduction of Amtrak to the facilities allowed the station to retain rail service for a certain period of time. Amtrak service lasted until 1988, when it was transferred to a new Detroit station. At this time, Michigan Central Station was closed and remained vacant for over two decades. Controlled Terminals, Inc. acquired the terminal in 1996 but did nothing to rehabilitate the structure.  

In 2009, the City Council passed a resolution to demolish the station but the process was halted when a private citizen sued the city, citing the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. Politicians and developers have suggested a number of redevelopment plans over the years: a convention center and casino; offices for the Department of Homeland Security – Customs and Border Protection; Detroit Police Headquarters; a trade processing center; or a high-speed rail station. Yet the station still remains vacant. In

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103 Controlled Terminals, Inc. is part of a group of transportation-related companies owned by Manuel Moroun, Chairman and CEO of CenTra, Inc. The sister company of Controlled Terminals, Inc. is the Detroit International Bridge Co., which owns the Ambassador Bridge connecting Detroit with Windsor, Ontario.
March 2011 the building’s owner announced plans to work with the City of Detroit in funding a replacement of windows and the roof of the eighteen-story building behind the head house. The goal is to make the structure more appealing to potential developers. These renovations are currently underway under the direction of the Ann Arbor-based company, Quinn Evans Architecture.\(^\text{104}\) Local residents have also contributed to the clean-up of the station grounds. A non-profit organization, the Michigan Central Station Preservation Society (MCSPS), was formed by local residents and is “dedicated to the restoration of the Michigan Central Station and investment into the surrounding Corktown community for the purpose of promoting development and economic prosperity in and around the proximity of the Michigan Central Station.”\(^\text{105}\) The MCSPS has worked on the depot since 2009, organizing teams of volunteers to remove debris from the interior ground floor and the exterior of the building and to complete landscaping projects around the building.

Online community discussion forums abound on the possible uses for the railroad station.\(^\text{106}\) Both preservationists and non-specialists have sent comments to these forums suggesting the obvious: a shopping center, restaurants, or cultural center. However, these suggestions do not take into account the location of the station (approximately two miles west of downtown Detroit) and the needs of the citizens of Detroit. Lessons can be learned from past adaptive use projects such as that of Indianapolis Union Station. To renovate the station solely for commercial or recreational use would be a repeat of the


“Pioneer Effect” that occurred in Indianapolis. Indianapolis Union Station was the first commercial venture in the surrounding area and thus, did not receive the necessary patronage for the festival marketplace to thrive. A similar situation would most likely occur if Michigan Central Station were to be converted into a shopping mall or cultural center. The eighteen-story tower provides a number of opportunities for residential and/or office purposes. If the tower were occupied by residents or office workers, the head building would then have a greater patronage base for any commercial, cultural, or entertainment ventures.

A key element to any plan for the adaptive use of the station would be public transportation to the area. Lack of public transportation limits access to the building; this was a major problem for the Mexican Consulate in Indianapolis Union Station. For any venture (commercial, entertainment, civic, etc.) public transportation would not only provide access to the building for those without automobiles but also reduce the amount of parking space needed at Michigan Central Station. The Woodward Avenue Light Rail, approved by the City Council in April 2011, is part of a $10.5 billion, twenty-five year plan to develop a regional mass transit system (including light rail, bus service, and commuter rail). If the light rail service, as well as bus service, were to extend to Michigan Central Station, it would connect the area directly to downtown Detroit. Michigan Central Station, along with the plan for a regional mass transit system, could become part of a revitalization effort in the Detroit area. As demonstrated in the example of the Milwaukee Road Depot, the success of the project depends on the collaboration of the developers with city officials as part of a larger effort by the city to revitalize the downtown area.
The difficulty in realizing any of the above suggestions is, of course, funding. Currently the station is owned by a private corporation, Controlled Terminals, Inc. They are working with the city, however, to replace the windows and roof of the eighteen-story tower. Both the city and Controlled Terminals, Inc. will profit from a successful rehabilitation and renovation of the station but will have to work together to utilize all potential sources of funding for this adaptive use project. Historic tax credits, at both the federal and state levels, are available for the rehabilitation of the structure. In Michigan, state-only tax credits are non-competitive and non-capped and are equal to 25% of the project’s qualified expenditures. More significant funding could potentially come from both federal and state DOT programs relevant to any proposed transportation project for the station, which is necessary to make this project viable on a long-term scale. Some potential sources include the Urbanized Area Formula Program (Sec. 5307) and the Transportation, Community, and System Preservation Program (TCSP). Funding from the State DOT in the form of Transportation Enhancements (TE) is another option; however, the project sponsor must pay the full cost of the project upfront and will later be reimbursed up to 80% of the project cost. Dan Stamper, president of station owner Matty Moroun’s Detroit International Bridge Company, estimates that a complete renovation could cost approximately $80 million (a conservative estimate at best). To pay the full cost of this project upfront may not be possible, especially since there are currently no prospective tenants for the structure.

Controlled Terminals, Inc. has begun replacing the windows and roof of the eighteen-story tower in the hopes of attracting tenants for the structure. However, the city of Detroit has been hit harder by the economic recession than many other cities: historically high unemployment rates; wide occurrence of abandoned properties due to a mortgage crisis; and industry, especially automobile manufacturers, shuttering their factories and leaving town. With the economic struggles Detroit faces, the city is unable to provide any grants or loans for rehabilitation of historic structures; potential funding must be at the federal and state levels. Even still, the city of Detroit must remain actively involved in the rehabilitation and adaptive use of Michigan Central Station since a successful project will introduce employment opportunities for local citizens, both during and after renovations, and generate revenue for the local economy.

Michigan Central Station stands as a symbol of Detroit’s past before the automobile era. The rise of the automobile industry was a major cause for the decline of the railroads and the presence of this deteriorating station in “Motor City” holds great significance. This abandoned shell of a building is perhaps too much a physical reflection of the current hard times Detroit is facing and is now a dual representative of the declining railways and the current recession. Michigan Central Station stands as a monument to the once-thriving industry of Detroit and as a repurposed building it will stand as a monument to the recovering city of Detroit. If Controlled Terminals, Inc. and the city of Detroit work together to find solutions that will stimulate the local economy,

the station will once again contribute to the development, prosperity, and cultural heritage of the city of Detroit.
V. CONCLUSION

Since the 1970s, the steps made by preservationists, architects, developers, and the government to preserve and repurpose railroad stations have been considerable. Milford Wayne Donaldson, chairman of the ACHP, has expressed his interest in “building a new generation of preservationists” by engaging youth through service learning programs.110 The number of young professionals entering the preservation field as architects, architectural historians, lawyers, conservators, etc. continues to grow.111 Established public- and private-sector preservation programs are more numerous today, as are preservation legislation and funding. But despite all of these achievements, historic preservation is one of the first programs targeted during budget cuts. Until historic preservation becomes a priority and is recognized as a necessary action in our nation, funding for preservation will continue to diminish.

This does not mean all hope is lost, however, as successful adaptive use projects have the potential to advance community and economic development. Historic rehabilitation has been proven to be a powerful tool for community and economic development.112 Yet the economic benefits are not the only advantage; the cultural value of preservation, something that cannot be measured in charts or graphs, is the driving force behind the preservation movement. Preservation’s dual role in cultural heritage and

111 Degree and certification programs in historic preservation now number at least fifty-five, a substantial increase from 1973, the year Columbia University offered the nation’s first degree program in historic preservation.
112 Studies by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and individual states have found that historic designation often increases property value, historic building rehabilitation creates more jobs and results in more local business than new construction, and also encourages additional neighborhood investment as well as heritage tourism. See Amy Facca, “An Introduction to Preservation Planning,” Planning Commissioners Journal 52 (Fall 2003).
economics cannot be separated. Cultural geographer Kent Ryden writes that “a sense of place results gradually and unconsciously from inhabiting a landscape over time, becoming familiar with its physical properties, accruing history within its confines.” Retaining a sense of place in an area is the cultural benefit of historic preservation.

The adaptive use of historic rail stations is especially important to national cultural heritage. Historically, the presence of the railroad in a town or city advanced the local economy. Railroad stations were the physical manifestation of this prosperity and stood as monuments to the economic and physical growth of an area. The railroad system catalyzed important changes in the development of the United States: towns and cities were built up along the railways; industry expanded; the economy grew; and immigration to the country increased rapidly. Railroad stations were a source of pride for the towns and cities in which they were located and signaled prosperity. A railroad station was at the center of many towns, literally and figuratively. The demolition of hundreds of rail stations across the country in the mid-twentieth century was an incredible loss for our nation’s cultural heritage and more specifically, for each town. Preserving the stations we have left is one way to retain the historical significance of the railroads.

Even with the elimination of programs like SAT, there still remains a wider pool of funding for preservation than there was in the 1970s. These sources, as well as new methods for adaptive use, such as sustainability and intermodalism, need to be utilized in order to protect the historic rail stations threatened today. Due to their size, location and function, these stations have the potential to contribute to their neighborhood in a way

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that other historic structures may not. They can provide spaces for transportation, for commerce, for entertainment, for education. Adaptive use of historic rail stations remains a pressing concern. Abandoned rail stations are untapped resources for areas without adequate transportation or for neighborhoods in need of revitalization. With adaptive use projects, these stations can once again serve their neighborhoods and contribute to their growth and development.
ILLUSTRATIONS

fig. 1: Union Station, Nashville, TN

fig. 2: Train Shed, Union Station, Nashville, TN

fig. 3: Central Railroad of New Jersey Terminal, Jersey City, NJ
fig. 4: Interior, Central Railroad of New Jersey Terminal, Jersey City, NJ

fig. 5: Southern Pacific Railroad Depot, Woodland, CA

fig. 6: Union Station, Ogden, UT
fig. 7: Interior of Main Hall, Union Station, Ogden, UT

fig. 8: Santa Fe Depot, Las Cruces, NM
fig. 9: New York Central Railroad Station, Elyria, OH

fig. 10: Central Railroad of New Jersey Depot, Whitehouse Station, NJ

fig. 11: Interior, Central Railroad of New Jersey Depot, Whitehouse Station, NJ
fig. 12: Interior, Milwaukee Road Depot, Minneapolis, MN
View of bar seating in the head house.

fig. 13: Milwaukee Road Depot, Minneapolis, MN
fig. 14: Train shed of Milwaukee Road Depot converted into an ice-rink.

fig. 15: Map of Downtown Minneapolis
Orange lettering marks points of interest. The Depot is marked by a red arrow.
fig. 16: Union Station, Indianapolis, IN

fig. 17: Interior, Union Station, Indianapolis, IN. Pullman cars renovated to serve as hotel rooms in the western half of the train shed.
fig. 18: Waiting area for Mexican Consulate, Union Station, Indianapolis, IN

fig. 19: Saint Louis County Union Depot, Duluth, MN
fig. 20: Passenger Rail Terminal Study, Duluth, MN

fig. 21: Michigan Central Station, Detroit, MI
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