

# Plans Over Crayons: Historic Preservation Engages the Community



## HONOR AWARD

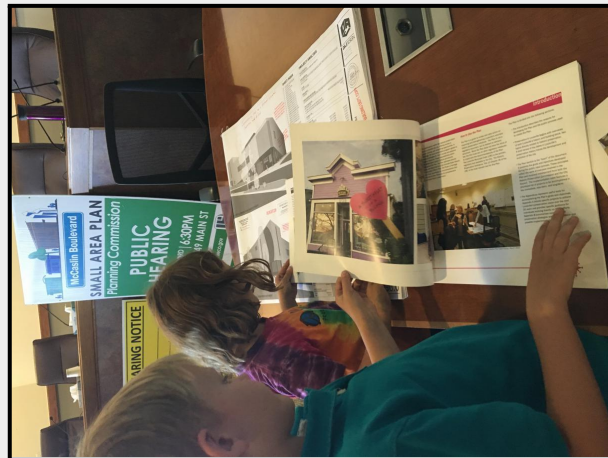
### **Plans Over Crayons: Historic Preservation Engages the Community**

*By: Lauren A. Trice, AICP, Associate Planner*

Imagine a room full of 2nd graders learning about urban planning. Most of them are coloring pictures of a new business they would like to see on Main Street. A few students eagerly page through the Preservation Master Plan laid out on the table. They see buildings they know, read aloud photo captions, and recognize maps.

In the article “Preservation Planning Comes of Age” (Planning Magazine, October 2016) A. Elizabeth Watson, AICP, discusses how early preservation plans were “compilations of survey information and explanations of preservation tools and processes”. These documents were written without meaningful community engagement and are often still sitting on the shelf. Whereas, now, successful preservation plans are tied to “strategic planning and collaborative dialogue”, Watson observes. My own career path parallels the path of preservation planning. After working as an architectural historian, I wanted to do more community engagement so I went to graduate school to study urban planning.

When Louisville’s Preservation Master Plan process began, the community had just updated its Comprehensive Plan and two small area plans were underway. The community had an expectation for engagement and there was a process in place. The community knew how to participate in online forums. Giant signs and utility bills were used to encourage people to come to meetings. As a member of the Planning staff and project leader for the Preservation Master Plan, I was able to build upon the existing processes by designing specific activities to create a community



vision for Louisville’s Historic Preservation Program.

Louisville has a unique voluntary preservation program, supported by a dedicated sales tax. The program focuses on providing financial and zoning incentives to property owners that volunteer to landmark their property. The program hinges on proactive public outreach making it important to use the preservation planning process as a way to share information.

The plan also became a venue to bring people with a variety of interests, such as sustainability and design, to historic preservation. The process used a variety of methods to engage the community including social media, online forums, interactive stations, and surveys. Many of these tools are applied to traditional planning processes but finding creative ways to engage the community in historic preservation was innovative.

It quickly became evident how our community engagement process was changing the way the Historic Preservation Program was seen by the Louisville community. The process inspired a 4th Grade Field Trip, Historic Preservation Commission Farmer’s Market Booth, and Landmark Ribbon Cutting ceremony all before the Plan was adopted. The successful community engagement efforts also inspired the creation of specific action items in the Plan focused on education, outreach, and partnerships.

By running the Historic Preservation Program through the Planning Division and exceeding the community’s expectation for engagement, Louisville created a document that guides the practice of preservation, reinforces its voluntary nature, increases public awareness, preserves resources, develops partnerships, and increases preservation incentives. The City of Louisville created a plan, a historic preservation plan, which engaged seven year olds more than crayons.