2020 YEAR in REVIEW
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rethos.org
While I started at Rethos remotely from my former home in Las Vegas, NV, as of two weeks ago I am now a Minnesotan having driven with my husband and our two elderly cats across the country during the recent polar vortex, which in itself was more adventure that we had hoped for. I guess I should say that I am a Minnesotan again having left the Twin Cities in the early 90s for a two-year stint as an English teacher in Japan and then landing in Chicago where I did my doctorate in anthropology at Northwestern University. It was that doctorate that took me out to the Wild West as an assistant professor at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. From 2005 to 2012, I taught anthropology and continued my research on literacy and migration among Tibetan refugees in northern India. However, with the Great Recession hitting Nevada’s tourism-based economy particularly hard I found myself among the ranks of the unemployed.

It was on the heels of the Great Recession that I made a shift in my career by successfully running for the Nevada Legislature, where I served from 2012-
2020, and founding Nevada’s statewide historic preservation nonprofit, Nevada Preservation. It might seem surprising to undertake historic preservation in a city that is more well-known for its implosions than its preservation. However, once you step away from The Strip and Fremont Street, Vegas is a surprisingly normal city. Plus, with its history of decadent lifestyles and globally known entertainment there is definitely a lot of history there to take note of.

Over my almost eight years at Nevada Preservation, we grew from my back bedroom to a true statewide with offices in Las Vegas and Elko along with board members and projects across the entire state. By mid-2020, it was clear that I was looking for a change in both my legislative and preservation careers. I came across Rethos while taking one of our online classes and applied for the open executive director position immediately, seeing that it would allow me to blend my legislative and preservation work into a single position. Plus, I could return to where I grew up and be closer to family.

The work that Rethos does is wide ranging and cohesive. We work to tell the story of communities and places through various programs. As you will see in this issue of *Places Reimagined*, this work has continued despite the impacts from the Covid-19 pandemic and some changes in staffing over the course of 2020.

In this issue, we will take a look at 2020 and some of the changes and challenges that the pandemic brought as well as a peek into 2021. Natalie Heneghan, our Education Manager, digs into the issues around demolition and reuse of materials through an emerging idea of deconstruction, alternatives to current management of building waste, and what Rethos is doing to educate the public. Next, we hear from our Main Street Program and Emily Kurash Casey with all things Main Street. Not only will she recap the challenges that the pandemic brought in 2020 but will bring in the voices of Patricia Frey from the National Main Street Center and of several of our local Main Street directors. Policy Director, Erin Hanafin Berg, gets back to basics with a Q&A on one of the most pressing issues in historic preservation in Minnesota: the looming elimination of the Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit set for June 30. The last of our program highlights brings in Ethan Boote who runs our Investment Partnership program that has newly been renamed the Historic Rehabilitation Loan Program. You’ll want to check out the work that has been done on the State Theater in Ely along with other projects he will touch on.

Of course, throughout the issue, you will see the stats from our programs along with mention of our sponsors and upcoming events. 2020 was definitely challenging for all on many fronts. Yet, here at Rethos, we worked hard to provide support to our Main Street Communities and to provide educational opportunities in the virtual world to keep minds off the pandemic. It was a rough year that had some shining gems in it. Thank you to everyone who worked with us and supported us throughout the pandemic.

As we look forward to 2021 and the end of the pandemic, Rethos has many exciting plans in the making. I am honored to be part of this fantastic organization and look forward to future post-pandemic gatherings at historic sites and addressing issues around Minnesota’s historic resources and communities.

Stay safe. Stay well. See you soon!

Heidi
RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURE OF THE 1950S AND 60S - 2 CE CREDITS

9:00 AM – 12:00 PM | Zoom Webinar

This exhilarating class examines the social and historical influences that defined the unique residential styles and trends most associated with the mid-mod era. We will look not only at common forms like the ‘Cape Cod’ and the ‘ranch house’, but also some high-style examples designed by prominent architects. The fascinating story behind 1950s and 60s homes, neighborhoods, and suburbs will be explored in this three-hour CE class, which will leave you with a new appreciation for Minnesota’s mid-century properties.

This rich overview is three hours long and has been approved by the Minnesota Commissioner of Commerce for 3 hours of continuing real estate education. It is open to all.

BRINGING DOWN THE HOUSE: UNDERSTANDING DECONSTRUCTION & SALVAGE - 1 CE CREDIT

12:00 PM – 1:00 PM | Zoom Webinar

This 1-hour class digs into construction and demolition (C&D) waste and discusses alternatives to standard demolition like deconstruction and building material salvage. The purpose of this session is to introduce real-life solutions to reduce C&D waste and offer resources for connecting with local salvage organizations.

This course is approved for 1 hour of CE credit for real estate agents, and it is open to all. Homeowners planning a renovation project, contractors, and anyone interested in creating a more sustainable future are welcome to attend. Non-agents can attend at no cost, thanks to the generosity of our instructors, who have donated their time to create and host this class.
REPAIRING ROTTED WOOD
9:00 AM –10:30 AM | Zoom Webinar

Got rot? You’ve come to the right place. In this webinar, you will learn how to assess rot; use epoxy, consolidants and wood filler; and consider options for wood replacement. We will also discuss topics like water management and common places of rot.

Workshop goals:
• Understand buildings as systems and why rot happens
• Learn what tools and materials you’ll need to repair or replace rotted wood
• Learn how to prevent rot

Your instructor is Laura Leppink, a rehab specialist, Northern Bedrock Historic Preservation Corps board member, and Research & Access Assistant in the University of Minnesota College of Design.

RACISM IN REAL ESTATE - 2 CE CREDITS
1:00 PM –3:00 PM | Zoom Webinar

Racism in Real Estate explores structural racism and the racial wealth gap as it applies to housing. We’ll consider the role of the real estate industry in the history of racial housing discrimination and the consequences of this history on housing equity today. Recognizing that we cannot fix the issues and inequities of the present without understanding the past, this course intends to expose the racist policies and practices that shaped our cities.

This class was created with materials from the Mapping Prejudice project and other research by instructor Denise Pike. This class is co-sponsored by Minneapolis Area REALTORS (MAR). MAR members receive a $10 discount to the class by using the coupon code WhoWeR-MAR.

NEW PEOPLE & PLACES

These new tools made our program more accessible than ever. Students could attend our classes without worrying about travel or health safety. Even with a minimal marketing budget, we significantly expanded our audience reach both within and outside the state of Minnesota.

36% increase in class attendance from 2019
63 unique counties (doubled from 2019)
nearly HALF of students live outside the Twin Cities Metro.
Going Virtual

To continue offering high quality community education, Rethos transitioned its programs to digital and virtual formats.

1. LIVE BROADCASTS

To showcase specific rehab skills, we hosted some virtual workshops from inside old homes. Instructors demonstrated repairs on-site while students tuned in via Zoom.

With proper lighting and a stable internet connection, these interactive workshops successfully engaged our homeowner audience.

NEW TOOLS

2. DEMO VIDEOS

Pre-recorded, well-edited videos can both supplement existing webinars and stand on their own. Short tours and demonstrations bring students to old homes to learn the ins and outs of maintenance and rehab. Videos can turn daunting repair projects into a short, digestible lessons.

NEW TOOLS

3. DIGITAL RESOURCES

Rethos manages a "Rehab Resources" webpage (pictured). It is full of external links, checklists, and guidelines. Beefing up this page was a priority when we stopped hosting in-person classes.

Tons of resources exist outside of our program. We want to arm our rehabber audience with all the tools they need.

NEW TOOLS

4. WEBINARS

Until April 2020, Rethos never hosted webinars. We quickly learned that virtual versions of our existing classes were an easy way to reach new & old audiences.

Example: Racism in Real Estate

We hosted 6 webinar sessions of Racism in Real Estate, reaching 434 students from 175 unique zip codes all over the U.S.

These new tools made our programs more accessible than ever. Students could attend our classes without worrying about travel or health safety.

We significantly expanded our audience reach, both within and outside the state of Minnesota.
Rethos is excited to be a part of the ‘Community Within the Corridor’ project in Milwaukee! The project’s developer, Roers Companies, in partnership with Scott Crawford, Inc will turn the long vacant manufacturing facility into 197 multi-family apartments and 60,000 square feet of commercial space in the Sherman Park neighborhood. The project’s access to federal and state historic tax credits made possible the rehabilitating of these buildings. They will now serve their community with affordable housing, as well as support businesses with an add-on gym space, a laundromat, daycare, and youth and adult development programs.

Introducing Brandon Hartung - Duluth Education Coordinator

Hello, I’m Brandon and I currently act as Northeastern Minnesota and Northern Wisconsin Education Coordinator. I grew up in Wisconsin and moved to Duluth in 2012 to attend UMD. I graduated with a BA in communication in 2016 and started the UMD Master of Education program in 2018. I study historical empathy and how it can be used to walk the learner through a transformative process that creates critical consciousness, shares disenfranchised narratives, and counteracts aspects of white supremacy culture. After finishing the M. Ed program this semester, I plan to take a short break, and then apply for various doctorate programs. I enjoy museums, reading, adventures outdoors, and gawking at old structures. A few of my goals in preservation work include elaborating on the Green & Renewable nature of preservation, and a holistic view of living preservation that is more accessible and proactive for communities.

The rehabilitated Historic State Theater is providing a fresh spark for the Ely, Minnesota main street. The rehab of this longtime staple of Ely community life shows how historic preservation and building reuse can be fuel for neighborhood vitality. Dollars spent on building rehab create local jobs, spur local reinvestment, and build community wealth.

To learn more about the Ely state theater and the local parties involved in its rehab, check out our video on the Rethos Facebook page or on Instagram – and be sure to like and share it so even more people will learn about this important project.
2020 YEAR IN REVIEW

TOP MOMENTS FROM 2020

4,059 Main Street volunteer hours

167 Main Street buildings rehabbed

6 new tax credit projects kicked off

1,237 students educated
**RURAL PROGRAMS**

Rethos Rural Programs works with communities across Minnesota to restore the vitality of historic downtown districts by leveraging communities’ existing assets: people, businesses, places, and unique stories. We want rural communities across greater Minnesota to thrive and we believe returning vibrancy to local main streets is critical to long lasting and sustained economic and societal health. Our rural programs are aimed at fostering community growth through various programs that support small business entrepreneurship, promote existing cultural assets, and engage local artistic talent.

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**YEAR IN REVIEW**

- **Main Street Reinvestment total private dollars**: $43,122,693.59
- **Main Street Reinvestment total public dollars**: $2,515,989.98
- **Main Street jobs created**: 106 Full or Part-time Jobs
- **Main Street buildings rehabbed**: 167
- **Main Street New Small Business Expansion**: 6
- **Main Street volunteer hours**: 4,059
- **Community Engagement projects conducted**: 2

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**HISTORIC REHABILITATION LOANS**

Our State Historic Tax Credit Investment Program helps reimagine underutilized spaces into vibrant, modernized buildings that generate income, sales, property tax, and new enthusiasm in their communities.

- **Loans Funded in FY 9**: 9
- **Affordable Housing Units Created**: 154 (out of 348 total)
- **Historic Tax Credits Paid**: $28,997,821
- **Number of states impacted**: 4
- **New Projects started in FY 6**: 6

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**EDUCATION**

Rethos Education works to empower individuals with the tools, skills, and experiences they need to restore and revitalize the places they live in and value. By delivering unparalleled hands-on workshops and classes, Rethos is creating an expanding network of homeowners, craftspeople, and Realtors, who possess the passion and knowledge to care about and care for old buildings and neighborhoods. As housing stock across America’s Cities and towns continues to age, this program provides vital resources to residents, helping maintain our living spaces in a sustainable, affordable, and equitable way.

- **Classes held**: 39
- **Counties impacted**: 63
- **Students**: 1,237
- **Public History Courses Held**: 14
- **Rehab Courses Held**: 25

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**AOMS Communities**: 11
Rethos staff and Board of Directors continue to carefully manage the organization’s resources. We limit operational spending for the fiscal year to remain within our budget, and supplement by additional service revenues.

The graph identifies the sources of operational revenue and our use of those funds. For review of Rethos' IRS Form 990, contact Executive Director Heidi Swank at 651.293.9047.
2020 GIVING

Rethos: Places Reimagined is grateful for each and every level of contributor; individual, sustaining, corporate, and philanthropic. Your support gives us the ability to live our mission to lead and inspire people to connect with historic places, promoting community vitality.

The following list reflects support given between January 1, 2020 and December 31, 2020.

$200,000+
- Minnesota Historical Society
- Bush Foundation

$20,000+
- Dominium Development Acquisition, LLC

$15,000+
- Otto Bremer Trust

$10,000+
- Bridgewater Bank
- Colliers Mortgage LLC
- Sherman Associates, Inc.
- Weis Builders

$5,000+
- Carl and Verna Schmidt Foundation
- Berwald Roofing Company
- BKV Group
- Carl Bolander & Sons, Co
- D&M Industries
- Frana Companies Inc.
- Hempel
- JE Dunn Construction Company
- Kaas Wilson Architects
- Major Mechanical, Inc.
- Mulcahy Nickolaus LLC
- Northland Concrete and Masonry Company, LLC
- US Bank
- Value Plus Flooring
- W L Hall Company

$1,000+
- Meeker County Development Corp.
- Historic Preservation Education Foundation
- Advanced Masonry Restoration, Inc
- Braun Intertec
- Guaranty Commercial Title, Inc.
- Hess, Roise and Company
- Loucks
- National Window Associates
- Skyline Fire Protection, Inc.
- Wendy Ethen
- Ryan Sailer
- Jane Bisel
- Allegion
- Gary Stenson
- Kevin Olsen
- Steve Knight
- Tony Simmons
- University of Minnesota
- Winthrop & Weinstine
- Minneapolis Area Association of Realtors
- National Trust for Historic Preservation
- David Carisch
- Collin Kaas
- Erik Hansen
- Nick Place

$100+
- Arthur Kaemmer
- Roers Investments
- Kristen Anderson
- Scott and Heather McQueen
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- Sue Ainsworth
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**Thank you to all our donors!**

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PLACES REIMAGINED
From bait-and-tackle shops to craft breweries to farmers market vendors, Minnesota small businesses provide the character and community that make small towns and urban neighborhoods unique. Just as important, they also drive economic development by funneling local dollars back into the community—and employ nearly half the workers in the state.

Yet many of Minnesota’s small businesses won’t make it through the winter. After almost a full year of unprecedented economic challenges, the next few months may be the final straw for the state’s mom-and-pop shops. Beleaguered by shutdowns and economic uncertainty, Minnesota small businesses need all the help they can get.

Throughout the pandemic—and before—much of that help has come via the local affiliates of Main Street America, a nonprofit with a 40-year track record of preservation-based economic development. Through the Main Street approach, Rethos Main Streets: Minnesota empowers communities to transform their economies by supporting local businesses, renewing historic buildings, and creating thriving public spaces. Minnesota Main Streets are, by nature, designed to grow and sustain neighborhood business districts.

Take, for example, Main Street efforts in downtown Red Wing—ordinarily a hub of social and economic activity. In a typical year, tourists stroll the banks of the Mississippi River and spend the night at the 145-year-old St. James Hotel. Workers stream through the doors of Red Wing Shoe Company, a major local employer, and patronize local eateries on their lunch breaks. But when the state shut down for several weeks last spring, downtown Red Wing became a ghost town—and once it was time to reopen, many people were anxious about a return to stores and restaurants.
Today, Main Street’s core mission—to strengthen older and historic small business districts—is more important than ever. And funding is critical. Since the pandemic began, Rethos has helped communities navigate grant funding and repurposed $36,800 to assist small businesses directly through the Main Streets Support Fund, which helped 58 essential business initiatives. Without the money, 80% of recipients said they would not have been able to complete their project. In Willmar, for example, the money helped a barbershop owner buy new signage to make his storefront more visible. It helped a prosthetics and orthopedics business install new lobby furniture that met COVID-19 guidelines for sanitation. And Willmar’s local community theater used its funding to obtain plexiglass and hand sanitizer to protect employees and patrons.

The way Minnesota Main Streets have responded to the pandemic illustrates the value of Main Street’s preservation-based approach to economic revitalization. And that approach depends on the support of community volunteers, the Main Street network, and—importantly—state and local lawmakers. One thing legislators can do to support Main Street efforts is to extend the Minnesota Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit, a critical tool for stimulating job growth, increasing local tax bases, and revitalizing communities around the state. Since its implementation in 2011, the credit has generated an estimated $3.3 billion of economic activity—meaning that $9.17 has been generated for every dollar of historic tax credit awarded.

As the pandemic wears on and its shocks continue to ripple through the economy, Minnesota’s small business districts urgently need the support of lawmakers and Main Street groups alike. Extending the historic tax credit will help sustain the work of Minnesota Main Streets—while building job growth, accelerating the economy, and preserving the small business districts that make Minnesota communities unique.

Sincerely,
Patrice Frey, President and CEO, Main Street America

So Red Wing Downtown Main Street sprung into action. The group created the “COVID Aware Because We Care” program, which established safety protocols for local businesses to follow and special branding for participants. A majority of local businesses joined the program, committing to follow best practices and display “Covid Aware” signage—thereby encouraging community members to feel safe as they supported local shops and bringing small business owners together to face the challenges of the pandemic.

Meanwhile, in Albert Lea, social distancing requirements meant that many traditional local events—like the annual holiday shopping promotion—would be different. Pivoting from the typical setup, in which shoppers punch “passports” in-person at multiple stores, Albert Lea Main Street organized a holiday bingo card. Participants could support local businesses and enter to win a gift basket without leaving their house—by ordering takeout, buying a gift certificate or posting a Facebook review, among other actions.

These are just a few examples of the way Minnesota Main Streets support small business. Along with the statewide program, local Main Streets communicate information about resources, promote small businesses to the community, help implement reopening strategies, administer local grants, and provide business support and training. And over the past decade, they have proven their value to the community. Since 2010, Minnesota Main Streets have collectively created 889 new jobs, helped launch 159 new small businesses and expansions, and fostered an environment that has led to 627 building rehab projects. Furthermore, Minnesota Main Streets have generated $138 million in public and private investment and inspired 48,000 volunteer hours.

SINCE 2010
MINNESOTA MAIN STREETS HAVE:

- created 889 new jobs
- helped launch 159 new small businesses
- fostered an environment that led to 627 building rehab projects

...Minnesota small businesses provide the character and community that make small towns and urban neighborhoods unique.”
Main Street Programs have long been the backbone of resilience in downtowns. Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Main Street staff and volunteers have used whatever resources they had available to create exciting growth on Main Street. They have proved to be scrappy and savvy, creative and energetic—all traits that have been even more important in the past year than ever before.

While we might know what Main Street means, it is a phrase that can be used anecdotally and in settings that lead to confusion or lack of credit. While you may hear “Main Street” used often in a variety of situations from federal funding bills to holiday events, we want to share what Main Street, the movement, the people, and the work means, and what Main Street directors from around the state wish others outside of the program understood.

Main Street America, of which Rethos is the Coordinating Partner for the state of Minnesota, is a program of the National Main Street Center, a subsidiary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. As stated on the Main Street America website:

The National Main Street Center leads a movement committed to strengthening communities through preservation-based economic development in older and historic downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts.

It was established as a program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 1980 as a way to address the myriad issues facing older and historic downtowns during that time. Working with a nationwide network of coordinating programs and local communities, Main Street has helped over 2,000 communities across the country bring economic vitality back downtown, while celebrating their historic character, and bringing communities together.

We believe Main Streets are for everyone. At the core of our approach to revitalization is a commitment to creating places of shared prosperity, equal access to opportunity, and inclusive engagement. The National Main Street Center models and champions this vision through our actions and programs.

By Emily Kurash Casey

Continued on next page
As the coordinating program for Minnesota, Rethos works closely with staff at the National Main Street Center to bring resources to our Main Street Programs across the state. From education and training to networking, grant opportunities and design assistance (which is made possible through support of the Minnesota Historical Society and the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment) Main Streets are part of a collaborative network. However, especially as new programs are instituted, Main Streets often are a misunderstood or underutilized resource in their communities. In addition, what exactly constitutes “Main Street” can be unclear to towns looking for revitalization tools.

To help resolve some of these issues, Rural Programs staff posed the question to our designated Main Street Program Directors - “What do you wish people knew about Main Street?”. As the people standing on the frontline of Main Street reinvestment efforts, Main Street Program Directors continue a daily conversation about the value of their downtown districts. They often must go to bat for their program—securing additional funding, volunteers, and other forms of support. When considering what they wanted their communities to know about their local Main Street Program, some directors shared the economic benefits:

“I wish more people knew how much the Main Street Program contributes to a city’s downtown (re)development, and the impact it has on improving the overall economy, sustainability, and health of a downtown. Many people associate the program as an event planning program that brings people downtown, but there’s a lot more the program does beneath the surface that impacts downtown.”

“I wish people knew that we were busy doing things they might not see and that [downtown] transformation takes longer than we think it will. I wish they knew that we understand the deep love of the downtown area and that change is hard but necessary sometimes. I also wish people knew that we need their help. Ideas are great and when people step up to help us solve problems we can do amazing and big things.

“I wish people understood the potential for Main Street to be a truly impactful hub for so many kinds of community activities. Rather than constantly competing for volunteers, money, and so on, those with a stake in a downtown district can come together under the Main Street umbrella and achieve much more than if they are working separately.”

Others shared a sentiment of downtown value—something that seems obvious, but can be a complicated conversation when looking at community planning, growth, and potential:

“Downtown is the heart of a community. It holds the history of previous generations, the excitement of events, and the opportunity of aspiring entrepreneurs. It’s a hub for social and economic activity, and a shared experience that is unique to and reflective of that town.”

“Your Main Street district is a reflection of community identity, prosperity, representation, pride and level of investment the town takes in preserving its past while planning for its future.”
“Your Main Street district is a reflection of community identity, prosperity, representation, pride and level of investment the town takes in preserving its past while planning for its future.”

“...how driven & focused this program is to better the community. It's not just this or that, it's all the things--tackling all the major & minor problems that our downtown communities face.”

Finally, some shared the value of a network—of being part of Rethos: Main Streets Minnesota and Main Street America.

“We have made an impact on our downtown by being part of local, state and National organizations. We feel the benefits of trainings and resources as we continue to invite a cross section of leaders of our community to be on the same page for continued growth and revitalization of our historic downtown. We have been the convener of all organizations and we all are partners in making our downtown healthy and thriving.”

“I want people to know that being a Main Street community means connection to a network full of other community members working tirelessly to make their cities/districts a thriving place where they are proud to live, work, and play. Main Street is the time-tested proof that preservation of our downtowns can be vibrant and relevant for us in the 21st century.”

Truly, the impact of having a cohort of others doing similar work in communities all over the country makes such a difference to what is often an office of one. Being part of a team dedicated to downtown revitalization willing to share tools and ideas leads to faster momentum and greater positive change – benefiting communities across Minnesota.
These days, when a property owner wants to remove a building or portion of a building, the go-to choice is demolition. As the house or building comes down, its parts are thrown in a dumpster, and they are transported to a landfill.

About 85% of those materials could be reused or recycled (Hennepin Co). Eighty-five percent! But how?

Deconstruction is one alternative to demolition. Deconstruction means carefully dismantling buildings to salvage materials for reuse and recycling. (EPA). Reusing building materials has numerous benefits. It diverts material from landfills and reduces our reliance on manufacturing new parts. It means we lessen our extraction and use of virgin resources, like forests. It can create new jobs and spur economic activity.

Deconstruction does not happen without community buy-in, political will, and trained experts. Rethos is committed to driving this possibility forward. We are members of ReUSE MN, a statewide network of reuse, repair, and recycling businesses. We recently joined Build Reuse, a national organization committed to turning construction and demolition waste into local resources. Our staff are proud to be part of conversations that recognize the connection between building reuse and sustainability, and we are excited to bring educational opportunities on the topic to our audience.

Our April 13th class – Bringing Down the House: Understanding Deconstruction and Salvage – features staff from Hennepin and Ramsey Counties who are working to make deconstruction a more viable option. This session offers real-life solutions to reduce waste and ideas for sourcing salvaged materials.

What’s at stake?

A 2012 study by the Brookings Institute estimated that 82 billion square feet of existing buildings would be demolished and replaced in the United States between
2005-2030. That’s equivalent to 1/3 of the U.S. existing building stock. Imagine one-third of your block or your community not only being torn down during one generation, but also being replaced by new construction.

We recycle and reuse lots of everyday products. We adjust our behavior to recycle paper and cardboard or to use reusable water bottles and shopping bags. But we don’t extend those same values to our largest, most energy-consuming products: buildings. Concrete, wood, metals, bricks, glass, fixtures, and so many of the materials that make up our homes and buildings can be recycled or reused, if we start to prioritize solutions like deconstruction.

**Deconstruction then & now**

Deconstruction is not new. For centuries - indeed, for most of human history - people have repurposed products and deconstructed buildings. As industrialization and mass production of buildings materials grew in the 20th century, replacement parts became more common. Demolition of buildings became standard. Not just standard, it grew exponentially. In 1990, 135 million tons of construction and demolition (C&D) waste were generated in the United States. This number shot to 600 million tons in 2018, more than twice the amount of municipal solid waste generated in the same year. Of those 600 million tons, 90% comes from demolition while only 10% comes from construction. (EPA)

**Our role**

At Rethos, we love to see buildings repurposed, restored, and reimagined. We know how sturdy and how adaptable old building materials are. Often those materials can’t be kept in place, though, and we believe they can be reused elsewhere.

Our education program teaches our homeowner audience about the value in reusing the materials already in your home. Old growth wood trim, brickwork, and original windows can be repaired. They are durable; they will serve generation after generation of homeowner if we take good care of them.

Deconstruction, like rehab and restoration, prioritizes the inherent value and the embodied energy of existing building materials.

**So, what can we do?**

As a homeowner, talk to your contractor before tackling a big renovation or rehab project. Ask how they handle waste and whether they consider deconstruction and salvage.

Research local salvage businesses who will take your appliances, fixtures, and materials.

Live in Hennepin County? Explore the deconstruction grant program.

>>> Keep learning!

Check out these sites below, and keep an eye on Rethos’ Education Program as we expand our rehabilitation and restoration opportunities to include deconstruction training.

https://www.buildreuse.org/
https://reusemn.org/
https://www.hennepin.us/salvage
FAQs about Revitalize MN

What is Revitalize MN?
Revitalize MN is best thought of as a public awareness campaign, like “Click It or Ticket” that urges people to always wear their seat belts or the billboards that tug at your heartstrings until the next thing you know you’re headed home with a #shelterpet in the car next to you. We are strengthening a movement that brings Minnesotans together around our shared values and demonstrates how historic spaces contribute to stronger, happier communities. In addition, Revitalize MN is a coalition – a group of stakeholders who have come together to advance a particular policy, which in this case is the extension of the Minnesota Historic Structure Rehabilitation Tax Credit.

Who came up with the name?
The lead organizations of the coalition – Rethos, New History, and Winthrop & Weinstine – hired Alta Via Consulting to develop our messaging strategy and media content. After considering several different naming concepts and taglines, the lead organizations agreed on Revitalize MN. We think it captures the energy and spirit that we’re after, and that the logo and tagline “creating jobs & rebuilding communities” is perfect for the times we’re in now.

Why is Revitalize MN needed? Wasn’t Rethos already advocating for an extension to the state Historic Tax Credit?
Rethos had been working earnestly at the state capitol since 2018, advocating for an extension to the looming June 30, 2021 sunset date for the Historic Tax Credit. During the 2018 and 2019 Legislative sessions, Rethos focused on addressing the impacts that the federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, passed in December 2017, would have on the Minnesota Historic Tax Credit. At the start of the 2020 Legislative session, we were optimistic that the Historic Tax Credit sunset extension would be a top priority, as we had strong, committed bill authors, and had a hearing in the House Taxes committee in early March. But then the pandemic struck, and we realized that with pressing policy issues and the dwindling countdown timer to the sunset, we would need a broader – and louder – coalition of stakeholders and grassroots advocates.

Who else is involved in Revitalize MN?
The Revitalize MN coalition is made up of stakeholders at all levels, from industry professionals to community champions. Our sponsors are wide-ranging, and include developers, bankers and investors, general contractors and specialty construction firms, labor unions, architecture and engineering firms, and historical consultants. Community organizations across the state have voiced their support as well. Heritage Preservation Commissions, Main Street organizations, chambers of commerce, and local historical societies recognize how crucial our Historic Tax Credit is for their communities. We know that preservation is a large tent, and we welcome everyone!

How can I get involved?
There are many ways to join, sponsor, or help however you can – we need folks to be involved! Legislators need to hear directly from Minnesotans that extending our Historic Tax Credit is a priority that creates jobs and revitalizes communities. If you run a business that is involved in tax credit projects, please join us as a sponsor so we can maximize the reach of the coalition. If you belong to a professional association that has an interest in seeing the Historic Tax Credit extended, ask to have its director write a letter to the editor of the local paper. If you have a role on your city’s HPC or planning commission, are a member of the city council or county board or have any other role as an elected or appointed public servant, make a motion to adopt a resolution in support of the state Historic Tax Credit sunset extension. Looking for an easy way to make a difference as an individual? Sign the petition or email your legislator through the Revitalize MN website (RevitalizeMN.org). All of these actions will let legislators know that Minnesotans are invested in the extension of our Historic Tax Credit. Make sure to sign up for emails at RevitalizeMN.org so you will know when your small actions will have the biggest impact.

HOW YOU CAN HELP
Sign the petition or email your legislator at RevitalizeMN.org
Legislators need to hear directly from Minnesotans that extending our Historic Tax Credit is a priority that creates jobs and revitalizes communities.

Will Revitalize MN disband after the Historic Tax Credit is extended?

When the future of the Historic Tax Credit in Minnesota is secured, we will pause to celebrate (and catch our breath), but we don’t expect to go away. The continuation of amplifying the successful rehabilitation of valued places across the state, to motivate and inspire other property owners, developers, and community leaders, is vital. As economic conditions change, new Federal policies are put in place, or potential new projects are identified, we may need to advocate for changes to the state Historic Tax Credit to make it more accessible or to broaden its impacts. If another sunset date is set for the future, we expect that Revitalize MN will have the tools we need to mobilize our supporters to continue our advocacy efforts for an extended sunset.

How can I find out more about Revitalize MN?

Visit RevitalizeMN.org to find out more information about the coalition, tools to contact your legislator, become a sponsor or make a contribution, for sample resolutions and to learn more about what you can do to help. Be sure to follow Revitalize MN on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, too!
When I initially saw an announcement about the Capitol Pathways Internship program, I was drawn in by two of its benefits: first-hand experience with the legislative process and a minimum salary of $15/hour. Ecstatic as I was to apply—given my growing interest in education policy and being a broke college student, it dawned on me that I had no concept of all that encompasses legislation. I asked myself: What exactly is public policy? How are bills made and passed? Who is involved and when? What is my role as a constituent? Eager to understand these complexities, I was propelled even more towards this opportunity.

Upon my acceptance into the program, I was paired with Rethos, a non-profit organization that has been advocating for the repeal of the Minnesota Historic Tax Credit (HTC) sunset date. My initial reaction could be expected from any outsider with absolutely no knowledge of real estate development and policy: What in the world does that mean? As I began working alongside the Rethos staff, I learned that the HTC contributes to economic and cultural revitalization through the preservation of historic structures, and that the HTC helps preserve historical sites crucial to the livelihood of our communities. Restoring existing structures allows for increased investment in labor, creating job opportunities while also rebuilding shared spaces that can be enjoyed by all community members.

While the HTC is a beneficial tool, pushing for the extension of it through the legislative agenda is indeed challenging. As I began learning about the legislative process alongside the Rethos staff, I noticed three key pillars that embody the work of policy construction and activism:

Progress is stagnant, but mobilization and activism remain persistent. When I started as an intern, the opening weeks of the legislative session seemed easygoing. My workload included virtually attending a few committee hearings and gathering information about the Legislators who represent our Main Street communities and sit on key committees. I quickly learned that although I was experiencing a slow pace in the process, my internship supervisor, Rethos Policy Director Erin Hanafin Berg, was far busier. Erin told me that coordination between chief authors and legislative researchers, mobilizing support from both House and Senate members, and planning for testimony and outreach began weeks prior to the start of the legislative session. At the same time, federal advocacy was also taking place to help leverage change at the state level, such as preparation for Preservation Advocacy Week on Capitol Hill. I quickly learned that being an advocate for the HTC—or any other bill—requires extensive communication, organizing, and patience.

Understanding Legislators beyond their district and party affiliation is paramount in building relationships and advocating. When I was first instructed to watch the House and Senate committee hearings that solely involved members introducing themselves, I was confused. I thought to myself: Why do introductions matter? Little did I know that these initial hearings were the most important of all. These were the moments where you began to understand the background of each legislator.
Capitol Pathways is an internship program of the Citizens League that places students who identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in paid internships with host organizations where the students can gain experience and build relationships in and around the State Capitol. The Citizens League provides legislative training and cohort support to interns throughout the semester, as well as diversity training for interns and host organizations alike. This is the second year that Rethos has participated as a host site. As this year’s internship program is 100% virtual, we are fortunate to be able to host Samantha Raghu from Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter. Samantha, who grew up in Arlington, MN, is a senior majoring in Sociology and Anthropology, with a Political Science minor and a growing interest in education policy – and historic preservation.
You may remember us talking a lot about “Investment Partnerships” with regards to our state historic tax credit projects. While this name worked for us when this program was in its early stages, it does not accurately reflect its present-day nature. Thus, we have decided to rename this program Historic Rehabilitation Loans.

New name regardless, the mission of this program has not changed since its inception in 2011, as Rethos encourages the rehabilitation of our historic assets with state historic tax credits. We provide historic rehabilitation loans through a donate-loan back model to help projects use their tax credits in the most efficient way. 35 states have these credits and by far and wide have seen an increase in historic rehabilitation projects.
This important tool injects much needed financing to rehab our old buildings, while also attracting federal and private monies, creating jobs, and filling property tax coffers.

11-years ago this April, Governor Tim Pawlenty signed the Minnesota State Historic Tax Credit into law, satisfying a 12-year advocacy effort by the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota to expand economic incentives to redevelop historic properties. This major accomplishment for both preservation and economic development opened the doors for our organization to expand. Our previous Executive Directors Bonnie McDonald and Doug Gasek saw the opportunity in increasing the capacity of our organization through involvement in project financing.

The benefits of state historic tax credits mirror Rethos’ mission to connect people with historic places and promote community vitality. In Minnesota alone, the tax credit enabled $3.5 billion in economic activity since its creation in 2010, created numerous jobs, and rehabilitated 140 buildings. It also supports community vitality through an economic ripple effect, as historic tax credit projects impact 97% of our state’s industries and prompt other forms of investment in each community. Rethos’ 45 projects have helped renovate nearly 4 million square feet of historic buildings, preserving or creating over 3200 units of housing in 21 cities in 5 different states.

A key part of our historic rehab loans is a specific fee dedicated to education services. Rethos’ education program is extremely active in creating opportunities for people to connect with places and learn about maintaining and caring for them. In 2019, we were able to hire education coordinators based in Duluth-Superior and Central Minnesota. Our Duluth-based coordinator can bridge the Minnesota-Wisconsin border to create Wisconsin-centered program like our class on Wisconsin’s Homeowner Tax Credit. More recently, we were able to create a video highlighting the rehabilitation of the Ely State Theater and its impacts on downtown Ely. As we expand outward into new states, our intention is to explore how this program can enable our mission through creative partnerships. In 2020, we closed on our loan with Saigebrook Development’s Cielo Place project in Fort Worth, TX. Rethos was able to contribute funds to support the local nonprofit Historic Fort Worth’s Preservation Resource Center (PRC). The PRC contains thousands of files on historic resources in the Fort Worth, including historic photos, surveys, and maps, and it is open to the public.

Each of our 45 projects offer an opportunity to connect people with the past and include them in our network and values. Our 2019 rebranding to Rethos unlocked potential to connect with people under a new name that more accurately reflects our mission. It also represents the expansion of our programmatic and geographic capacity, which is attributed to the hard work and dedication of Rethos’ staff.

Because of them, our programs are evolving, and new ideas are forming for how we can engage and assist our constituents.

The Historic Rehab Loan program is important to us for its ability to facilitate building reuse, but more importantly for its impact on communities. While tax credits have proven their ability to support jobs and stimulate growth, Rethos’ program adds a benefit to the public that furthers our ability to reach new audiences and enhance our understanding of what surrounds us. We are excited by the possibilities of new projects and educational opportunities, and welcome our new Executive Director Heidi Swank, who echoes the past Executive Directors’ sentiments to make this program more impactful.

Special thanks to our program participants:

- Aeon
- The Ackerberg Group
- Alley A Realty
- Buhl Investors
- Craig Cohen
- David Schall, VoR Jax
- Dom Grande and Matt Wolf
- Hatch Development Group
- Hempel
- Hobart Historic Restoration
- Huntley Witmer Development
- JB Vang
- KCG Companies
- Madison Equities
- MetroPlains
- Octagon Finance
- Palanisami & Associates
- Peter Shortridge
- Pioneer Group
- Real Estate Equities
- Rebound Enterprises
- Roers Investments
- Royal Capital Group
- Saigebrook Development
- Sand Companies
- Saturday Properties
- Sherman Associates
- Timberland Partners
A Historic Impact: Minnesota and Beyond

Riverside Plaza
Minneapolis, MN
Completed: 2013

One of the first investment partnerships for Rethos, the Riverside Plaza renovations would have been impossible without the help of the state historic tax credit. Built in 1973, the modernist and brutalist 6-building complex was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2010, enabling Sherman Associates to access both federal and state historic tax credits.

The $140 million project garnered $17 million in state historic tax credits, while providing updates to the 1,303 affordable housing units. Completed in 2012, the complex is Minnesota’s largest affordable housing project. As a part of our partnership, Rethos published a book highlighting the history, architecture, and community of Riverside Plaza.
HISTORIC PRESERVATION LOAN PROGRAM

The legendary Hotel Northland is once again thriving in downtown Green Bay. For more than 50 years after its opening in 1924, the hotel hosted a multitude of guests, ranging from Eleanor Roosevelt, JFK, Jacqueline Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, and Richard Nixon. In addition, out of town NFL teams were hosted at the hotel.

The hotel’s history is intricately intertwined with the history of Green Bay. The hotel was converted to low-income apartments in 1979, but the expansion of the Wisconsin State Historic Tax Credit in 2013 made the redevelopment of the hotel into a Marriott Autograph collection possible. The 9 story 160 room hotel accessed $8.5 million in historic tax credits, and now contributes to a thriving downtown Green Bay, bringing people from all over and from nearby to support downtown businesses.

Northland Hotel
Green Bay, WI
Completed: 2018

Our partnership with Hatch Development Group in Newton, IA helped rehabilitate the Hotel Maytag to create 45 mixed-income apartments, event space, a theater, and a café. Opened in 1926, the Hotel was a hub of activity for 40 years. After the 1960s, the hotel fell into disrepair, and was sectioned off into apartments, offices, and commercial spaces.

Since 2007, Newton has faced economic challenges after the Maytag factory was closed. Public-private partnerships like the Hotel Maytag rehabilitation have helped make the city more resilient, while reviving a long-beloved building for community use. The project’s success was recognized on September 4 when the Iowa Finance Authority gave the Hotel Maytag an award for Best Multi-Family Housing.

Hotel Maytag
Newton, IA
Completed: 2018
Rethos: Reimagining our Future as an Organization

While much of this issue of Places Reimagined has been about looking back at 2020, there is much work also being done to look forward not only to 2021 but over the next few years through 2024. Like many other nonprofits, Rethos knows that planning is key to achieving our goals and that planning takes a good amount of time and effort.

As we move into warmer weather (and hopefully more vaccinations!), Rethos staff and board of directors will be meeting to discuss and develop our strategic plan for 2021-2024. For those who have never been through such a process, it usually takes around six months or so of meeting as a full group as well as in small committees. In these meetings, an organization uses some of the time to take stock of its offerings, determine where things are working well and what could use a bit more polish and shine. It is a time to take a step back and make sure that we are accomplishing what we set out to do and if we are not, how to get us back on track.

The strategic planning process is also the time to look forward and determine where we, as an organization, would like to be in three to five years. Some of these ideas will be those that can be achieved in a year – like increasing membership – while others will only be in the planning stages when this plan comes to a close.

Rethos is currently talking with a few consultants whose business it is to guide nonprofits like Rethos through the strategic planning process. Once we have selected our consultant, we will be able to set up a timeline for action. We anticipate starting this summer with the strategic plan being complete later this year.

One of the major components for Rethos in this particular strategic plan is stakeholder engagement. We will be working to reach out to current and former stakeholders to learn what we can do to better serve our communities and state. To this end, we are asking that you start to think about what you would like to tell us about your interactions with Rethos. What do you love that you would like to see kept around? What did we do in prior years that you would like brought back? And what are we doing that we should most definitely let go?

Over the next few years, we will be growing Rethos' community and stakeholder engagement. And we would like to get you in on the ground level. Keep an eye on your email and social media for engagement opportunities! We will be asking for your ideas, so we hope you'll be willing to help us out!
Minnesota's Historic Structure Rehabilitation Tax Credit, passed into law in 2010, has been a successful economic development tool for revitalizing distressed, vacant, and underutilized historic properties throughout the state.

Your support works, and with the Historic Tax Credit sunset date getting closer, we need your support now more than ever.

Your 2021 sponsorship provides the funding needed to fight for the Historic Tax Credit at the State Capitol. If we can assist in generating nearly a third of the money awarded in only ten years, imagine what we can do with ten more.

Became a sponsor. Protect the HTC.

Please email Hayden Troy, Development Officer of Institutional Giving at hayden@rethos.org to learn more.

Join our growing coalition of property owners, local governments, architects, developers, contractors, and realtors. Anyone involved in building reuse, development, and rehab benefits from the work of Rethos.

Historic Tax Credit Project: Lora
Location: Stillwater, MN
Support Rethos’ work to foster adaptive building reuse in communities and promote statewide rehab policies like the MN Rehabilitation Tax Credit.

For every $1 invested through a tax credit project, over $9 in economic activity was generated for Minnesota.

The MN Rehabilitation tax credits creates jobs for Minnesota.