

# Preservation plan submitted for Collier Lodge



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By **Amy Lavalley**  
Post-Tribune

DECEMBER 22, 2016, 5:50 PM

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itself is on the National Register of Historic Places; deconstructing the building, salvaging as much of the material as possible, and rebuilding in the same place after archaeological study to see what's underneath it; or deconstructing it and rebuilding it with new materials in a different location on the site.

The third option, deconstructing and rebuilding in the same spot, is the preferred option, said Tina Rongers, the grant administrator who's working with the Kankakee Valley Historical Society to bring the building's salvation to fruition. She also helped the historical society secure a \$15,000 grant in March from the community and rural affairs office to pay for the preservation plan.

Once all the necessary reviews have taken place, a final version of the plan will be submitted to the community and rural affairs office for formal approval.

Restoring the lodge has been a longtime dream of John Hodson, president of the historical society, who founded the group with his wife, Mary. In 2002, some work, including a metal roof, was completed to stabilize the structure, but that was meant to be short-term.

"The thing is deteriorating fast. It's basically imploding," he said. "We don't have much time."

The final study, Rongers said, will shape how the historical society can pursue state and federal funding for the project, and feedback from the historic preservation office will inform the society on how the various options for the building might affect its historic design.

Possible uses for the future building include an education and community center; an overnight retreat center; and a vacation/ weekend rental property.

Deconstructing, salvaging and rebuilding Collier Lodge will cost around \$1 million, Rongers said.

"The whole concept of the disassembly I like because it fits in with my scheme of things," Hodson said, which is to break up the cost over time.

The historical society will have to continue to build partnerships for short-term funding and preservation, and for sustainability in the long term, Rongers said.

Some of that groundwork is already in place, she said, since the historical society already has partnerships with the Board of Commissioners, the county's park department, Ivy Tech and the University of Notre Dame.

"It will be a phased approach and we will have to find grants that support elements of the project," she said, adding there also are opportunities for private sector investment and individual donors.

"There's no quick single source. We're going to be piecing it together and making partnerships to make it happen," she said, applauding the grass roots approach of the historical society. "That's a passionate group of people."

*Amy Lavalley is a freelance reporter for the Post-Tribune.*

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