

PORTLAND HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION

STATE OF THE CITY PRESERVATION REPORT 2020

MARCH 2021

Statues

The Historic Landmarks Commission is a body of volunteers appointed by the Mayor, and one of our duties is to provide advice on matters that involve historic preservation. We have a few thoughts about various statues in Portland, though we do appreciate that not everyone will see eye to eye on this matter.

The thing that makes statues different than other types of historic resources such as buildings or bridges is that statues have a purely social function. Other than perhaps to provide a vertical or axial marker in a larger streetscape or landscape, which theoretically could be filled by any similar form, statues function much as any work of art. Their purpose is to educate, inform, and often to elicit emotion such as delight or sympathy. Specifically, statues of people in our collective past were chosen for a reason – to glorify and monumentalize a person whose accomplishments or values were judged to be worth emulating and/or remembering.

But what of statues of the people whose flaws loom larger in our evolving historic understanding of that person? It is no question that everyone in the past, just like the present, was not perfect. But as society evolves, so too must our appreciation of whose opinion matters. Perhaps there is an argument for a “pros and cons” explanation added at the base of some statues while others are simply “retired” from public display. At some point it would be interesting to see a number of such statues be repurposed and used in a display of “exiled” public statues; a very thought-provoking commentary on how society does change.

How do we have a public discussion about what kinds of character flaws we can collectively tolerate, with added “explanation” to a statue? Who gets to write this description? We should not rely on the opinions of the majority as some groups in the minority who were grievously injured in the past should have an outsized voice in the discussions and decision-making of what and who we honor. Discussion might include the intent of the persons or groups that acquired and had the statues erected.

The Landmarks Commission would like to offer our expertise as part of a panel, including urban design member or members such as a Design Commissioner, public art specialists such as RACC, and led by an experienced city-wide equity group occupying the most “seats.” We in Portland value public process and we value the ability to publicly speak our piece. The Landmarks Commission does not want to see statues replaced by guerrilla artists with no opportunity for the public to weigh in. The statue of York on Mount Tabor may well turn out to be exactly what we as a City want and need. But the next one may not. Let’s work together, through the public process to hear all voices, so that we can retire the statuary of the people and stories we no longer wish to honor and elevate those that we do want to honor.

Portland Historic Landmarks Commission

The Portland Historic Landmarks Commission **provides leadership and expertise on maintaining and enhancing Portland's architectural and cultural heritage.** The Commission reviews development proposals for alterations to historic buildings and new construction in historic districts. The Commission also provides advice on historic preservation matters and coordinates historic preservation programs in the City.

2020 Commission Members



KRISTEN MINOR, CHAIR – Commissioner Minor has spent over 25 years studying and shaping the built environment. She practiced architecture for 10 years, then spent 10 as an urban planner, and now works exclusively with historic and older buildings.



MAYA FOTY, VICE CHAIR – Commissioner Foty's experience includes numerous preservation projects on both the east and west coasts. With over 18 years' experience as a preservation architect working exclusively on National Register listed properties, she specializes in projects with complex seismic and material conservation issues.



MATTHEW ROMAN – Commissioner Roman has 25 years of experience preserving Portland's architectural heritage both as a designer and through involvement in nonprofit organizations like Restore Oregon, the Architectural Heritage Center, the Pittock Mansion, and the Preservation Artisans Guild.



ERNESTINA FUENMAYOR – Commissioner Fuenmayor has a Master's Degree in Historic Preservation and spent the last 10 years working in historic preservation in the Pacific Northwest. She has written several National Register Nominations and local landmark designations, as well as historic building surveys. She has been practicing architecture for the last 16 years focusing in multifamily, government projects and historic resources.



ANNIE MAHONEY (UNTIL DECEMBER 2020) – Commissioner Mahoney is an architect who has worked on historic buildings and new construction over the past 20 years. She has a broad range of experience working with public and private entities on institutional and commercial projects.



ANDREW SMITH – Commissioner Smith is an historical architect with more than 20 years of experience working on preservation and rehabilitation projects, including many utilizing historic tax credits. He holds a Master of Architecture from Tulane University, and practiced in St. Louis, Chicago and New Orleans prior to living in Portland.



DEREK SPEARS (UNTIL OCTOBER 2020) – Commissioner Spears has been in the insurance and financial services industry for over 13 years and has experience evaluating regulatory structures. He has a great passion for acknowledgement, preservation, and protection of all culture and history. in multifamily, government projects and historic resources.

The Historic Landmarks Commission is supported by **HILLARY ADAM**, primary staff to the PHLC, an expert team from the Bureau of Development Services, and **KARA FIORAVANTI**, supervising manager of the Design and Historic Review team at BDS, as well as **BRANDON SPENCER-HARTLE**, our liaison from the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability.

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2020 STATS	<u>Commission Reviews</u>		1	Retreats with Staff and Commission
	13	Type III Historic Resource Reviews	1	Trainings
	0	Type III Appeals to City Council	5	Work Sessions
	0	Type III for Landmark Designation	<u>Staff Reviews</u>	
	2	Type II Appeals	34	Type II Staff Level Reviews
	11	Design Advice Requests	17	Type IX Staff Level Reviews
	9	National Register Nominations	37	Type I Staff Level Reviews
	12	Briefings		

1.0 Message From the Chair

Dear Mayor Wheeler and City Council Members,

It is sobering to see the unprecedented level of need and inequity in our City. The COVID-19 pandemic initiated a shuttering of our downtown and neighborhoods, and combined with ongoing protests, some of which have included substantial vandalism, has had a devastating effect on the City's buildings, businesses, and its people. An economic recovery plan is needed to address the situation, and must address the disparities that existed before the pandemic – specifically the City's shameful lack of housing for those on our streets.

As the Historic Landmarks Commission, we struggle with whether we can do more or whether historic preservation can help people whose very basic needs are not being met. With so many other pressing issues of existential consequence, is Historic Preservation even relevant right now?

The answer is complicated and demands honesty. Honesty as a City and as a Commission requires us to start with self-examination. Who has made or enabled the decisions of what to save and what to tear down? Who is making those decisions now, and why? Historic Preservation cannot be relevant if it tells only one side or one version of our collective history. We have gone too far down that path already. Historic Preservation has a responsibility to reflect a more balanced, full story of how groups of people lived, who they were and what they did, not just the “whitewashed” version in vintage history textbooks. While the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability has acknowledged many of Portland's racist policies and actions (see the *Racist History of Planning in Portland, OR*), there is also an understandable tendency to want to blame only certain neighborhoods, such as those that had racial exclusion clauses in their deeds, while ignoring the fact that the Federal Housing Authority refused to back loans to African-Americans for home purchases. But blame-throwing not only gives a false sense of “those other people” having perpetuated racist actions or policies, it also doesn't begin to address past harms to specific people, which is our responsibility.

The Landmarks Commission seeks to be part of a larger reckoning of past planning-related policy. Historic preservation can be part of the solution to help the families or descendants of those negatively affected by the City's past policies. One way to do this is by focusing on preserving places important to a less white or privileged population. We also must support policy specifically designed to help people stay in their communities, improve the safety and efficiency of their environments, and build wealth through different models of ownership.

To be relevant, historic preservation must also be able to demonstrate its benefit to the collective, not just to individuals. Our societal laws and structures tend to uphold self-interest and the rights of the individual over the needs of the collective. We cannot fault developers for tearing down older houses and constructing large, expensive houses; that is how capitalism works. Yet planning, including historic preservation, is an example of governmental regulation which should look out for “the greater good.” How can Portland ensure affordable and comfortable housing for all, yet not erase what has come before? Historic preservation is one facet of reuse and upcycling, recognizing that buildings and places can and should reflect a process of social change. We can redefine preservation in Portland less as “preserve it in amber” and more as “let the place continue to tell an ongoing story.”

In this period of isolation and loss of community, people keenly want to belong and to feel seen and heard. The landscapes we inhabit and the built environments we create for ourselves should reflect the past and the present, our predecessors and ourselves, as contributors and as people who matter. We can define how our environment can change, and what we value. We must not let someone else take away this power. Historic preservation is relevant, because it is this power.

Thank you,
Kristen Minor
Chair of the Portland Historic Landmarks Commission

2.0 What We Do



The Portland Historic Landmarks Commission has a wide variety of tasks, goals, and collaborative partners. We are here as a resource for city officials and neighborhoods as well as applicants. We are professionals who believe in finding nuanced solutions that benefit all Portlanders, including future generations. Below is a list of some of the powers and duties afforded to the Commission by the Portland Zoning Code:

Make Recommendations to City Council

- Establishment, Amendment, or Removal of Historic Districts
- Adoption of New Design Guidelines for Historic Districts
- Type IV Demolition Reviews



Decide Land Use Applications

- Type III Reviews of New Construction in Historic Districts
- Type III Reviews to Establish or Remove Landmark Designations
- Type III Reviews of Alterations To Historic Resources
- Type II Appeals



Provide Advice

- Design Advice to Applicants for future Land Use Reviews
- Legislative Advice on Code Projects to Other Commissions (Design, PSC, PDC), City Council, City Bureaus, Other Public Agencies
- Collaborate with Portland Design Commission



Advocate

- Initiate and Coordinate Preservation and Outreach Programs within and outside of the City

Commission Highlights

- Portland Historic Landmarks Commission (PHLC) held joint briefings with the Design Commission (DC) on the Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge. Participating in discussions together as this project moves forward is critical as any potential future bridge would require approval by both the PHLC and the DC. Through this process we have found many commonalities in what we value in the existing bridge and would expect to see in any potential future bridge.
- PHLC participated in the first hearing for the Historic Resources Code Project (HRCP) at the Planning and Sustainability Commission and initiated collaboration in a 3x3 working group with members of both the PSC and HLC with a goal of refining the HRCP for the benefit of the public while meeting the preservation goals of the City's Comprehensive Plan.
- Reviewed and recommended for approval several National Register nominations including Darcelle XV which is Oregon's first LGBTQ-related resource to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the African American Multiple Property Documentation, which will allow an easier path to listing for future resources related to Portland's African American history.



3.0 Priorities and Goals

3.1 Preservation Justice

The Landmarks Commission has been committed to advocating for the preservation of resources important to nonwhite and underrepresented communities for some years. However, it is not in our purview to designate. We can react to the requests that come before us, but that is not the same as actively identifying and working with communities that deserve and desire historic recognition (and incentives). The HLC needs City Council's support and help to pivot away from only seeing wealthy, white building owners who have the funds to hire a professional and instead put in place a more just system. Some of the Comprehensive Plan 2035 policies spelling this out are:

- **Policy 4.53 Preservation Equity.** Expand historic resources inventories, regulations, and programs to encourage historic preservation in areas and in communities that have not benefited from past historic preservation efforts, especially in areas with high concentrations of under-served and/or under-represented people.
- **Policy 4.54 Cultural Diversity.** Work with Portland's diverse communities to identify and preserve places of historic and cultural significance.
- **Policy 4.55 Cultural and Social Significance.** Encourage awareness and appreciation of cultural diversity and the social significance of both beautiful and ordinary historic places and their roles in enhancing community identity and sense of place.

The Historic Resources Code Project will put in place some new processes regarding survey and identification- a huge and welcome step- but there is nothing contemplated in the code that would ensure some of this work gets funded every year. The importance of the identification and designation of diverse places is not simply to address an inequity that has been deepening over time, it is to recognize the past harms that have been done to certain communities in the name of Urban Renewal. Planning overall has much to atone for in Portland. We ask for special consideration of past City actions that displaced and are still displacing; actions that demolished and are still demolishing. It is our responsibility to stop perpetuating the "culture of clearance" policies that promote ongoing loss of community cohesion. This starts with identifying and supporting the designation and preservation of those places whose stories we have yet to tell."

3.0 Priorities and Goals

3.2 Sustainability and Climate Resilience

When it comes to historic buildings, in most cases the “greenest” building is the one already built. Preserving historic buildings almost always offers environmental and energy savings over demolition and new construction which in turns reduces a city's carbon footprint. Reinvestment in historic districts and communities promotes reuse of existing infrastructure and supports areas that generally are walkable and have good transit access options. The result? Energy savings and enhanced community livability.

Additionally, we know that many historic buildings will be structurally compromised in an earthquake. These older offices, schools, and houses often shelter the most vulnerable of our population and represent affordable rents which would no longer be available if these structures were lost. They also form the core of our dense downtowns. We need to encourage the reuse of our historic downtown buildings and also the strengthening of our historic building stock. It is critical that the City update the Historic Resources Inventory. The inventory should identify those buildings to be prioritized for structural renovation to make them more able to withstand a disaster. These structures must meet and perhaps even exceed code, and should receive the first reconstruction funding or efforts.

Simply, we should most protect those building that are most economically and socially valued, so that they will still be with us in the future. It is worth reiterating that these buildings are often the most affordable for housing and businesses.

3.3 Affordability

The provision of affordable housing and the goals of historic preservation are complementary. Since 1966 with the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has held that “the rehabilitation of historic buildings contributes to the ongoing vitality of historic neighborhoods as well as businesses and institutions that serve them” (U.S. Housing and Urban Development, 2017).

If HUD recognizes the nexus between housing and preservation, then why shouldn't Portland's housing and historic preservation policies coalesce too? While rancor and tension enflames the debate on how private development shapes Portland's neighborhoods, recent studies have shown that older neighborhoods with historic buildings contain:

1. A greater proportion of immigrants;
2. People new to the city from other parts of the country;
3. Same sex households;
4. Women and minority owned businesses; and
5. 75 percent more people of color.

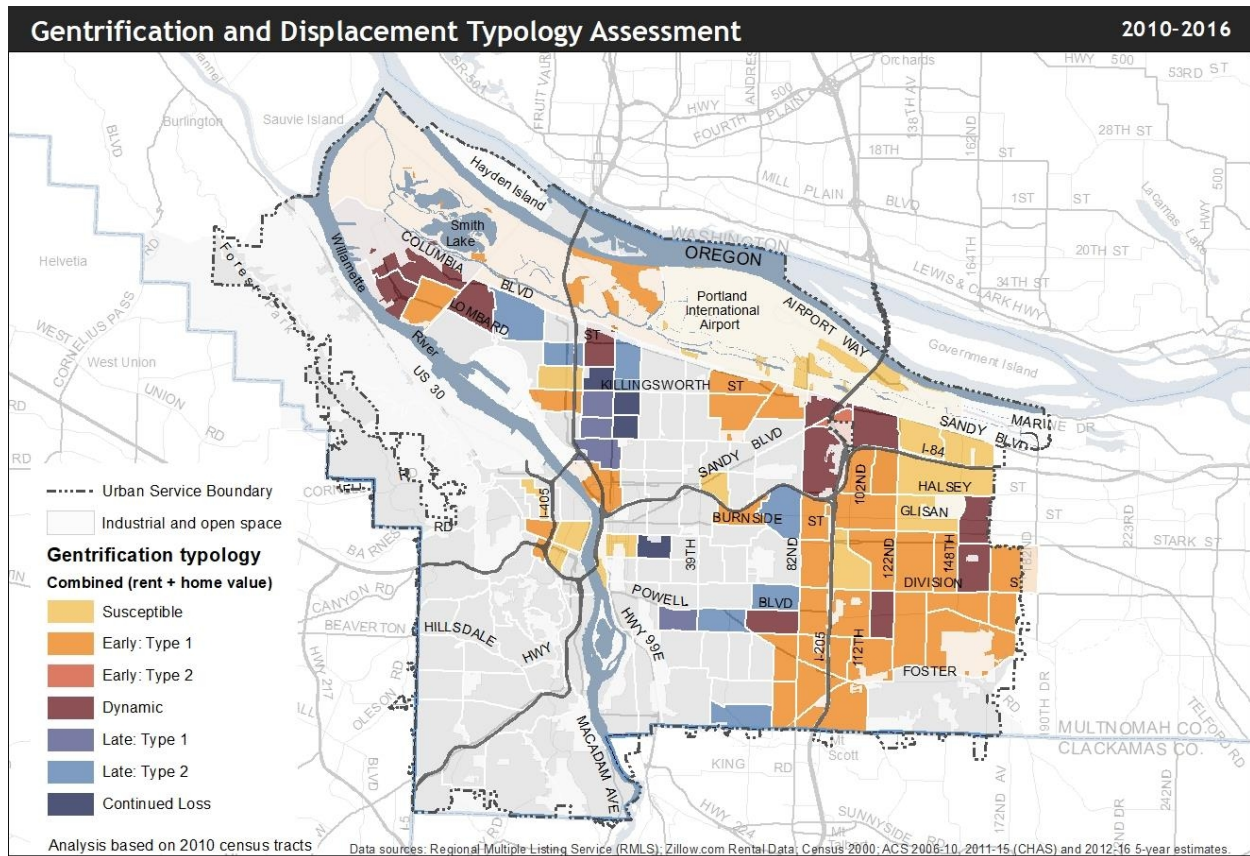
They also are more likely to contain:

1. Unsubsidized “naturally” affordable housing;
2. Exhibit income integration; and
3. House a greater density of jobs in small and new businesses (NTHP 2016).

In short, historic neighborhoods are the incubators for Portland's creativity and unique sense of place while serving as a well-spring for income, cultural, and lifestyle diversity.

Additional studies have concluded that private development in Portland is targeting undesigned historic areas for re-development and thus triggering existing population displacement and steep increases in housing prices – an impact the city first sought to identify in 2013 (Bates 2013). One study of the Beaumont-Wilshire area found that 34 demolitions in that neighborhood resulted in an average replacement house that was 149% larger and cost 148% more than the original demolished house. Another study found that the city's Conservation Districts have failed to protect the existing housing stock. In the Woodlawn Conservation District, for instance, demolitions are occurring at a rate commensurate with the surrounding

3.0 Priorities and Goals



Summary of gentrification typology by type for combined housing market analysis (rent + home values) taken from the 2018 Gentrification And Displacement Neighborhood Typology Assessment commissioned by BPS

areas (Historic Laurelhurst 2017). Not surprisingly, in Woodlawn alone, the U.S. Census revealed that 915 black residents left the community between 2000 and 2010 and were replaced by 840 white residents (Hannah-Jones. 2011; U.S. Census, Population Schedules, Portland, Oregon 2010). Our housing policies have clearly failed the city’s inner city minority populations. This should come as no surprise as the number of demolitions (1442) between the years of 2012 and 2017 destroyed the equivalent of 180 city blocks of housing

Historic preservation can be a solution to the problems of displacement and housing affordability. Studies in places ranging from Fort Worth, Texas, to New York City, have found that there is little to no evidence that historic districts lead to changes in the racial composition of a neighborhood (Coulson and Leichenko 2004; McCabe and Ellen 1998). In Chicago, the City’s political leadership recognized the latent opportunities of the over 100,000 bungalows in the city, not for gentrification, but neighborhood stability. Through a tax-certified renovation program, Chicago’s “housing preservation” approach has paid dividends after the city recognized that the housing replacement options were simply not affordable for most city residents (Karamanski, 2010). A study of California’s affordable housing program has arrived at a similar conclusion by noting that the provision of affordable housing has to take into account both the rehabilitation of existing housing and new construction (Rosenthal and Listokin 2009).

3.0 Priorities and Goals

Chapter Highlight: Darcelle XV National Register Nomination

Who are the people of Portland who came before us? Who gets to tell their story? Who gets to take pride in a celebration of meaningful local places or past events? Our perspective as a city and as a state has been shifting seismically. We are not satisfied with the one-sided historic stories of white pioneer culture and “squatter’s rights” that is so often told. The Landmarks Commission is strongly advocating for recognition of places important to other subcultures and communities that played- and are still playing- a part in creating Portland.

One such meaningful and moving story is that of Walter Cole/Darcelle. The recent addition of the drag venue Darcelle XV to the National Register of Historic Places helps us all understand how the club was a place of refuge and welcome for the full spectrum of LGBTQ folks on the west coast, yet managed to build “straight” allies at the same time. How quickly most of us forget- or perhaps never knew- what life was often like for people rejected, hated, even killed for their sexuality during the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and certainly well into the 1990s. Sadly, even in Portland, violent crimes against the LGBTQ community still occur, which makes the preservation of places like Darcelle XV all the more critical.

The nightclub Walter Cole transformed from a run-down skid row tavern to a renowned drag performance venue of national importance has seen changes over time, but the character of the space retains its essential “illusion of glamour” with low-budget finishes, homemade accommodations, and repurposed elements. Within the space, we gain an understanding of a self-reliant population fighting to be allowed to be themselves. Darcelle XV Showplace made an impact in changing hearts and changing minds in the struggle for gay, lesbian, and trans rights not just locally, not just in Oregon, but in the United States. This is truly what Cultural Heritage means, and every Portlander can be proud to share in this part of our collective history in Portland.



Image of Darcelle XV Showplace, 1994



Image of Darcelle XV Showplace, 2020

4.0 Council Action Items

4.1 Support the Creation of a Cultural Heritage Plan

Responsible management of a City's assets should be addressed in a strategic, sustainable, and transparent manner. The City has a Comprehensive Plan that outlines goals and policies of the City on a broad scale. Among many other things, these include noble goals and policies related to historic preservation; however there appear to be few action items intended to ensure these goals and policies are met, thus weakening the City's accountability to this purpose. The Historic Landmarks Commission posits that the City should develop a Cultural Heritage Preservation Plan to analyze, assess, and establish measurable action items to further the City's commitment to its significant resources and to curb additional losses of these important resources.

In order to build a positive future for this City, this community needs to have a more complete understanding of this land's full history so that we can adequately honor this place, it's people and the multitude of their stories, and build a legacy of which we can be proud. In this sense, historic preservation is not just an endeavor of luxury; it is a public responsibility. The recent designations of Darcelle XV and the Billy Webb Elks Lodge demonstrate how the preservation of these important spaces demand a sense of respect from the broader community and enhance the sense of dignity and pride to those who see their stories represented in these spaces and see themselves in the continuum of a community's significant history.

A proper preservation plan should include a road map to identify potential historic resources, establish appropriate plans for protection, identify short-term and long-term strategies, identify financial and administrative resources to aid the preservation of resources, identify responsible parties (bureaus and other community partners), establish timelines for completion of identified projects, and estimate a range of budgets to accomplish these goals. Such a plan would allow decision-makers to see how a diverse range of preservation programs and efforts can be used to help with a multitude of issues affecting our community. With such a plan, the City could establish a directive to, for example: create a program for preserving legacy businesses, target buildings for seismic upgrade, identify buildings that could be adapted to house the houseless, elevate the stories that have to-date been overlooked; all of these types of projects can help preserve and restore dignity in our community.

The Landmarks Commission recognizes the significant challenges of our time and specifically in our City. Substantial resources are needed to address these challenges and are limited in their availability. Still, this Commission believes that preservation has a role in the process of recovery and repair and we request and offer support in helping to identify exactly how such goals can be accomplished, as well as when and by whom.

4.0 Council Action Items

4.2 HRI Funding

For over a decade the Portland Historic Landmarks Commission has recognized the inequity built in to our Historic Resources Inventory (HRI). Our current database is largely a legacy of the National Register of Historic Places and local surveys completed almost 40 years ago. The geographic areas last surveyed in 1984 comprised mostly west side and inner southeast neighborhoods ignoring large areas of the city with more diverse and economically underprivileged populations. Previous City Councils have acknowledged the need to update the HRI with rumors every year that funding would eventually follow. Small pilot projects like the survey recently completed in the Montavilla Neighborhood demonstrate how many unidentified historic resources might be out there worth recording for history before they are gone. Adequate public funding for this important work has never come through. Now we find ourselves at a crossroads having to explain why we don't have an updated HRI to help protect the histories, cultural landscapes and architecture of a more diverse group of people. We are way behind many major Cities across America who have invested in the field work, research and data systems to ensure all communities are equally represented in the stories that are told. Survey LA for example in Los Angeles California took eight years to complete and included over 500 square miles of the city. Prior to their recent work approximately 15 percent of LA was surveyed for historic resources. While it was a huge undertaking, they are now in a position to tell the stories of all the community not just the few and privileged. Portland has elected the most diverse City Council in its history at a time when her citizens are demanding justice. Part of that justice is hearing the stories we have not acknowledged properly in the past. The City must work with the local community and be proactive in its identification and protection of these valuable places before they are lost forever.

4.3 Adopt HRCP

Not all communities have the resources to privately fund research into their neighborhoods or to document the history of their properties to the standards of the National Park Service. Many arguments have been made about the inadequacy of our current inventory, how it has served to protect certain areas of the city over others. Adopting the Historic Resource Code Project (HRCP) allows for Portland's Historic Resource Inventory to be added to and updated for the first time since 1984, and aligns our code with State regulations meant to increase local decision-making in historic regulation. We need a system that serves all our diverse communities not just those who have the wherewithal to go through a highly technical process Federal process. Preservation should benefit all Portlanders especially now as we recognize previously overlooked communities to ensure all voices are heard. The Landmarks Commission has been working with the Planning and Sustainability Commission to ensure that the future zoning code related to historic resources will help reduce barriers to preservation and ensure appropriate levels of protection for the various types of resources in the city. We hope to reach agreement on these methods prior to their presentation to you.

4.4 URM Funding Opportunities

Portland has approximately 1,650 unreinforced masonry (URM) buildings, which use stone or brick masonry for structural walls. These buildings range from small one-story residences to large 10- or 12-story buildings, and many have civic or educational uses. Many of these buildings are designated as historic landmarks and represent a valuable part of the City's cultural heritage.

Because URM buildings are very fragile in a seismic event, the City has been exploring ways to ensure upgrades for URMS. In 2019, the Portland Bureau of Emergency Management formed a URM work group

4.0 Council Action Items

Accurate Data is the First Step to Implementing a URM Policy: The Washington State Unreinforced Masonry Inventory

At the close of the 2017-2018 legislative session, the Washington State Legislature directed the Department of Commerce, in collaboration with the Department of Archeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP), to initiate an inventory of unreinforced masonry (URM) buildings in Washington State, excluding single-family housing. This undertaking included the following tasks:

- Inventorying and categorizing, to the greatest extent possible, information such as the locations, building attributes (e.g., building use, historic character), and vacancy or underutilization of Washington’s URM buildings.
- The Legislature’s directive stipulated that the URM Inventory be produced using existing survey and data sources to the greatest extent possible. Development of both the structure and content of the URM Inventory consequently drew on a variety of data sources.
- The development of a URM Dashboard, an online mapping interface that enables users to view – at varying levels of detail – the geographic distribution of suspected URM buildings that meet a wide variety of criteria, as well as a detailed development of that criteria.
- Finally, a focused pilot survey in order to demonstrate the type of building-specific field survey and permit research that is necessary to transform a given list of “Suspected URM” buildings to one consisting of “Identified URM” buildings. Downtown Port Townsend was selected as the location for the pilot survey due to its preponderance of URM buildings, several of which have undergone structural upgrades

comprised of representatives of URM building owners, URM building tenants, and other subject matter experts charged with further evaluating reasonable seismic retrofit requirements, and developing recommendations for standards, financing options, incentives, tax strategies, and timelines for a seismic retrofit program for Class 3 and Class 4 URM buildings. Two HLC Commissioners sat on this work group as well. The work group was dissolved in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis and the subsequent civil rights protests.

It is of paramount importance that the City continues its efforts to find ways to incentivize building owners to upgrade their URM Building and to help identify funding sources to help defray the costs. The recent Covid-19 epidemic and wildfires should underscore the fact that natural disasters are real and can happen any time, and we must be ready for them. While we understand that ongoing natural disasters take precedent over future ones, we must keep taking steps to prepare ourselves. One easy task would be to update the City of Portland URM Inventory to clarify definitions of what a URM building is and make sure the list of buildings on it is accurate and up to date. The Landmarks Commission has demonstrated its interest in aiding in this process and we again offer our services toward this effort.

4.0 Council Action Items

Chapter Highlight: CASE STUDY - KEX Portland

The historic Alco Apartments building was built in 1912 at the corner of NE Couch and Union Ave (now MLK Jr. Blvd). A typical Central Eastside streetcar commercial building, the Alco included small apartment units on floors 2 and 3, with commercial lease space at the ground floor. The structure consists of unreinforced masonry exterior bearing walls, and a wood frame interior.

After more than 100 years of service, the Unreinforced Masonry Building (URM) was in need of significant rehabilitation and life safety improvements. Like so many other URMs within the City of Portland, the Alco was at extreme risk of catastrophic damage in the event of a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake. The Alco, later known as The Vivian, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2017 as a good example of the streetcar commercial style that was once prevalent in the Central Eastside but is now becoming rare due to increased development pressures.

In early 2018, a group of investors purchased the building and began a comprehensive rehabilitation. A key feature of the project was a seismic retrofit which brought the building up to new construction standards. A portion of the interior wood structure at the core of the building was removed to make way for a new elevator. The design team seized this opportunity to include reinforced concrete shear walls around the elevator shaft, which serve as an earthquake-resistant backbone.

The existing floors and roof were then overlaid with a new plywood diaphragm to assist with bringing loads to the new shear walls. Floor and roof decks were tied to the exterior masonry walls to brace the walls and prevent “pancaking” of the floors during a seismic event. Finally, steel cross-bracing was installed at the ground floor storefront, and steel tube “strongbacks” were placed along the inside of the masonry walls at the upper floors as a surrogate for the missing reinforcing steel inside the brick. The strongbacks were then concealed inside the finished interior wall.

The building reopened in late 2019 as KEX Portland, a hostel-style hotel. Despite the significant interventions made to safeguard the building and its occupants, the important character-defining features were carefully protected. The project met the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation and was awarded federal historic tax credits. In addition, Restore Oregon bestowed on the project a 2020 DeMuro award for excellence in preservation.



Before Rehabilitation (Exterior)



Before Rehabilitation (Interior)

4.0 Council Action Items



After Rehabilitation

4.0 Council Action Items

4.5 Retention of Affordable Housing/Adapting Vacant Buildings for Housing the Houseless

As BDS staff and the Landmarks Commission look back over a year of land use cases and historic projects to illustrate particularly good ones or “lessons learned,” one stands out as a frustrating example of the limitations of Historic Review approval criteria. The project, a new 14-unit apartment building in the Alphabet Historic district, would have been a fairly easy approval had it not been replacing an existing 13-unit converted house, built during the neighborhood’s period of significance and frankly, probably eligible as a contributing structure to the Alphabet Historic district despite a large rear addition. The HLC heard numerous testifiers discuss their concern with not being able to find a comparably-priced place to live in any location in Portland. While we felt the public pressure to deny the application for the new development in an attempt to save the existing building, it is not in our power to designate any structure without the owner’s consent and we therefore have no ability to protect places that offer “naturally occurring” affordable housing.

The Historic Resources Code Proposal (HRCP) may give some new “affordable” housing projects, such as ADUs, a “pass” from Historic Review, and yet most existing and “naturally occurring” affordable multi-dwelling structures are almost certain to be far more compatible, far more accepted by the neighborhood, and far less disruptive to the social fabric of the neighborhood by keeping people where they already live. Let’s work together to incentivize owners to keep these existing low-cost housing options.



Existing non-contributing 13-unit apartment, slated for demolition



Proposed replacement apartment, which offers 14 apartment units

4.0 Council Action Items

4.6 Establish a Legacy Business Program

The year 2020 helped reveal vulnerable communities that have been overlooked in the past years. The economic hardship hit small businesses harder than any other areas of the economy and brought to our attention the importance to financially support *Legacy Businesses*. This term has been used in other cities around country, like San Francisco, CA and San Antonio, TX to identify historic small businesses that based on their “enduring presence in their neighborhoods, are community gathering places that have played an integral role in making a city what it is today”¹. These cities created programs that economically support Legacy Businesses years before the pandemic, and has helped vulnerable communities survive and maintain their heritage and culture.

Since summer of 2020, the PHLC initiated conversations with City Council staff to study the implementation of a similar program in the City of Portland. In order to do this we need to:

- Understand what is existing, with an inventory that can be done by the communities by self-registering their businesses that would comply with the criteria established.
- Identify funding sources: bond measure, city budget, etc.
- Determine which bureau would run such a program or partner with a local non-profit to administer the program.
- Implement a Pilot program and then develop a more robust program.

Actions to save small businesses from closing are desperately needed in Portland, where displacement, gentrification and now a pandemic, has affected the communities around the city and beyond. The PHLC is in support of a program that can help preserve our uniqueness, character and culture, and strongly encourage our government to take action with a Legacy Business Program.

¹ Erin Swicegood, “Celebrating Mom and Pop Shops: The Importance of Legacy Business Programs for Conserving Living Heritage” (Master Degree Terminal Project, Portland, Oregon, University of Oregon, 2020), 3.

San Francisco Legacy Business Registry & Legacy Business Historical Preservation Fund

A 2014 report by the City of San Francisco's Budget and Legislative Analyst's Office showed the closure of small businesses had reached record numbers in San Francisco. Commercial rents in most neighborhoods had risen significantly. The report drew connections between the city's high level of commercial evictions and skyrocketing rents. While rent control laws shielded many residents from exorbitant rent hikes, no such laws existed for businesses. An alternative effort to assist the city's longstanding businesses was needed.

Inspired by programs in cities such as Buenos Aires, Barcelona and London, Supervisor David Campos proposed legislation and a ballot proposition that would become the Legacy Business Program. It was introduced in two phases:

Phase I: Created the San Francisco Legacy Business Registry. The registry is open to businesses that are 30 years or older, have been nominated by a member of the Board of Supervisors or Mayor and, in a hearing before the Small Business Commission, prove they have made a significant impact on the history or culture of their neighborhood

Phase II: Created the Legacy Business Historic Preservation Fund, first-of-its-kind legislation that provides grants to both Legacy Business owners and property owners who agree to lease extensions with Legacy Business tenants, pending availability of funds.

Currently, there are over 100 restaurants and bars, located throughout the city, in the program. These businesses had achieved longevity of 40 years or more, possessed distinctive architecture or interior design and/or contributed to a sense of history in the surrounding neighborhood.

5.0 Select Large Projects Approved by Commission



5.0 Projects Approved by Commission

200 SE GRAND

Architect: TVA Architects

Developer: Sturgeon Development



5.1 200 SE Grand

The Historic Landmarks Commission approved this 8-story half-block office building near the north end of the East Portland/ Grand Avenue Historic District in August 2020, following two collaborative Design Advice Requests. Additional FAR was gained on this site through funds provided to the Affordable Housing Fund by the developer. The approved building met the maximum height allowed of 100' but was determined to be compatible due to the breakdown and proposed arrangement of massing on the site. The proposed building provides a strong response to the surrounding historic context, activation and enhancement of the pedestrian experience on the street frontages and offers an elegant and coherent design with high quality materials and meaningful details.

5.0 Projects Approved by Commission

1010 SE ASH

Architect: Hartshorne Plunkard Architecture

Developer: Troy Laundry Property Holder LLC



5.2 1010 SE Ash

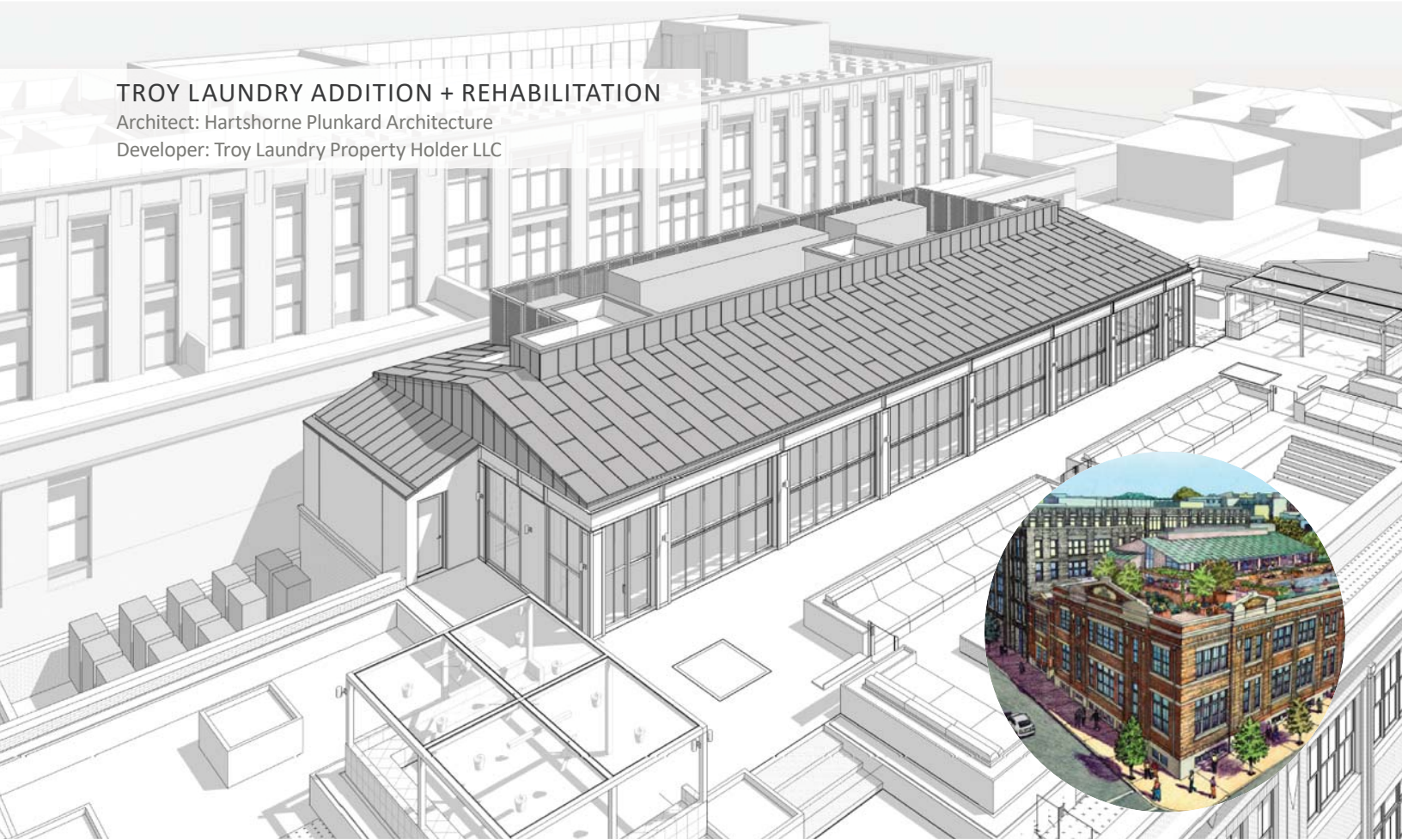
This 6-story residential building with ground floor retail, below-grade parking, and a rooftop terrace was approved by the Landmarks Commission in July 2020. Immediately adjacent and within the boundary of the landmarked Troy Laundry Building, the proposed building is taller than the existing landmark but responds to the architecture of the Troy with solid brick massing and modest articulation, a stepdown sidecar reminiscent of the Troy's historic vehicular bay and fine brick detailing.

5.0 Projects Approved by Commission

TROY LAUNDRY ADDITION + REHABILITATION

Architect: Hartshorne Plunkard Architecture

Developer: Troy Laundry Property Holder LLC



5.3 Troy Laundry Addition + Rehabilitation

In addition to proposing a new 6-story residential building on the north half of this block the same developer and architecture team proposed rehabilitation of the historic Troy Laundry Building, which is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places and located in the Central Eastside. This 1913 brick building designed by Ellis Lawrence will receive a full seismic rehabilitation, restoration of the exterior, and the addition of a new rooftop penthouse with amenities.

5.0 Projects Approved by Commission

BENSON POLYTECHNIC HIGH SCHOOL MODERNIZATION

Architect: Bassetti Architects

Developer: Portland Public Schools



5.4 Benson Polytechnic High School Modernization

Following early coordination that included pre-design Briefings and a Design Advice Request with the Landmarks Commission, the modernization of Benson High School was approved in July 2020. As a result of the early coordination with the Commission, Portland Public Schools revised their design to preserve more of the historic fabric of this local landmark than was originally proposed. The resulting project is a mix of sensitive rehabilitation and distinctly modern intervention that will hopefully lend to the inspiration of the attending students.

5.0 Projects Approved by Commission



5.5 Multnomah County Courthouse (*Rehabilitation Project of the Year*)

The proposed rehabilitation of the Multnomah County Courthouse to a new office use includes a seismic upgrade, extensive alterations to the rooftop penthouse, and opening up the ground floor to make it more accessible to the public. Following a Design Advice Request in 2019, the revised proposal, which was more sensitive to the architecture and pedestrian realm of the historic landmark, the proposal was approved in August 2020. The proposed alterations associated with the adaptive re-use of the resource serve to ensure the continued use and viability of the resource and the reintroduced entries at the base of the building help to better integrate the existing building with pedestrian realm.

5.0 Projects Approved by Commission

UNICORN BED APARTMENTS

Architect: Dao Architecture LLC
Developer: Guerilla Development



5.6 Unicorn Bed Apartments (*New Build Project of the Year*)

Following a Design Advice Request, this building was approved in January 2020. This two-building development in the Alphabet Historic District is comprised of two separate buildings for a total of 14 two-bedroom units. The two-building layout allows for light and air on three of four sides of each unit, ensuring comfort for the inhabitants. These apartments are intended to be marketed at below-market rents toward single parents in a highly desirable and walkable neighborhood. The balconies and exterior stair balustrades are laser-cut steel with organic imagery providing a sense of whimsy and fun to the buildings. The proposed development provides a compatible infill development replacing an incompatible development, bringing more activity closer to the street and serving as a transition between the large apartment building to the west and the smaller-scaled development to the east.

6.0 HLC 2021 Watch List

2035 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

POLICY 4.51 - CITY-OWNED HISTORIC RESOURCES:

“Maintain City-owned historic resources with necessary upkeep and repair.”

6.1 Old Blanchet House

While not a City-owned property, the old Blanchet House of Hospitality, a contributing resource in the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District was once available to the city to purchase for \$1 - an option the City did not act upon. Located at the edge of the historic district, this building is now proposed for demolition for the purpose of landbanking the property. It is anticipated that the City intends to purchase the vacant property to absorb it into the Block 25 redevelopment proposal, spearheaded by Prosper Portland, which has been heavily involved with discussions around this building. While a recent Demolition Review application was withdrawn and staff supporting the Landmarks Commission attempted to engage in conversation about this building's ability to be integrated into any future Block 25 development, it appears that demolition may again be pursued. The Commission asks City Council to direct Prosper Portland to engage with the Landmarks Commission on ways to preserve this important building at the northern edge of the 10-block New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District.



Old Blanchet House

6.2 Engine No. 2 Building (Demolition Imminent)

Managed by Prosper Portland and owned by the City for decades, this 1913 landmark has experienced a severe lack of maintenance under the City's ownership. This has led to break-ins, damage, and even fire. The city now seeks to demolish this landmark structure rather than invest in its rehabilitation. The 120-day demolition delay on this resource just ended and demolition is imminent and may even be completed by the time this report is presented. This act of demolition by neglect by the City of a City-owned property should serve as a reminder that we have an obligation to properly maintain our historic resources for future generations.



Engine No. 2 Building

