

# PORTLAND PLAN

## Historic Resources

### REPORT 1: KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



PORTLAND PLAN BACKGROUND REPORT  
FALL 2009

**PLANNING AND SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION**  
**RECOMMENDED DRAFT**  
**DECEMBER 14, 2010**



City of Portland Bureau of  
**Planning and Sustainability**  
Sam Adams, Mayor | Susan Anderson, Director

# Acknowledgments

## Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS)

Mayor Sam Adams, *Commissioner-in-charge*

Susan Anderson, *Director*

Joe Zehnder, *Chief Planner*

Steve Dotterer, *Principal Planner*

Eric Engstrom, *Principal Planner*

Gil Kelley, *Former Director, Bureau of Planning*

## Primary Authors

Nicholas T. Starin, *City Planner, BPS*

Liza Mickle, *City Planner, BPS*

## Contributors

Gary Odenthal, *Technical Services Manager, BPS*

Carmen Piekarski, *GIS Analyst, BPS*

Liza Mylott, *Community Service Aide, BPS*

# Historic Resources



PROSPERITY AND BUSINESS SUCCESS



SUSTAINABILITY AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT



DESIGN, PLANNING AND PUBLIC SPACES



NEIGHBORHOODS & HOUSING



TRANSPORTATION, TECHNOLOGY AND ACCESS



EDUCATION AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT



HUMAN HEALTH, FOOD AND PUBLIC SAFETY



QUALITY OF LIFE, CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND EQUITY



ARTS, CULTURE AND INNOVATION

# PORTLAND PLAN



City of Portland Bureau of  
**Planning and Sustainability**

Sam Adams, Mayor | Susan Anderson, Director

To help ensure equal access to City programs, services and activities, the City of Portland will reasonably modify policies/procedures and provide auxiliary aids/services to persons with disabilities. Call (503) 823-7700 with such requests.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**..... 2

    KEY FINDINGS ..... 2

    RECOMMENDATIONS ..... 4

**INTRODUCTION** ..... 7

**CURRENT CONDITIONS** ..... 8

**KEY FINDINGS** ..... 10

**CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES** ..... 13

    CHALLENGE: INADEQUATE INVENTORY OF HISTORIC AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES AND OTHER TOOLS..... 13

    CHALLENGE: IMPROVED PRESERVATION POLICIES, TOOLS AND INCENTIVES ARE NEEDED ..... 13

    OPPORTUNITY: HISTORIC PRESERVATION IS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ..... 14

    OPPORTUNITY: COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIP ..... 15

**RECOMMENDATIONS** ..... 16

    INTEGRATE HISTORIC RESOURCES INTO THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PORTLAND PLAN ..... 16

    PURSUE STRATEGIC PRESERVATION RESEARCH, EDUCATION AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS..... 17

**OTHER PORTLAND PLAN HISTORIC RESOURCES BACKGROUND REPORTS:**

- Historic Resources Background Report 2: Data and Maps
- Historic Resources Background Report 3: Understanding Historic Resources in Portland
- Modern Historic Resources of East Portland: A Reconnaissance Survey

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:**

- East Portland Historical Overview and Historic Preservation Study
- Civic Planning, Development and Public Works, 1851-1965

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: PORTLAND PLAN HISTORIC RESOURCES BACKGROUND REPORT



Vista Bridge Steps

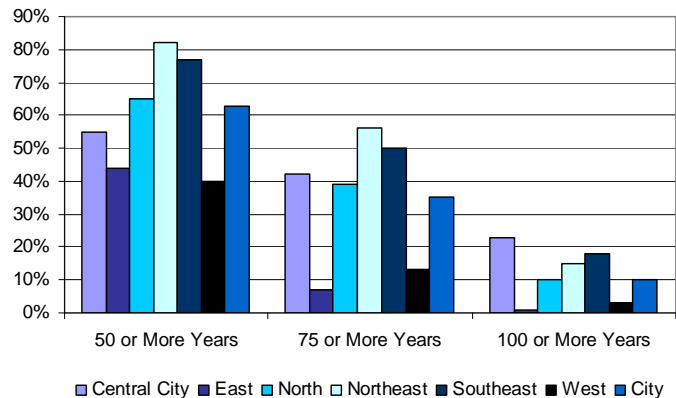
Historic resources—buildings, districts, bridges, public art, landscapes, etc.—are structures and places that connect the past to the present. They enrich our built environment and public spaces, help define the character of our neighborhoods, and contribute to our sense of place. Historic preservation, in its broadest sense, is a collective endeavor that seeks to understand, protect and enhance these resources for ourselves and future generations.

This overview presents highlights of the *Portland Plan Historic Resources Background Report*, which forms a basis for understanding the role of historic buildings and places in shaping the city, and critical issues to consider as the Portland Plan unfolds.

### KEY FINDINGS

Historic resources play a vital role in defining Portland’s sense of place and the character of its neighborhoods. In addition to more than 670 individual historic landmarks, Portland has 20 historic and conservation districts, covering 1,500 acres and containing more than 3,500 contributing properties. The City’s Historic Resource Inventory, completed in 1984, includes 5,000 properties. Portlanders place a great value on historic resources, not only designated landmarks and districts, but the established fabric of the city’s neighborhoods—its older buildings, structures and streetscapes that may not (yet) be formally designated as “historic,” but are central to the city’s distinctiveness and quality of life. More than 60 percent of the city’s buildings are at least 50 years old, and 35 percent are at least 75 years old, creating a vast pool of potentially significant historic resources. Portland residents’ appreciation of the historic built environment are manifested in many ways, from strong citizen engagement in the historic design review process to grass roots projects to save threatened buildings and create new historic districts.

Age of Buildings in 2010



Preserving historic resources is complex and must be balanced with other policy goals. One of the most challenging tasks for the Portland Plan and the update of the Comprehensive Plan will be finding ways to accommodate a significant share of the region’s anticipated growth, while also preserving its historic resources and protecting the character of its many long-established neighborhoods. Redevelopment pressure on designated and potentially significant historic resources is already evident in some neighborhoods and the scale and design of infill development



is often controversial. In places expected to experience higher density and development in the future, the existing and historic built environment and landscape may be at additional risk. A balance between preservation goals and other policy objectives must be achieved, and tools must be developed to sensitively manage change.

**A “new history” is emerging: the recent past and Modern architecture.** Much of Portland’s post-World War II era architecture has only recently started to become eligible for historic designation. Many types of “modern” resources were constructed after World War II. Collectively they represent a shift in the types of developments built to meet the changing needs and lifestyles of the nation, ranging from “suburban” housing developments to new special-purpose building types. While mid-century resources are becoming eligible for historic designation, many are disappearing before they can be evaluated or considered for preservation. As yet, Portland has an inadequate inventory of these resources. Additional tools are needed to evaluate, protect and preserve them.



Dutch Colonial house, SE 122<sup>nd</sup> Ave.

**East Portland is “underserved” by historic preservation research, policies and protections.** In terms of designated historic resources and preservation planning attention, East Portland is at a disadvantage compared to most other parts of the city. It has a substantially different history, identity and built and natural environment than the inner Portland neighborhoods that have long been the focus of preservation efforts. East Portland also has Metro-designated 2040 Centers, Main Streets and Corridors, urban renewal areas, and MAX corridors, which will be the continued focus of growth policies and

redevelopment. However, East Portland lacks an adequate inventory of potential historic resources and other evaluative tools, making it difficult to create policies, programs and projects that will help preserve aspects of the area’s historic fabric over time.

**There is an inadequate inventory of historic and archaeological resources and other tools.** An inventory of potentially significant buildings, structures, sites and landscapes is a fundamental building block for creating effective historic preservation policies, programs and projects. Unfortunately, Portland’s Historic Resources Inventory (HRI) is now a quarter century old and has a number of shortcomings. A large number of now potentially significant resources were not identified because they were not yet of sufficient age. Some areas of the city and certain types of structures were not well documented. Areas recently annexed to the City were not inventoried, and archaeological and culturally significant sites were not included.

**Historic preservation is sustainable development.** Historic preservation can foster development that is socially, economically and environmentally sustainable. Older and historic buildings have intrinsic value in terms of their embodied energy, were often constructed from quality materials and represent durable assets. Good building stewardship, re-use and rehabilitation are inherently sustainable practices. Portland has taken a leadership role in the sustainability movement and is recognized for a number of public and private sustainability initiatives. The merger of the Bureau of Planning and the Office of Sustainable Development creates new opportunities to explore and improve the connections between preservation planning and sustainable development. Some issues and opportunities that have been identified include:

## The Portland Plan

- *The role of historic preservation in sustainable economic development.* Preservation and rehabilitation have demonstrable economic benefits to the community, such as spurring revitalization in surrounding areas, increasing the local tax base and creating heritage tourism opportunities.
- *The cultural and social value of historic buildings.* Historic buildings play an important role in enhancing community character and sense of place, preserving affordable housing and stabilizing property values, among other considerations that relate to the common good.
- *The suitability of historic structures for alternative energy production and other conservation technologies.* These modifications can help meet environmental goals and extend the useful life of a building, but if not sensitively executed may negatively impact the integrity and character of historic places. Creative approaches and collaboration can concretely demonstrate the connections between preservation and sustainability values.



Historic district building, NW 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave.

Improved preservation policies, tools and incentives are needed. Portland's tool kit of preservation policies, programs, regulations and incentives that support the preservation and enhancement of historic resources need to be reviewed and, where appropriate, revised and improved. Some identified issues include: effectiveness of preservation zoning incentives; lack of financial incentives; inconsistent and complex applicability and content of historic design guidelines and standards; barriers to designating local landmarks; and coordination of City historic resource functions.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Integrate historic resources into the development of the Portland Plan and the update of the Comprehensive Plan.** Historic resources and their role in defining neighborhood typologies and



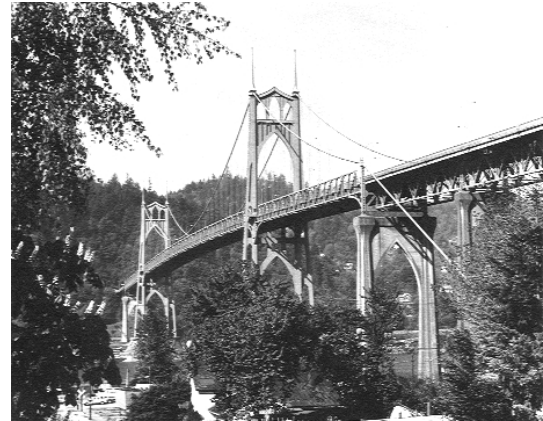
Queen Anne house, SE McLoughlin Blvd.

pattern areas will be a fundamental layer used in determining "areas of stability and change" and other urban form and physical planning components of the Portland Plan and the updated Comprehensive Plan. As plan concepts, goals and policies are developed, the City's existing historic preservation policy framework and tool kit should be evaluated. In the later stages of the process, preservation policies and implementation measures (e.g., zoning provisions and design guidelines) should be reviewed and revised in order to ensure that they address some of the existing challenges and opportunities outlined here.

**Pursue collaborative and strategic preservation research, education and policy development projects.** The list of Portland's preservation needs and challenges is extensive; however, the scope of the Portland Plan and available resources are limited. The City and its community partners will need to

prioritize their preservation efforts and be strategic about the projects they pursue. There are a number of opportunities to meet multiple objectives and other policy goals at the same time. Below are some possible avenues for targeted approaches to addressing historic preservation needs.

- **Identify opportunities for targeted inventories of historic resources.** Comprehensively updating the HRI on a citywide level would require a considerable commitment of resources. A more strategic or phased approach to updating the HRI may need to be developed, such as targeting specific geographies or types or eras of resources. Partnerships with preservation and neighborhood groups will be required. City-owned historic resources should also be a priority for new inventory work. Existing inventories should be made more readily accessible to researchers and the public. New mapping and database tools can also assist in broadening understanding of historic resources citywide.



St. Johns Bridge

- **Pursue preservation projects in East Portland.** East Portland has few protected historic resources, lacks an adequate inventory and has had little historic preservation planning. New preservation initiatives in the area are called for, such as inventory and research, historic designation projects, and the development of preservation policies and strategies that respond to the distinctive attributes of East Portland.
- **Pursue projects that explore the significance of Modern architecture.** Even as a new wave of potentially significant architecture from the post-war era becomes eligible for historic designation, many examples are disappearing before they can be evaluated or considered for preservation. There is an inadequate inventory of these types of resources, and few tools to evaluate, protect and preserve them. The basic groundwork for a considered approach to protecting this very different universe of historic resources should be established.
- **Pursue strategies that capitalize on the nexus between historic preservation and sustainable development.**



Rose Friend Apartments, SW Broadway (demolished)

The City should work with local citizens and business, as well as federal, state, and local organizations, on initiatives that promote both preservation and sustainability. These range from tax credit programs and incentives that encourage historically appropriate rehabilitation and energy upgrades, to improved green-building rating systems. The integration of the City's long-range planning and sustainability programs in the new Bureau of Planning and Sustainability creates opportunities for new and improved projects that more fully incorporate historic preservation values and expertise with sustainability.

## **The Portland Plan**

Historic resources enrich our built environment, help define the character of our neighborhoods, and contribute to our civic identity and sense of place. With the expected population, housing and employment growth in the Portland region, there will be challenges to preserving historic resources and protecting and enhancing our historic and established neighborhoods. The City and its community partners will need to prioritize preservation efforts and be strategic about the projects they pursue. A key priority should be integrating preservation values into the Portland Plan and Comprehensive Plan update processes, while also balancing preservation goals with other policy goals. Collaboration among all stakeholders and community partners will be key to the success of these efforts.



## INTRODUCTION

Historic resources—buildings, districts, bridges, public art, landscapes, etc.—are structures and places that connect the past to the present. They enrich our built environment and public spaces, help define the character of our neighborhoods, and contribute to our sense of place. The experiences that historic resources provide and the stories they tell offer perspectives on who we were and who we are—as individuals, diverse communities and as a society. They add to the many layers of our personal, cultural and civic identities. Historic preservation, in its broadest sense, is a collective endeavor that seeks to understand, protect and enhance these resources for ourselves and future generations.

The Portland Plan Historic Resources Background Report is intended to inform the development of the Portland Plan, a multi-year effort to guide the physical, economic, social, cultural and environmental development of Portland over the next 30 years. The background report has three parts: (1) *Key Findings and Recommendations* (this document), (2) *Data and Maps*, and (3) *Understanding Historic Resources in Portland*. There also are several supporting documents that present additional data and analyses related to Portland’s historic resources. Together, these form a basis for understanding the role of historic buildings and places in shaping the city, and critical issues to consider as the Portland Plan unfolds.

This *Key Findings and Recommendations* document begins with a brief overview of current conditions and selected data, followed by summaries of key historic resource-related issues, challenges and opportunities in Portland and initial recommendations for possible preservation-related components of the Portland Plan or related future planning efforts. This document draws from the following sources, among others:

- The recommendations of the advisory committee for the Bureau of Planning’s *Historic Resources Code Amendments Project* (2004)
- The Bosco-Milligan Foundation’s *Historic Preservation Needs Assessment* report (2009)
- The Portland Historic Landmarks Commission’s *State of Preservation Report* (2009) and other input from the commission
- Public testimony regarding the Portland Plan work program
- The Bureau of Planning and Sustainability’s (BPS) *East Portland Historical Overview and Historic Preservation Study* (2009)
- Other Portland Plan background studies, including the *Comprehensive Plan Assessment* and the *Central Portland Plan Assessment*



*Shemanski Fountain (1926)*

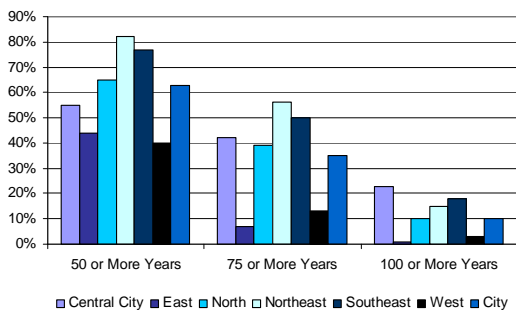
## CURRENT CONDITIONS

Portland has 20 historic and conservation districts — covering 1,500 acres and containing more than 3,500 contributing properties — along with more than 670 individual historic landmarks. The City’s Historic Resource Inventory, completed in 1984, lists 5,000 properties. Portland residents are currently sponsoring a number of historic district proposals that can add significantly to the list of designated properties. The federal government adopted one of those proposals in late October when they approved the Irvington District as an addition to the national register. The statistics in this report do not reflect this addition.

While designated historic landmarks and districts are especially iconic of the city’s history and architectural heritage, Portland is largely a city of well-established commercial, mixed-use and residential neighborhoods, with a vast reservoir of potentially significant historic properties. Overall, Portland has a significant number of older buildings. Approximately 35 percent of the city’s buildings are more than 75 years old, and 63 percent are at least 50 years old.

The following figures provide a brief overview of data on historic resources in Portland.

Resource Type	Description	No.
<b>Historic Landmarks</b>	<b>Historic Landmarks</b> are individual resources of local, state, or national significance. They include National Register properties, National Historic Landmarks, and locally designated Landmarks. They may have more than one designation and be listed as Contributing resources in districts.	<b>673</b>
	▪ <b>National Register Properties</b> These properties may also be locally designated Historic Landmarks and Contributing resources in districts.	<b>546</b>
	▪ <b>Locally designated Historic Landmarks</b> not listed in the National Register	<b>127</b>
	▪ <b>National Historic Landmarks</b> These are also listed in the National Register.	<b>2</b>
<b>Conservation Landmarks</b>	<b>Conservation Landmarks</b> are resources of local or neighborhood significance designated by the City.	<b>12</b>
<b>Historic Districts</b>	<b>Historic Districts</b> are a collection of resources of local, state, or national significance. These can be listed in the National Register, and all those in Portland are listed in the National Register.	<b>13</b>
	▪ <b>Contributing resources</b> in Historic Districts	<b>1,358</b>
	▪ <b>Noncontributing resources</b> in Historic Districts	<b>709</b>
<b>Conservation Districts</b>	<b>Conservation Districts</b> are a collection of resources of local or neighborhood significance designated by the City.	<b>7</b>
	▪ Contributing resources in Conservation Districts	<b>2,450</b>
	▪ Noncontributing resources in Conservation Districts	<b>2,162</b>
<b>Historic Resource Inventory (HRI)</b>	The <b>Historic Resource Inventory (HRI)</b> is a catalogue of resources which may be eligible for historic designation. Many of these resources, surveyed in 1984, are also landmarks and/or Contributing properties in districts.	<b>5,158</b>



The table above outlines the types and numbers of historic resources in Portland.

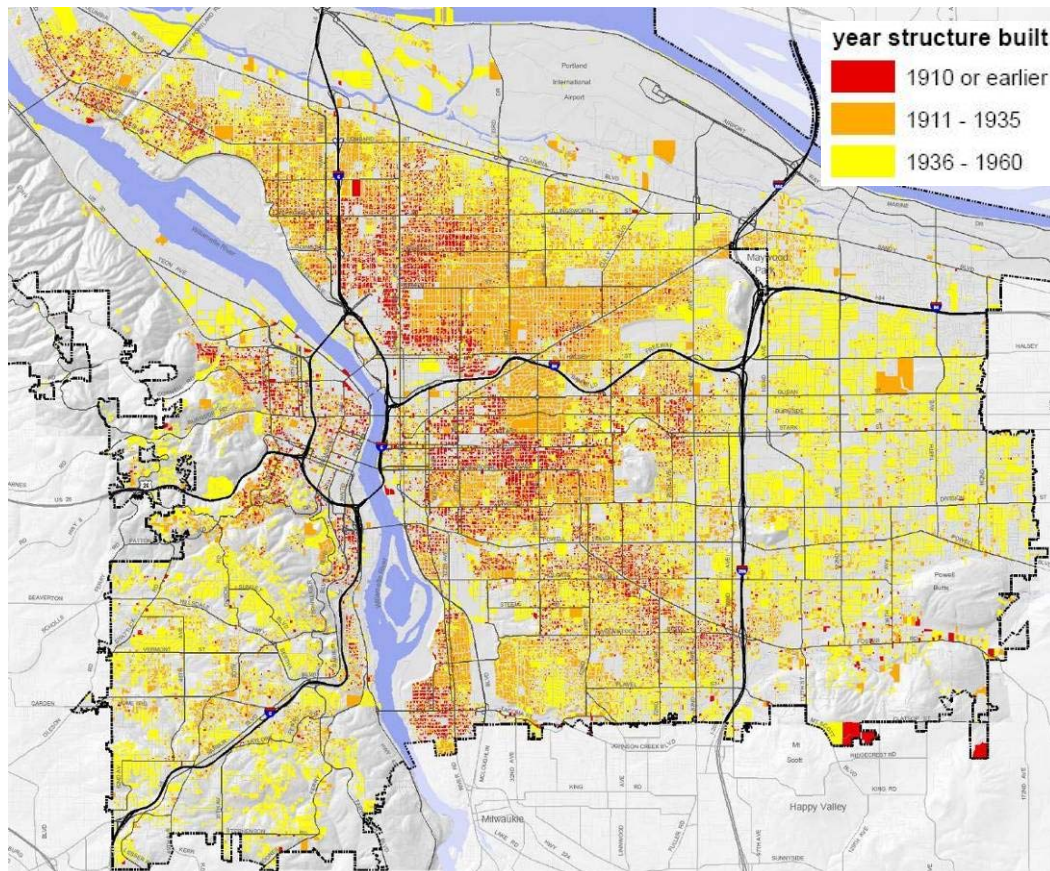
The chart at left shows percentages of buildings by liaison district (district planning areas of the city) that will be more than 50 years old in 2010, and thus technically eligible for historic designation.

The following table shows number and type of designated historic resources by liaison district. Central Portland has the highest concentration of resources in the city.

District	Historic Landmarks		Conservation Landmarks		Historic Districts		Conservation Districts		HR Inventory	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Cent. City</b>	346	53%	0	0%	7	54%	1	14%	1,547	30%
<b>West</b>	115	18%	2	17%	2	15%	0	0%	834	16%
<b>Southeast</b>	88	13%	0	0%	2	15%	0	0%	1,265	25%
<b>Northeast</b>	69	11%	4	33%	1	8%	4.5	64%	809	16%
<b>North</b>	36	5%	6	50%	1	8%	1.5	21%	620	12%
<b>East</b>	1	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	43	1%
<b>City</b>	655	100%	12	100%	13	100%	7	100%	5,118	100%

There is still much to learn about Portland's historic resources. There are large numbers of potentially significant properties that have only recently become old enough to possibly be considered historic. There are also large numbers of historic resources in areas of the city that have generally been outside the focus of preservation efforts and thus may be underrepresented.

Additional data and maps are available in the Historic Resources Background Report documents, *Understanding Historic Resources in Portland* and *Data and Maps*. The remainder of this document outlines key issues, opportunities and challenges related to historic resources in the city.





## KEY FINDINGS

### Historic Resources Play a Vital Role in Defining Portland’s Sense of Place and the Character of Its Neighborhoods

“Those attending spoke passionately about the value they place on the histories of their neighborhoods and the older buildings within them. ...Vintage buildings connect them to their neighborhoods, other residents, past and present, and strengthen their affection for their city.”

— Historic Preservation Needs Assessment, Bosco-Milligan Foundation, 2009

Historic buildings, structures and sites are vitally important elements of Portland’s unique and diverse urban character. They are special places that have been recognized as worth preserving and protecting for future generations. Portlanders place a great value on historic resources, not only designated landmarks and districts, but the established fabric of the city’s neighborhoods—its older buildings, structures and streetscapes that may not (yet) be formally designated as “historic,” but are central to the city’s distinctiveness and quality of life.

Portland residents’ appreciation of the historic built environment and their desire to protect it are manifested in many ways, from strong citizen engagement with the historic design review process (see Figures 12a and 12b), to grass roots activism, as seen in the successful recent effort to save the Ladd Carriage House. Over the past few years, strong public interest in creating new historic districts has been evident. Several neighborhood groups, from such diverse areas as the Buckman, Irvington, Brooklyn, and Reed neighborhoods, are in various stages of developing historic district nominations.



NW 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue Historic District

### Preserving Historic Resources Is Complex and Must Be Balanced with Other Policy Goals

From a public policy perspective, the protection and enhancement of historic resources is complex and must be viewed within a broader context of multiple—and occasionally competing—land use, economic development, sustainability and social policy goals. One of the Portland Plan’s most challenging tasks will be finding ways to accommodate a significant share of the region’s anticipated population, housing and employment growth, while also

preserving its historic resources and protecting and enhancing the desired character of its many long-established neighborhoods.

Two related aspects of this challenge have already been identified by citizens and preservation stakeholders:



- *Redevelopment pressure on designated and potentially significant historic resources is evident.* A large proportion of older and historic buildings do not use the full development potential of their sites under existing zoning. As development economics change over time, this can encourage demolition and increase the likelihood of insensitive additions and alterations. This tension between density and preservation policies, as well as other zoning conflicts, can be seen in areas such as the King’s Hill and Alphabet historic districts, some industrial districts, and other areas where existing zoning allows for denser development on sites with existing older and historic buildings. Redevelopment pressure has significantly impacted many historic areas outside of the Central City, especially where historic design review requirements are less stringent, including Portland’s seven conservation districts, where use of generic design standards can substitute for historic design review.
- *The scale and design of infill development are often controversial.* The character of new development in historic and conservation districts and in Portland’s many largely built-out and established neighborhoods is sometimes unsympathetically received by neighbors, citizen groups and the preservation community. The compatibility of infill development, including height and bulk issues, is consistently identified as one of Portland residents’ major livability concerns.

These tensions between public expectations for stability and continuity on the one hand, and widely supported public policies that promote the accommodation of growth on the other, are already evident in Portland. As a Portland Plan growth strategy is developed, some areas will be targeted for additional change. In places expected to experience higher density and development, the existing and historic built environment and landscape may be at additional risk. A balance between preservation goals and other policy objectives must be achieved, and tools must be developed to sensitively manage change.

### A “New History” Is Emerging: The Recent Past and Modern Architecture

Much of Portland’s post-World War II era architecture has only recently started to become eligible for historic designation, and more will become eligible every year (see Figures 2a-2d and Map 2). This includes International Style icons such as the Memorial Coliseum, larger scale developments such as the South Auditorium Urban Renewal Area, and the “Mid-Century Modern” commercial and residential structures that are sprinkled throughout Portland’s neighborhoods. The spare language of Modernism represents a kind of “new frontier” in historic preservation that is beginning to be more appreciated and documented by Portland residents and the preservation community.



Memorial Coliseum, c. 1961 (Hoffman Construction Co. photo)

In addition to a relatively small group of iconic “high-style” Modernist buildings, many types of resources were constructed after World War II. Collectively they represent a shift in the types of developments built to meet the changing needs and lifestyles of the nation, ranging from “suburban”

## The Portland Plan

housing developments to shopping malls, gas stations and new special-purpose building types such as drive-in theaters and fast-food establishments. New technologies and materials were introduced, along with changing architectural styles. While mid-century resources are becoming eligible for historic designation, many are disappearing before they can be evaluated or considered for preservation.

As yet, Portland has an inadequate inventory of these resources. Additional tools are needed to evaluate, protect and preserve them, such as historical and architectural context studies. As more mid- and late-century Modern buildings become “historic,” the City and the preservation community will need a new framework for understanding historical and architectural significance—one that goes beyond the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century downtown and streetcar main street-centric model that currently prevails.

### East Portland Is “Underserved” by Historic Preservation Research, Policies and Protections



Mill Park Elementary School (1962), East Portland

The vast area of Portland east of 82<sup>nd</sup> Avenue contains only one historic district (Rocky Butte Scenic Drive) and one historic landmark (Sleepy Hollow/Leach Botanical Garden). Because designated historic resources are shared community assets and preservation protections are public benefits, East Portland is at a disadvantage compared to most other parts of the city (see Maps 1 and 5 and the *East Portland Historical Overview and Historic Preservation Study* from March 2009). East Portland represents another kind of preservation “frontier” that deserves additional public attention. It has a substantially different history, identity and built and natural

environment than the inner Portland neighborhoods and Central City that have long been the focus of preservation efforts.

The area’s special characteristics include a preponderance of post-war architecture and street/lot/site patterns that differ significantly from other parts of the city (see Map 11). In addition, it possesses an especially at-risk array of other potential historic resources that illuminate the area’s unique history, including remnant agricultural landscapes and farmhouses, WPA-era public infrastructure, stands of mature fir trees and other landscape features, and Native American archaeological resources.

East Portland also has Metro-designated 2040 Centers, Main Streets and Corridors, urban renewal areas, and MAX corridors, which will be the continued focus of growth policies and redevelopment activity. However, East Portland lacks an adequate inventory of potential historic resources and fully developed historical context statements and evaluative tools, making it difficult to create policies, programs and projects that will help preserve aspects of the area’s historic fabric over time.

## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

### CHALLENGE: INADEQUATE INVENTORY OF HISTORIC AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES AND OTHER TOOLS

An inventory of potentially significant buildings, structures, sites and landscapes is a fundamental building block for creating effective historic preservation policies, programs and projects. It is difficult to protect what we have not identified or evaluated. Unfortunately, Portland’s *Historic Resources Inventory* (HRI) is now a quarter century old and has a number of shortcomings that reduce its effectiveness as a preservation planning tool (see Figures 3a-3g and Map 5):



*Centennial Mill complex, built 1910-1940*

- A large number of now potentially significant resources (such as post-war Modernist buildings) were not identified because they were not yet of sufficient age.
- Some areas of the city and certain types of structures (such as industrial districts and buildings and historic landscapes) were not well documented.
- Many inventoried structures have since been demolished, altered or restored.
- Areas recently annexed to the City, notably in East Portland, were not inventoried at all (see Map 7).
- Historic and prehistoric archaeological resources and culturally significant Native American sites were not included. Challenges to understanding archaeological and cultural resources include restricted access to sensitive site location data.

### CHALLENGE: IMPROVED PRESERVATION POLICIES, TOOLS AND INCENTIVES ARE NEEDED

Portland’s tool kit of preservation policies, programs, regulations and incentives—the public “carrots and sticks” that support the preservation and enhancement of historic resources—needs to be reviewed and, where appropriate, revised and improved (see the *Understanding Historic Resources* document). Some of the following issues and needs have been identified:

- *Effectiveness of preservation zoning incentives.* The City currently lacks a reliable and consistent system for tracking the use of preservation incentives, such as the use of Transfers of Development Rights (TDRs) and land use flexibility allowances for historic landmarks. In addition, these incentives need to be evaluated for their effectiveness and value in comparison to other alternatives (such as development bonuses), as they appear to be underutilized. (They likely have been used on fewer than 20 occasions citywide.) See Figure 6.
- *Lack of financial incentives.* Although Portland does have some regulatory incentives, such as preservation zoning provisions, it lacks financial incentives targeted specifically toward historic preservation. The former Portland Development Commission-administered Urban Conservation



## The Portland Plan

Fund has long been defunct. The Oregon Historic Special Assessment property tax benefit, one of the few financial incentives currently available, was scaled back by the 2009 Oregon Legislature, making local financial tools even more critical (see Figures 7a-7e).

- *Inconsistent and complex applicability and content of historic design guidelines and standards.* Depending on geographic location and historic designation, landmarks and districts are subject to design review requirements and criteria that can differ considerably (see Map 6). For example, resources in districts that do not have their own guidelines are subject to more standardized and generic requirements, while in other areas several sets of uncoordinated guidelines are applicable. This multi-layered structure of disparate and sometimes overlapping sets of guidelines and standards can lead to inconsistent application of regulations and potentially less-than-desirable development outcomes.
- *Barriers to designating local landmarks.* Only two historic landmarks have been designated by the City in the past 15 years (see Figure 4c). This is due to several factors, including changes to state laws requiring owner consent. However, the fee charged by the City (currently about \$3,000) remains a significant disincentive for owners of historic properties. Many Oregon jurisdictions with sizable stocks of historic resources, such as the City of Albany, do not charge for local landmark designations.
- *Coordination of City historic resource functions.* Currently historic resource-related functions are carried out by a number of City bureaus and commissions, including the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, the Bureau of Development Services, the Historic Landmarks Commission, the Portland Development Commission and the several bureaus that manage physical assets, such as Parks and Recreation and General Services. Although there does not appear to be much duplication of services, better communication and coordination are needed. The possibility of a dedicated preservation office or officer is one approach that has been effective in other jurisdictions.

### OPPORTUNITY: HISTORIC PRESERVATION IS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

“Development without a historic preservation component is not sustainable.”

-- Donovan Rypkema

Historic preservation can foster development that is socially, economically and environmentally sustainable. The National Trust for Historic Preservation has begun to document the benefits of historic preservation, including figures that measure the carbon footprint of demolition and new construction in comparison to rehabilitation, and the gain in “green” jobs from rehabilitation projects. Portland has taken a leadership role in the sustainability movement and is recognized for a number of public and private sustainability initiatives, as well as several high-profile historic buildings that have achieved LEED ratings (see



White Stag Block rehabilitation (photo by Sally Painter)



Figures 9a-9f). The merger of the Bureau of Planning and the Office of Sustainable Development creates new opportunities to explore and improve the connections between preservation planning and sustainable development and to initiate projects and programs that meet multiple objectives. The following are some of the issues and opportunities that have been identified by preservationists at the national and local level as important to preservation planning within a broad conception of sustainability:

- *Greater understanding of the value of historic building from the standpoint of sustainability.* More can be done at the local level to identify how the values and practices of historic preservation and sustainable development overlap, and where conflicts can be resolved. Older and historic buildings have intrinsic value in terms of their embodied energy, were often constructed from quality materials and represent durable assets. Good building stewardship, re-use and rehabilitation are inherently sustainable practices.
- *The role of historic preservation in sustainable economic development.* This topic also deserves greater recognition. Large urban developments, such as those that have transformed the Pearl District, create significant economic benefits for the city. There are challenges when the City is faced with the choice of preserving small historic buildings or developing large mixed-use projects. Historic redevelopment can be very expensive and often requires subsidies (see Figures 7-8). However, preservation and rehabilitation have demonstrable economic benefits to the community, such as spurring revitalization in surrounding areas, increasing the local tax base and creating heritage tourism opportunities.
- *The cultural and social value of historic buildings.* Historic buildings play an important role in enhancing community character and sense of place, preserving affordable housing and stabilizing property values, among other considerations that relate to the common good. Historic preservation is a key part of sustaining our culture, civic identity and social values.
- *The suitability of historic structures for alternative energy production and other conservation technologies.* Retrofitting historic buildings with more environmentally sustainable technologies such as solar panels, wind turbines, eco-roofs and on-site water treatment systems presents both opportunities and challenges. These modifications can help meet environmental goals and extend the useful life of a building, but, if not sensitively executed, may negatively impact the integrity and character of historic places. Creative approaches, including design standards and guidelines, technological innovations, and collaboration between designers, preservationists, property owners and public agencies, can concretely demonstrate the connections between preservation and sustainability values.

#### **OPPORTUNITY: COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIP**

In an era of scarce public resources, preservation projects such as inventorying potential resources or creating new historic districts will require the cooperative efforts of preservationists, public agencies, property owners and concerned citizens. Effective comprehensive preservation efforts both require and create opportunities for communities to work together in a collaborative manner—building on and increasing local knowledge and community cohesion. Inclusive preservation

## The Portland Plan

planning will help ensure informed future decision making and increase the quality and effectiveness of preservation efforts.

The Portland Plan will create opportunities to engage an active citizenry, take advantage of the special expertise and advocacy of community groups and non-profits, and spur the collaboration of multiple public agencies. The following stakeholders and community partners, among others, have an interest in preservation, history and culture and can engage with the Portland Plan process:

- The Portland Historic Landmarks Commission
- The Oregon State Historic Preservation Office and other public agencies
- The Bosco-Milligan Foundation/Architectural Heritage Center
- The Historic Preservation League of Oregon
- The American Institute of Architects and the National Trust for Historic Preservation
- Portland State University and other educational institutions and groups
- The NAYA Family Center and other Native American and cultural organizations
- Neighborhood associations and other community groups



South Park Blocks, acquired 1869

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### INTEGRATE HISTORIC RESOURCES INTO THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PORTLAND PLAN

Historic resources play a key role in defining the character and identity of Portland's neighborhoods, and Portlanders show strong attachment and protectiveness toward older buildings and the culture and history of the city. Accordingly, development of the Portland Plan's growth strategy and land use and urban design policies should take into consideration not only the location and characteristics of formally designated landmarks and districts, but also the large number of older structures and historic street patterns that form the backbone of the city's neighborhoods and provide a vast pool of potential historic resources.

Historic resources and their role in defining neighborhood typologies and pattern areas will be a fundamental layer used in determining "areas of stability and change" and other urban form and physical planning components of the Portland Plan (see the Portland Plan *Urban Form Background Report*). As plan concepts, goals and policies are developed, the City's existing historic preservation policy framework and tool kit should be evaluated (see *Historic Resources Background Report: Understanding Historic Resources in Portland*). In the later stages of the Portland Plan process, preservation policies and implementation measures (such as zoning provisions and design standards and guidelines) should be reviewed and revised in order to ensure that they support the

plan and address some of the existing challenges and opportunities outlined in this document, such as the tensions over the scale and design of infill development in historic neighborhoods and the effectiveness of incentives.

## PURSUE STRATEGIC PRESERVATION RESEARCH, EDUCATION AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

The list of Portland's preservation needs and challenges is extensive; however, the scope of the Portland Plan and available resources are limited. The City and its community partners will need to prioritize their preservation efforts and be strategic about the projects they pursue. The task of integrating preservation values into the Portland Plan and creating a means for balancing the desire to preserve historic resources with other public policy goals will be challenging. On the positive side, there are a number of opportunities to meet multiple objectives and other policy goals at the same time. Below are some possible avenues for targeted approaches to addressing historic preservation needs. This list is preliminary and will need to be refined as the development of the Portland Plan progresses and citizens provide additional input. Further prioritization will be needed, as resources may not be available to pursue all of these actions and new needs and opportunities may arise.

- **Identify opportunities for targeted inventories of historic resources.** Comprehensively updating the HRI on a citywide level would require a considerable commitment of resources, including qualified personnel, time, leadership and a significant source of funding. A more strategic or phased approach to updating the HRI may need to be developed, such as targeting specific geographies or types or eras of resources. Partnerships with preservation and neighborhood groups will be required.



*Neighborhood in Northwest Portland*

Areas that are expected to undergo new growth and redevelopment as a result of existing or future Portland Plan land use policies should be prioritized for new survey work. Historic resources in “areas of change” are inherently at greater risk of demolition, especially those that have yet to be identified and documented. For instance, historic resources in Urban Renewal Areas (URAs) are vulnerable to redevelopment due to the nexus between revitalization and growth policies and the availability of public funding to carry them out. On the other hand, urban renewal also can supply the resources and momentum needed

for documentation, historic designation and, renovation and rehabilitation projects. More than 40 percent of Portland's individual National Register properties are located in Urban Renewal Areas (see Figure 4f).

City-owned historic resources should also be a priority for new inventory work (see Figure 5a and Supplementary Data Table 5). Because these collectively-owned resources are directly controlled by the City and citizens rightly have high expectations for good stewardship, the City should increase its efforts to identify, evaluate and protect them through Cultural Resource Management

## The Portland Plan

(CRM) practices. The recently completed historical context study *Civic Planning, Development and Public Works, 1851-1965* (Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, 2009), as well as the City's new Historic Resources Database, will greatly assist in this work.

Finally, a number of historic resource surveys conducted for various purposes over the past two decades have not been adopted as part of the "official" Historic Resources Inventory (HRI). They contain much valuable information that could be used in historic preservation planning. Selected inventories should be made more readily accessible to researchers and the public, such as through scanning and Internet posting. New mapping tools can also assist in broadening understanding of historic resources citywide. As an example, a current BPS project will bring the HRI data into GoogleMaps, making the inventory more accessible using a new interactive format. This could be a model for making greater use of existing survey and inventory data.

- **Pursue preservation projects in East Portland.** East Portland has few protected historic resources, lacks an adequate inventory and has had little historic preservation planning. New preservation initiatives in the area are called for, such as inventory and research, historic designation projects, and the development of preservation policies and strategies that respond to the distinctive attributes of East Portland. This would not only provide East Portlanders with proactive and positive approaches to livability concerns accompanying growth and change, but also broaden our understanding of the city as a whole. The *East Portland Historical Overview and Historic Preservation Study* (Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, 2009) and the *East Portland Action Plan* (Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, 2009) contain additional information about potential preservation strategies and projects for this area. A survey project now underway will enhance understanding of the area's architectural character and historic development. It focuses on "Mid-Century" residential properties constructed in the 1940s-60s, a period of rapid development in East Portland. The survey results will be made available to the public and included in a future addendum to the Historic Resources Background Report.
- **Pursue projects that explore the significance of Modern architecture.** Not every post-war or Modern structure warrants historic preservation protections. However, protection cannot occur without greater recognition and research. Even as a new wave of potentially significant architecture from the post-war era becomes eligible for historic designation, many examples are disappearing before they can be evaluated or considered for preservation. There is an inadequate inventory of these types of resources, and few tools to evaluate, protect and preserve them. The basic groundwork for a considered approach to protecting this very different universe of historic resources should be established. One approach would be to develop a historic context statement, as the City of Eugene did in 2003 (*Eugene Modernism, 1935-1965*, Eugene Planning and Development Department, 2003).

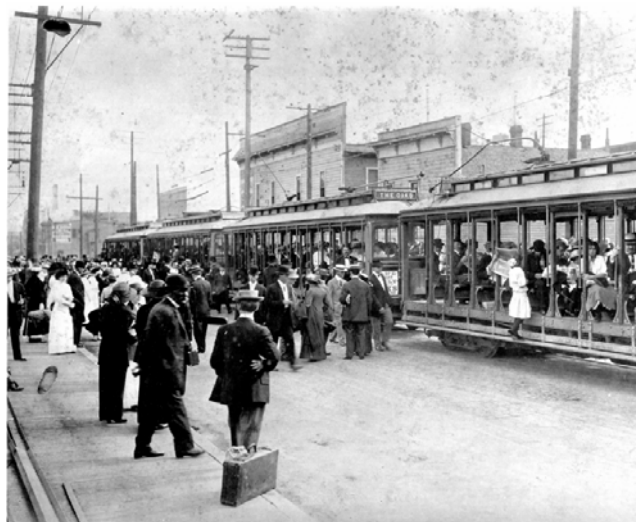


Bagdad Theater (1927), Southeast Portland



- **Pursue strategies that capitalize on the nexus between historic preservation and sustainable development.** The City should work with local citizens and business, as well as federal, state, and local organizations, on initiatives that promote both preservation and sustainability. These range from tax credit programs and incentives that encourage historically appropriate rehabilitation and energy upgrades, to improved green-building rating systems. The integration of the City's long-range planning and sustainability programs in the new Bureau of Planning and Sustainability creates opportunities for new and improved projects that more fully incorporate historic preservation values and expertise with sustainability. The following ongoing and planned efforts would benefit from this multi-objective approach:
  - Green Building Program activities, including technical assistance, financial incentives and demonstration projects
  - Update of the Green Building Policy and other policy and regulatory projects
  - Education and outreach, such as Fix-it Fairs and ReTHINK events
  - Planning efforts such as creation of eco-districts, 20-minute neighborhoods and public infrastructure plans
  - Implementation of the Climate Action Plan

Historic resources enrich our built environment, help define the character of our neighborhoods, and contribute to our civic identity and sense of place. With the expected population, housing and employment growth in the Portland region, there will be challenges to preserving historic resources and protecting and enhancing our cherished historic and established neighborhoods. Because resources are limited, the City and its community partners will need to prioritize preservation efforts and be strategic about the projects they pursue. A key priority should be integrating preservation values into the Portland Plan process, while also balancing preservation goals with other policy goals. Collaboration among all stakeholders and community partners will be key to the success of these efforts and future preservation planning.



Oaks Trolley, early 1900s (Oregon Historical Society)