



Portland Parks
and Recreation

INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 25, 1979

TO: Members of the Executive Management Team

FROM: Lana Danaher; Neighborhood History Project

SUBJECT: Future of NHP collections

Since the Neighborhood History Project (NHP) is being discontinued during this fiscal year, the question of where to house the materials that have been accumulated must be addressed. In light of ORS 192 concerning Public records and the City Ordinance implementing a Records Management Program, this decision will probably require the approval of the City Records Officer, Stan Paar. Below is a brief outline of the options and issues surrounding this question as well as my recommendation for the best repository for the materials that the NHP have acquired over the last three years. The materials in question include the following:

- An Oral History collection containing 65-75 taped interviews, the accompanying transcripts, and miscellaneous supportive items. Organized to supplement the Vertical File, each transcript is cross-referenced into that collection.
- Vertical Files on 74 neighborhoods and a variety of Portland topics. Each neighborhood file contains copies of research papers, unpublished manuscripts, newspaper clippings, and other miscellaneous items such as property abstracts. There is little original material in this collection, but it is heavily used by researchers because of its accessibility. These items have been assembled by volunteers, from Multnomah County Library (MCL), Oregon Historical Society (OHS), colleges, and scrapbooks of local residents.
- A Visual collection of an approximate 3,000 slides and 200 photographs. While some of these are original vintage photos dating from the turn of the century to the present. Many of these are copies from OHS' collection, the rest were copied or obtained from private collections of citizens.
- Miscellaneous items including: maps, enlarged Itek photos used in exhibits, exhibit panels and supplies left over from Neighborfairs, and equipment.

In deciding where the above collections should be transferred after NHP is discontinued, the following criteria should be considered:

- The accessibility of the facility to the traditional users of the materials, i.e. students, neighborhood association members, individual residents, planners, and architects, and especially teachers.
- The facilities stability. Places like Architectural Preservation Gallery had to be dismissed because of their lack of secure funding.
- Ability and willingness to service the collections. Involved with this criteria is whether the facility has similar types of materials.

There are three possible locations for the oral history and vertical file collections: The Oregon Historical Society (OHS), Multnomah County Library (MCL), and the City Archives. Representatives of each have expressed interest in receiving these NHP materials. I will discuss each of these options in turn.

OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The OHS is readily identified by serious researchers as the primary repository of historical materials of local and regional concern. OHS library includes a Vertical File, an oral history collection, and a photograph collection, similar to that of NHP. This increases the ability of OHS to assimilate the new collection. In spite of these arguments in favor of transferring the items in question to that facility there are also some problems with such a decision.

The major difficulty is that of accessibility to the traditional users of NHP services. With short office hours, non-circulating material, and a rule that prohibits anyone under 16 from using the library, there are some problems with using that facility. Many NHP supporters, some that have donated material, have expressed concern about a tendency for materials to get "buried" at OHS.

Finally, OHS is a private institution. According to city ordinance and ORS 192 Public Records can not be donated to a private institution, its retention period expires, and then only with the approval of the City Records Officer. The City Records Officer, Stan Paar, must notify the State Archivist as well. However, after reading the definition of "Public Record" in ORS 192, it is unclear whether NHP materials are within that category. The retention period has not been established for these materials as yet, either. The City Archivist would have to be consulted should the NHP Collection be transferred.

MULTNOMAH COUNTY LIBRARY

The MCL is easily the most accessible of the three to the general lay public. People of all ages are able to use the facility. Unlike OHS, MCL also has the capability of allowing users to listen to the oral history tapes instead of only reading the transcripts. With a neighborhood branch system and an emphasis on community education and outreach, NHP materials would be certain to be used by schools. However, they do not possess a collection of this type, they do not currently have oral history tapes or a vertical file. I have spoken with the Head Librarian and other representatives. Although they were interested in all the materials, primary interest was directed at receiving a copy of the five NHP slide materials and the "Reference Guide to Portland Neighborhoods".

CITY ARCHIVES

Unless a decision is made to the contrary which receives the approval of the City Archivist, this is where the materials will eventually be housed. If NHP collections are to be considered Public Records, the City Archivist has final jurisdiction. I have spoken with Stan Paar and Lisa Fagerlund. They have pointed out that though the City Archives does not currently house many materials similar to the NHP collections, and are not generally considered easily accessible to the general public, this situation is changing. They have identified as a goal in the near future the increased community use of the City Archives. Also, there is a possible program in the offing which will be increasing the use of

archives by the schools. The inclusion of NHP materials would enhance this direction. However, should we choose to locate the materials elsewhere, I am certain there will be no opposition from the Records Management unit and City Archives; especially since the NHP collection is not of an original nature. I do recommend that the Project files be released to the Archives unit by June 30, 1980 since those are definitely public records and logically should be housed there.

RECOMMENDATION

Because the Archives unit does not currently have the ability to be involved in community outreach, it would be necessary to publicize the transfer to that facility to ensure that those materials would be used. I do not feel that the City Archives is the best location at the present time.

Multnomah County Library should receive a copy of the five slide shows with a finalized script since they are best equipped to use that resource. They could also receive the exhibit panels since branch libraries are often in need of exhibit ideas.

Since the OHS has similarly organized material, and in spite of their problems, I see little choice but to donate the materials to that facility. This should not include the photographs and slides. The visual collection should be maintained within the Parks Bureau to be used by community information staff, and by other city agencies. The materials that would be transferred to OHS would include the oral history collection and the vertical file.

In the absence of an identified Portland or Multnomah County Historical Society, the OHS can best ensure the continued use and availability of these materials. Of course it should be understood that the transfer of this collection precludes a possible restart of the functions related to NHP by any city agency. I am confident that this material will be maintained as long as the community is interested in using it.

The NHP will be transferring the materials beginning September 30, 1979 and a decision will need to be made no later than August 15 to allow time for arrangements to be made.

cc: Lisa Fagerlund
Ronda Williamson