

SPECIAL



REPORT

Healthy Historic Districts

Solutions to Help Preserve and Revitalize Oregon's Historic Downtowns



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2010 Preservation Roundtable Process

Topic Defined

Summer 2009

Online Survey

Early January 2010

Workshop

Portland, OR
January 19, 2010

Symposium

Albany, OR
May 14, 2010

Research, Interviews & Site Visits

Late Summer 2010

Report Released

September 30, 2010

Background

In January 2010, Restore Oregon (formerly the Historic Preservation League of Oregon) launched the Preservation Roundtable to bring together diverse perspectives to address the topic of **Healthy Historic Districts in a Changing World – Compatibility & Viability**. The recommendations presented in this report were defined by Preservation Roundtable participants, who represented the wide range of views and geography that characterize Oregon's historic districts. Over 100 business owners, community leaders, real estate developers, historians, urban planners and residents from Astoria to Pendleton to Jacksonville participated, defining common obstacles to district vitality and exploring diverse solutions.

While not intended to represent a comprehensive examination of every issue, this report and its nine key action items offer a **call to action** - a road map to dramatically improve the cultural, economic, and environmental sustainability of dozens of communities across our state. If the enthusiastic participation in the 2010 Preservation Roundtable is any indicator, Oregon's historic districts have a bright future ahead.



Participants discuss issues and solutions for historic districts at the Preservation Roundtable

Introduction

Think “Main Street,” and images of Normal Rockwell come to mind. Friendly people, sidewalks that invite a stroll, authentic well-crafted buildings of brick, wood, and native stone, storefronts filled with local businesses.... You think **community**.

Oregon has 119 districts listed in the National Register of Historic Places and more are on the way. Among these are 30 commercial districts. Unlike ubiquitous strip malls which convey no sense of place, historic downtowns with their iconic buildings tell the unique story of their community - its heritage, values, craftsmanship, and enterprise. Today many are worn around the edges, under-occupied, or hidden behind ill-conceived “remuddled” facades, but still these districts represent an enormous economic asset. They’re as much a bellwether for the future as they are a reminder of the past and they help make Oregon, **Oregon**.

Restore Oregon and the nearly 100 people who participated in the 2010 Preservation Roundtable believe it’s time to invest in the revitalization of our historic districts. And this isn’t about nostalgia. This is about economic, cultural, and environmental sustainability:



- **Preservation = Jobs.** Dollar-for-dollar, building rehabilitation creates more jobs than manufacturing or new construction.¹ Additionally, preservation supports local employees, relies on regional suppliers, and increases the economic potential of commercial buildings and districts.
- **Preservation is about people, culture, and livability.** Historic downtowns encapsulate the stories of the past while providing an affordable and creative environment for future generations. They serve as models of community planning for the 21st century, providing all of life’s necessities within a 20 minute walk.
- **Preservation is green.** Retaining and reusing the embodied energy found within historic buildings minimizes the need for new materials, keeps waste from the landfill, and circumvents the need for intensive demolition and construction activities that produce harmful greenhouse gases.

Oregon’s historic downtowns are a tremendous asset. This report outlines nine practical ways we can invest in and benefit from them.

About Restore Oregon

The mission of Restore Oregon is to **Preserve, Reuse, and Pass Forward Oregon’s Historic Resources to Ensure Livable, Sustainable Communities**. Founded in 1977 as a 501(c)(3) non-profit, Restore Oregon provides education programs, advocacy, and maintains over 40 conservation easements on historic properties across the state, protecting them from demolition in perpetuity. Our goals include:



- **Preserve** and **pass forward** historic sites, properties and districts.
- Ensure sufficient **economic incentives** for historic preservation.
- Promote appropriate **land use policies**, development **guidelines** and preservation **standards**.
- Educate the public to **increase awareness** of the economic value of preservation and its essential role in sustainability.

Restore Oregon office is located in the historic White Stag Block in Portland’s Skidmore Old Town National Historic Landmark District.



Executive Summary

This summary highlights the 2010 Restore Oregon Preservation Roundtable recommendations for maintaining and improving the economic, cultural, and environmental health of Oregon's National Register historic districts. More details and steps toward implementation are discussed beginning on page 9. While these action items are aimed at historic districts that are primarily commercial in nature, many are applicable to residential districts, individual historic properties, and designated Main Streets².

According to Roundtable participants, healthy historic districts require four things:

- Coordinated **vision and planning** to provide a clear path for the future that encourages change but upholds the fundamentals of historic preservation.
- Infill **design** that is compatible with its surroundings and tells the evolving story of the district.
- Financial and honorific **incentives** that close the development gap and reward best practices.
- Clear and consistent **regulations** that protect the district's history but don't prevent positive change.

Characteristics of a Healthy Historic District

- Well maintained buildings that retain architectural integrity
- Vibrant activity day and evening
- High occupancy rates, and on all floors
- High percentage of local ownership
- Few surface parking or empty lots
- Well visited by tourists
- Low crime rate

The following nine recommendations will help get us there:

1. Chart a clear course with a comprehensive

district development plan. Oregon's historic districts will inevitably continue to evolve. Without a comprehensive vision for how the district should look, function, and serve its citizens, piecemeal development can slowly diminish the very fabric that made it significant in the first place. Development plans offer the potential to manage change that will enhance the character and vitality of the district over the long-term.

2. Establish economic development districts that support business and provide funding for the

rehabilitation of historic buildings. Urban renewal areas, business and economic improvement districts, and Main Street programs leverage local assets to achieve greater viability for business and buildings. Economic development strategies should channel resources into historic districts where dollars and technical expertise are needed the most.



Good and not-so-good examples of rehabilitation in Baker City



3. Create design guidelines and standards for infill to ensure the new is compatible with the old. Thoughtful design guidelines informed by the historic and architectural significance of the place are needed to encourage and shape infill construction that adds to, rather than detracts from or mimics, the evolving story of the district. Additionally, state and federal standards for infill are needed to set a clear and simple minimum baseline for what's appropriate and what's not.

4. Expand state and federal incentive programs to make appropriate development feasible. Current state and federal tax breaks to incentivize the rehabilitation of historic buildings often aren't enough to make preservation projects pencil financially. A state tax credit for rehabilitation and a federal incentive for compatible infill would make commercial historic districts even more economically, culturally, and environmentally sustainable.

5. Tailor local incentive and disincentive programs to meet local needs. Local jurisdictions can and should direct district change and preservation activities through the use of creative grants, fees, and policies. Among other ideas, landfill taxes on the demolition of older buildings, prioritization of locating government services in historic districts, and grants for storefront improvements can enhance the character and economic vitality of districts around the state.

6. Update preservation ordinances to ensure clarity, consistency, and defensibility. To promote appropriate local control of historic districts and create a consistent baseline across the state, model preservation ordinances should be developed to assist communities in implementing sound preservation policies that meet today's legal standards.

7. Identify a single point of contact to cut through red tape. Every commercial historic district should have a single point of contact to provide clear and consistent answers and assistance to business and property owners. This individual would help streamline the development process, disseminate information about incentives and regulations, help coordinate planning activities, and work closely with district stakeholders and policy-makers. With the historic district as their primary client, coordinators would be the municipal stewards of district health.

8. Tell the story of the district. The historic narrative is what makes a district significant and should be infused in everything from design guidelines to walking tours. Heritage education campaigns can be big or small, but fostering a sense of place is a must for each of the state's unique districts.

9. Promote best practices through a statewide preservation awards program. To recognize and honor preservation success stories from around the state, an inclusive awards program is needed. In addition to receiving recognition, award recipients would encourage and inform future preservation victories through sharing best practices and lessons learned.



Historic District—Independence, Oregon

Historic Preservation in Oregon—A Brief Overview

The historic downtowns and Main Streets found across Oregon are unique: they tell the stories of the past while still largely functioning as the economic, social, and cultural center of their communities. Oregon boasts 119 National Register historic districts that encompass:

- 12,274 properties
- At least 17,000 acres of land
- About 30 commercial districts
- Over 1,386 commercial buildings³

Ashland, Albany, Baker City, Condon, Cottage Grove, Independence, La Grande, Medford, Roseburg, Silverton, St. Helens, The Dalles, Union, and a host of other communities have successfully nominated their historic commercial districts to the National Register of Historic Places, declaring that their story matters. Additionally, two commercial districts - Jacksonville and Portland's Skidmore/Old Town - have been recognized as National Historic Landmark districts for their *exceptional* national significance.

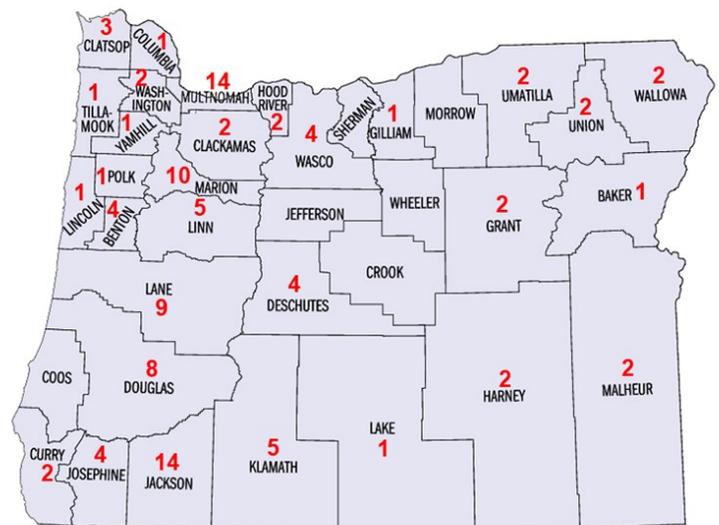


Oregon's historic districts exist within a framework that extends from individual property owners to the National Park Service. Standards for rehabilitation have been established, state and federal tax incentives have been codified by legislators, ordinances have been crafted by city councils, and historic areas have become some of the most popular places to live, work and play.

The State Historic Preservation Office's Certified Local Government program allows grant monies and technical assistance to flow from the National Park Service to urban and rural communities that meet the qualifications of the program. Additionally, the Oregon Main Street Program assists communities in implementing the 4-Point Approach® developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

However, ever-changing political, economic, and natural forces necessitate new ideas for protecting and promoting the state's historic resources. Many continue to deteriorate. While Oregon communities use differing standards for designating places as historic, Goal 5 of the *Statewide Planning Goals and Guidelines* employs the National Register as the general baseline for determining historic significance. National Register listing makes properties eligible for state and federal incentives, but it is up to local communities to adopt their own rules for managing historic places. While some larger cities have adopted ordinances that can deny the demolition of National Register properties, many smaller communities have no codified measures to protect their historic resources.

Our Historic Districts tell the story of Oregon! They deserve to be protected, revitalized, and passed forward to future generations.



National Register Districts by County

Preservation: Dollars, Sense, and Environments

The motivations for protecting historic places differ from community to community, but the benefits are essentially the same. A plethora of data shows that preservation is economically, culturally, and environmentally sustainable.

Economic Benefits

- **75% of economic benefits generated by rehabilitation stay within the local community.** Because preservation projects require skilled labor, specialized materials, and attention to detail, less money is sent overseas to import building materials that often have environmental and human rights implications.
- **Investing in rehabilitation creates more jobs than new construction.**⁴ In addition to producing skilled construction jobs, rehabilitating a vacant building leads to a substantial increase in the local tax base.
- **Oregon's tourism industry employs 90,000 and generates \$7 billion annually.** A 2006 survey concluded that 28% of the state's overnight visitors seek out historic sites, bringing with them significant heritage tourism dollars.⁵



Window restoration in Astoria's Historic District

Social and Cultural Benefits

- **Historic downtowns provide creative opportunities for affordable housing and small business generation.** Nationally, about two-thirds of recent rehabilitation projects were located in neighborhoods with average incomes below the area's median family income.⁶ Many historic districts are socioeconomically diverse, housing and employing people from all walks of life.
- **Historic districts are mixed-use and walkable.** Current planning initiatives to create "20 minute neighborhoods" need to look no further than the commercial historic district to find a model of a walkable community with a mix of business activities.
- **Historic places and traditional downtowns foster community pride.** Learning more about a community's history deepens local residents' sense of place and helps instill values and pride.



Portland's Skidmore Fountain celebrates citizens as the "riches of a city"

Environmental Benefits

- **Historic preservation is "green" at its very core.** It is about conserving and reusing what we already have!
- **Adaptive reuse reduces urban sprawl.** Converting a vacant historic building into 40 residential units can save the 10 acres of land required to provide the same number of single-family residences.⁷ As Oregon's population grows, protecting valuable farm and forest land hinges on increasing the density of urban areas. While most commercial historic districts are only a few stories in height, infilling vacant lots and reusing historic buildings can generate the density needed for mass transit and multifamily housing, as well as provide small business and office space.

(Continued on page 18...)



Demolition of the Rosefriend Apts - Portland 2008

Obstacles to Compatibility & Viability

When stakeholders were asked what had to be addressed for commercial historic districts to be successful, two themes emerged: compatibility and viability. Compatibility refers to how well the **design** of additions and new buildings fits into the historic context. Viability refers to the long-term **economic** success of districts. Although every district tells a different story, features a different stock of buildings, and exists within a different economic and political environment, they face common obstacles:

A lack of long-term vision and planning leaves districts subject to ad hoc change.

- Many districts are improperly zoned, discouraging the type of mixed-use development that made the district economically viable in the first place.
- The National Register nomination is not used as well as it could be to inform planning and development activities.
- The district is not adequately marketed to residents, businesses, and visitors.
- Public agencies do not coordinate with district stakeholders prior to and during major infrastructure projects.

Design of new buildings is often out of sync with the character of the district.

- The height and footprint of new buildings often conflicts with existing patterns.
- Abundant surface parking lots create an aesthetic nuisance that detracts from the district's continuity.
- New buildings are not built with the same quality of materials as their historic counterparts.
- Infill is often too jarringly different from the design of existing buildings, disrupting the harmony of the streetscape; or inappropriately tries to imitate vintage buildings.

Financial incentives often aren't enough to stimulate redevelopment.

- Seismic upgrades and ADA accessibility requirements are too expensive.
- Vacant lots remain undeveloped because compatible new construction is too costly.
- Oregon's Special Assessment program does not incentivize preservation activities as successfully as it once did.

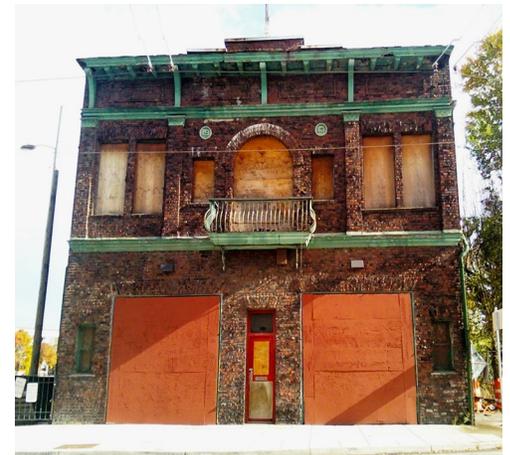
Regulations are too bureaucratic in some communities, while weak or non-existent in others.

- Property owners are given inconsistent information by city government.
- Developing within a district with regulations is costlier than developing outside the district.
- Yet without sufficient regulation, incremental alterations and demolitions diminish the story of a district over time.
- Building codes (or their interpretation) don't offer the flexibility needed to allow all buildings to be rehabilitated.

Photo by PublicHall



Historic La Grande, a Main Street participant



National Register-eligible firehouse, NW Portland

Findings and Recommendations

As Oregon forges its leadership position at the center of the sustainability movement, a major component must be the conservation and reuse of existing resources. Implementing the following recommendations conserves some of our most significant, irreplaceable historic places while also boosting the cultural and economic health of communities in every quadrant of the state.

1. Comprehensive, Updated District Development Plans

Ad hoc parking strategies, arbitrary new construction, the loss of historic buildings, and vacant upper floors are common in many of Oregon's commercial historic districts. While overarching downtown and city development plans often encompass historic districts, **specialized plans are needed** to honor the unique significance and economic potential of National Register districts. The vision of the future shouldn't reject change, but should set forth strategies to **enhance the character and economic vitality** of the district. Development plans serve the district, from its buildings to its businesses, in outlining measures to protect authenticity and encourage economic vitality.

Among other items, a coordinated and holistic vision for the following should be addressed in development plans:

- Parking
- Commercial and residential density
- Zoning
- Vacant and underutilized properties
- New construction and new uses
- Standards for rehabilitation
- Mitigating damages from public infrastructure projects
- National Register nomination updates as buildings are altered, demolished, or gain significance over time
- Heritage education and tourism

The bottom line: Anticipating and targeting district change can be accomplished through development plans that address stakeholder needs and provide measures to protect the historic fabric.

How we get there: Inherently place-specific, development plans are prepared and implemented at the local level. District stakeholders need to work closely with local government and, when appropriate, the local Main Street program in initiating, drafting, and implementing the plan. Training and technical assistance on preservation planning and economic development should be made available as district development plan campaigns move forward. While their implementation will differ from district to district, producing development plans is a relatively short-term process with long-term benefits.

Profile: Astoria

Everything Old Is New Again

Astoria Downtown Historic District
Period of Significance: 1883–1947

Listed in the National Register: 1998
Size of District: 30 square blocks containing 130 properties

Significant in the areas of architecture, commerce, exploration, industry, and politics, Astoria's downtown is one of the most recognizable historic districts in the state. Downtown Astoria has a plan to attract an infusion of private investment in its historic building stock, but the district still faces significant economic challenges. The 1924 Hotel Eliot and 1925 Hotel Commodore have been rehabilitated and work is underway to rehabilitate the Astor Hotel to better serve its affordable housing tenants. The Astoria Downtown Historic District Association, an "Exploring Downtown" Main Street member, recently hired a RARE intern to analyze the occupancy of downtown buildings and provide much-needed support for local businesses.



2. Coordinated Economic Development Districts

Local governments have fewer and fewer resources to support property owners and businesses in historic districts. Economic development districts that generate local revenue streams for local business and rehabilitation activities have immense potential to enhance the compatibility and viability of Oregon's commercial historic districts. Economic development districts are not a new idea, most urban communities across Oregon employ at least one of the following:

- The National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street Approach® supported by local, government, and grant revenue
- Economic and business improvement districts supported by voluntary business fees and property taxes
- Urban renewal areas supported by tax increment financing

Coordinating urban renewal areas, improvement districts, and Main Street programs with commercial historic districts have been proven to **support storefront rehabilitations, business retention activities, and promotional campaigns that energize historic downtowns**. To keep economic development districts from negatively changing the character of the district, historic resource protection, resident and business retention programs, and development goals should be identified early in the process. Concurrent implementation of a district development plan would compliment economic development activities.

The bottom line: Improvement districts, Main Street programs, and urban renewal areas direct local resources into commercial historic districts to support both bricks and mortar projects and business development activities.

How we get there: While urban renewal often starts with government, improvement districts and Main Street programs typically emerge from within the district. All commercial districts should consider adopting the Main Street Approach® and working towards sustained local funding for a staff person to administer the program. Using grant, business, or government funds to hire an explorative employee or RARE⁹ intern is often a good first step in proving the value of a non-governmental economic development strategy. A program for technical assistance should be offered and best practices shared between communities. Economic development strategies may take several years to implement, but provide ongoing benefits for business and buildings.

Profile: Pendleton

Renewing a Historic Downtown in Round-up Country

South Main Street Commercial Historic District
Period of Significance: 1881–1937

Listed in the National Register: 1986
Size of District: 11.8 acres; 33 properties



Pendleton's downtown became a regional center of commerce after the first railroad line came through the city in 1881. The small five block historic district represents Pendleton's physical and economic growth during the railroad era. Today, the historic district is part of the larger "area of historic significance" that encompasses much of the city's downtown. In 2003, Pendleton created an urban renewal area that included not just the historic district and area of historic significance, but a larger area along the Umatilla River. Among other benefits, the urban renewal program provides grants for 40% of storefront improvement costs, up to \$100,000 for elevator installation, and low-interest loans for interior business improvements. However, Pendleton's historic resources are afforded little protection from demolition or incompatible new infill.

3. Design Guidelines and Standards for Infill

New construction in Oregon's commercial historic districts is inevitable, and it's a good thing. Vacant lots and incompatible non-historic buildings can be found in almost every district, giving developers and designers opportunity sites for new construction that helps boost the economic potential of the district, while respecting the surrounding historic character. According to the State Historic Preservation Office, there are at least 500 such commercial properties in Oregon's districts, many of which are deserving of rehabilitation or new construction to better meet district needs.

Instead of reinventing the compatibility wheel each and every time a new project is proposed, historic districts should have **clear and illustrative guidelines to assist in the design and review of new infill projects**. New guidelines should be drafted and outdated ones updated to encourage design that meets community expectations and reinforces the character of the district.

Additionally, there is a need for **baseline standards for new construction**. Creating infill standards in the spirit of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties at the state and/or national level would provide simple best practices criteria for designing in a historic district. Establishing clear expectations for new construction would pave the way for local, state, or federal infill incentives that reward new construction that is compatible with and beneficial to the surrounding district.

The bottom line: We need a "Secretary of the Interior's Standards" for infill and local design guidelines that provide clear direction to replace the "missing teeth" of Oregon's historic districts.

How we get there: Design guidelines should be expected of all districts, and it should be a priority of Certified Local Governments,¹⁰ landmarks commissions, and district stakeholders to make them happen. Grant funding and local resources could be allocated to hire a qualified consultant to prepare guidelines that understand the architectural and historic significance of the district. If they are illustrative, clear, and comprehensive, design guidelines can be completed in a short amount of time and will remain useful for decades to come. Working through our partnerships with the National Trust, National Park Service, and SHPO, Restore Oregon hopes to start a dialog that will result in new "Secretary's Standards" for infill construction.



Profile: Oregon City

Design Guidelines Enhance District Character

In 2006 Oregon City received a matching grant from the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office to produce design guidelines for their Canemah National Register and McLoughlin Conservation Districts. The guidelines provide an example of what can be done to help inform and direct the design of new construction in a historic district. According to the document, the guidelines are intended to assist applicants in the design process and allow for baseline standards in the review of development proposals. Four years after their adoption, city planner Christina Robertson-Gardiner says of the document: "Design guidelines make it a lot easier to uphold our expectations for new construction."

SIZE	The overall size of the building and that relationship to its style and context	
ASPECT	PRINCIPLE — GOOD EXAMPLE	NOT ALLOWED
Heights The building heights to be similar to the neighborhood historic context and appropriate to the style chosen. Important Heights include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main level height above grade • Grade to eave and main ridge • Grade to parapet • Individual story height • Number of stories McLoughlin Commercial Style buildings on 7 th Street from Center to John Q. Adams can range from a tall single story to the approximate height of the existing historic buildings to provide new, but appropriately sized context. McLoughlin Commercial Use Buildings in a Residential Style: maximum height similar to residential use. Canemah Commercial use buildings: maximum height is higher than residential use, Maximum 2 1/2 stories.		Residential buildings that vary more than 20% from heights of the historic neighborhood context buildings unless approved by the HRB. Residential building ground levels that are elevated less than 18" above grade, unless there are topographic considerations. Canemah Residential: greater than 1 1/2 story maximum height plus basement McLoughlin Residential: greater than 2 1/2 story maximum height plus basement Commercial use buildings greater than 3 stories
Widths Residential: maintain historic height to width ratio range for style Commercial: maximum approximately 1:3 height to width ratio		Use of building widths that are out of proportion, or exceed the range for their historic style
Depths McLoughlin Commercial use buildings on 7 th Street except from John Q. Adams to Harrison: typically built to front lot line; possible small setback for public use		Use of building depths that are out of proportion, or exceed the range for their historic style

4. New and Expanded Tax Credits

The state and federal financial incentives we have today reward the broad public benefits that come from bricks and mortar preservation; however, current tax breaks aren't always enough to bridge the development gap. From Pendleton to Portland, many historic buildings continue to crumble and vacant lots continue to grow weeds. In many cases, the costs of rehabilitation and appropriate infill are just out of reach for even the most socially responsible property owner or developer.

Oregon's Special Assessment of Historic Properties Program should be complimented with a **state rehabilitation tax credit**¹¹ option as its usefulness has been greatly diminished by legislative changes and tax limitation measures. According to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, *31 states have adopted state rehabilitation tax credit programs* that provide the tangible benefits of **creating jobs, generating tax revenue, stimulating private investment, leveraging the federal rehabilitation tax credit, and bringing vacant properties back to life**.¹² A rehabilitation tax credit in Oregon could meet preservation goals, as well as:

- Add residential and commercial density in areas that are walkable and already served by utilities and infrastructure.
- Allow for seismic upgrades and improve ADA accessibility.
- Require "green" infrastructure improvements.

Additionally, a well-defined **federal infill tax credit** program providing a modest 10% credit for qualified new construction expenses would make appropriate infill more feasible in historic districts in Oregon and around the nation. The vacant parcels and incompatible non-historic buildings found in many of Oregon's commercial districts are opportunity sites for residential and commercial infill that would bring additional life and economic vitality.

The bottom line: As models of sustainability, districts deserve additional state assistance for the rehabilitation of historic buildings and a federal program that incentivizes compatible infill construction.

How we get there: New tax incentives for preservation will only become a reality if the preservation community is able to engage in a sustained campaign that shows the public value of proposed programs. Beginning in October 2010, Restore Oregon will begin the research and legislative vetting necessary to move the rehabilitation incentive proposal forward. Additionally, Oregon's preservationists and congressional delegation should research and promote a structured federal infill tax credit as an amendment to the current federal historic tax credit. It will require the concerted efforts of the public and private sector and it may be an uphill battle, but the economic, environmental, and community benefits justify the effort.

Profile: Minnesota

State Rehabilitation Tax Credit Seen as Economic Stimulus



On April 1, 2010, Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty signed into law the State Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit as part of a larger jobs stimulus bill. Expected to create 1,500 to 3,000 jobs annually, the bill provides a 20% income tax credit on expenses incurred rehabilitating commercial properties listed in the National Register. While it took a committee of the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota almost a decade to get the legislation passed, the new tax credit proves that preservation can be a priority even during the most difficult economic times. Other hard-hit states have passed similar legislation, including Michigan, bringing the number of states with rehabilitation tax credits to 31.

5. Appropriate Local Incentives and Disincentives

Since preservation planning happens at the local level, so too should programs to encourage rehabilitation and discourage unnecessary alteration or demolition. Economic development districts, grants, taxes, and local government allocations can support incentives, while codes, policies, and fees can create disincentives. A few opportunities for local incentives and disincentives include:

- Substantial fees on the demolition of properties designated as historic.
- Competitive annual matching grants for window repair, masonry tuck pointing, or lead paint abatement.
- Graduated nuisance taxes on parking lots that occupy street frontage in historic districts.
- Grants and low-interest loans for elevators (especially those that can serve multiple buildings), seismic improvements, ADA compliance, and “green” upgrades.
- Prioritize the locating of municipal offices in historic buildings and historic districts similar to Executive Order 10-01’s prioritization of locating state agency offices in historic downtowns.¹³
- Reduction of permitting and review fees for rehabilitation activities that meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards.
- A lodging tax that puts money back into the historic places that draw visitors into the community.

The bottom line: Local government has the power to reward the good and nudge the not-so-good, providing a path for positive district change.

How we get there: Local Landmarks Commissions or an appointed panel of district stakeholders (building owners, businesses, and heritage organizations) should request City Councils to create the right mix of incentives and disincentives.

Preservation is about people as much as it is about historic resources. This is especially true in historic districts.

—Anonymous survey respondent

Profile: Beaverton

A Historic Downtown in Suburban Washington County

Beaverton Downtown Historic District
Period of Significance: 1887–1940

Listed in the National Register: 1985
Size of District: 10 acres; 27 properties

Most people don’t think of Beaverton as historic, but it does indeed have a commercial historic district with an intimate collection of one and two-story masonry buildings. With most dating between 1914 and 1940, they are defined by an overall continuity of materials, setback, and scale. Today, the district is served by mass transit and is home to a handful of small businesses. One of the most prominent is the Beaverton Bakery, a downtown institution since 1925. Partially housed in the 1887 Robinson Residence, the bakery supplies cakes and baked goods throughout the Portland metro area. Beaverton’s Historic District features street furniture, hanging flowers, and historically appropriate street lighting, all provided by the City.



6. Codifying Updated Preservation Ordinances

Contrary to common belief that National Register designation itself conveys inherent restrictions, actual protection of **historic places happens at the local level**. Preservation ordinances outline the role of the community in regulating and guiding changes to historic properties and districts. While some communities have the authority to deny demolition, others have no mechanism to ensure that significant buildings remain standing. Additionally, many preservation ordinances lack the consistent, clear, defensible language necessary to hold up to a legal challenge.

To remedy this, **a model preservation ordinance should be produced** so that local governments and review boards can appropriately and adequately protect the state's historic resources. A model ordinance offering several options for review and demolition would be most effective in providing a malleable historic preservation tool that could be easily codified in communities large and small.

The bottom line: Oregon's cities and towns need preservation ordinances that reflect local political will, protect resources that matter to all Oregonians, and can stand up to today's legal challenges.

How we get there: A 21st century model ordinance should be prepared by the State Historic Preservation Office and shared with landmarks commissions, non-profits, and policy-makers across the state. Preservation organizations should coordinate with state and local government to offer technical assistance and support to local campaigns to implement the model ordinance in their community.

Sustainability means using, developing and protecting resources in a manner that enables people to meet current needs and provides that future generations can also meet future needs, from the joint perspective of environmental, economic and community objectives.

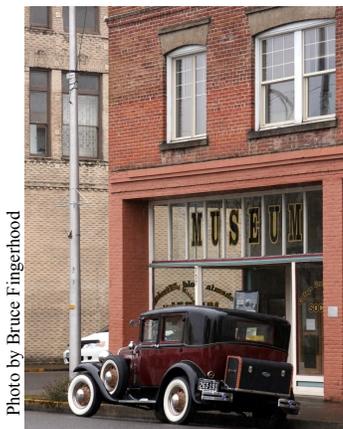
– Oregon Revised Statute 184.421, "Sustainability defined"

Profile: Cottage Grove

Celebrating the Agricultural Heritage of Lane County

Cottage Grove Downtown Historic District
Period of Significance: 1880–1941

Listed in the National Register: 1993
Size of District: 9.7 acres; 44 properties



The opening of a train station in 1879 and strikes in the Bohemia Mining District spurred rapid growth in this agricultural town from 1880 to 1918. Later the Pacific Highway (U.S. 99) ran right down Main Street bringing commerce from travelers. A bypass built in 1941 rerouted traffic away from downtown, beginning a period of economic decline. Today, Cottage Grove is participating in the Oregon Main Street Program as an "Exploring Downtown," the initial level of Main Street participation. Murals have been painted throughout the district and the Cottage Grove Historical Society is prominently located there. The City has adopted a Historic Preservation Overlay District that gives the Historic Landmarks Commission review jurisdiction over applications for new construction, additions, extensive remodeling, or demolition within the downtown historic district.

7. A Single Point of Contact for Each District

Many of Oregon's commercial historic districts lack the level of coordination, oversight, and assistance needed to provide clarity and simplicity to developers, businesses, and property owners. Insensitive and unpermitted alterations are all too common because property owners are not aware of rules and responsibilities. Equally common, property owners are not aware of the local, state, and national incentive programs, guidelines, and templates available for preservation projects.

Identifying one person that can **provide clear and consistent answers to stakeholders** would be a benefit to those who are stepping up to invest time and money in historic districts across the state. Seattle, Washington, for example has identified five employees in the Department of Neighborhoods to coordinate preservation activities in the city's seven local landmark districts.

The bottom line: Districts need a single point of contact to coordinate and streamline the development process, making it easier for stakeholders to navigate government bureaucracy, saving time, money, and ensuring consistency.

How we get there: Though hiring a new coordinator for each of Oregon's commercial historic districts is not financially feasible, the single point of contact could take many forms and could be done immediately:

- A Main Street executive director with an understanding of local regulations and incentive programs.
- An urban planner tasked with oversight of preservation issues.
- An urban renewal director or technical services employee.
- A dedicated "Historic District Coordinator" with technical expertise in preservation, planning, design, and business retention.
- Programs to offer literature and technical assistance to district coordinators across the state should be developed by preservation organizations.



Aerial view of Portland's Alphabet Historic District. An example of compatible infill is pictured below.

Profile: Portland

The ABC's of Northwest Portland

Alphabet Historic District
Period of Significance: 1880–1940

Listed in the National Register: 2000
Size of District: 157 acres; 635 properties

Northwest Portland's Alphabet Historic District was named after its alphabetical streets and was developed with a mix of architectural styles relating to single-family, apartment, and commercial buildings that date back to 1880. Once home to Portland's elite, the streetcar era brought single-story retail buildings to several of the district's main streets. Today, the district is an eclectic mix of affordable housing and luxury condominiums, art galleries and banks. Its known by residents and visitors alike as one of the city's best places to spend time and money. Among thirteen National Register historic districts in Portland, properties are subject to design and demolition review by the city's Landmarks Commission.



8. Programs that Tell the Story of the District

Historic districts are significant; one needs to go no further than the National Register nomination to understand the importance of the place. Telling the story of the district should infuse everything from the district development plan and design guidelines to the creation of signage and walking tours.

All too often residents are not given opportunities to learn about or interact with the history of their city's commercial district. Furthermore, the potential to leverage historic significance to attract heritage tourists is too great to pass up. Brochures, walking tour maps, heritage businesses, plaques, street signs, window displays, public archaeology, and heritage events can be informed by the historical research found in the National Register nomination. For example:

- In Silverton's historic downtown, murals have been painted on the backs and sides of buildings to help tell the story of the city's development.
- In Oregon City's McLoughlin Conservation District, period images, turn-of-the-century maps, and history lessons have been enameled into interpretive sidewalk tiles.
- In Pendleton, elementary school students are given walking tours of the city's historic residential neighborhoods and commercial downtown district.

The bottom line: Every historic district can leverage its story to generate local support and heritage tourism dollars.

How we get there: Heritage education campaigns can be funded in a variety of creative ways: mitigation for federal projects, educational grants, economic development dollars, local government funding, college internships and volunteers. "Friends of" groups should be encouraged to leverage volunteer time in producing simple programs that enhance visitor and resident interaction with the history of place. The interest and commitment of even one individual can boost an entire district's sense of place, and bricks and mortar projects can happen through modest financial support of property and business owners.



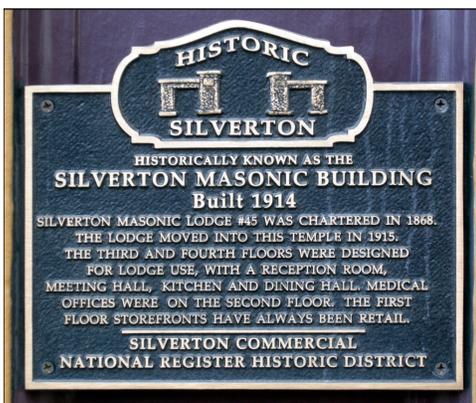
Silverton Historic District wall mural

Profile: Silverton

Mining the Story of a Rich Heritage

Silverton Historic Commercial District
Period of Significance: 1870–1936

Listed in the National Register: 1987
Size of District: 7 acres; 44 properties



The small downtown historic district represents Silverton's growth due to the combined factors of water power and commerce. Although the downtown suffered a significant fire in 1900, the district features buildings from a variety of periods and in a variety of styles. Today, Silverton's downtown is one of the most recognizable in Western Oregon. Murals dotted throughout the district spin the narrative of its history. With the compact size of the district and adjacency to Silver Creek, the town is a draw for visitors to the Oregon Garden and Silver Falls State Park. While the recent recession has left many of the district's storefronts vacant, planners, architects and building owners have been working to streamline the development process to make it easier to rehabilitate buildings and foster business development.

9. A Statewide Preservation Awards Program

While preservation projects, from building rehabilitations to survey and inventory campaigns, may receive attention from local media, success stories need to be better recognized and best practices shared across the state. The McMath Award, Main Street Award, or Heritage Excellence Awards provide examples that could be expanded or modeled to recognize some of the following:

- New infill construction that meets community goals while respecting the surrounding context
- A successful campaign to nominate a district to the National Register of Historic Places
- The rehabilitation of a long-vacant building in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards
- A project incorporating outstanding energy efficiency and sustainability practices.
- A local promotional campaign that boosts the economic vitality of a downtown commercial district
- The success of a grassroots effort in saving a building once threatened with demolition

The awards could strategically meet another need identified by Preservation Roundtable participants: preservation education. Pairing willing award recipients with preservation students looking for research topics would allow recipes for success to be put into numbers and words. Financing templates, code compliance strategies, and business retention studies would make future preservation projects more effective from the get-go. From factsheets to master's theses, the lessons learned by award winners would be disseminated by a partnership with students from community colleges to graduate schools. An annual spring awards program would align with the University of Oregon's Historic Preservation Program thesis selection deadline and allow student researchers to present their findings at the following year's awards.

The bottom line: Good work deserves to be recognized and future preservationists need information to help them take the plunge into a development project or grassroots campaign.

How we get there: By the end of 2010, Restore Oregon expects to will identify the best venue for a statewide preservation award by expanding an existing awards program or establishing a new one.

Awards bring focus
on excellence.
- Jill Thorne, Pendleton

Profile: Jacksonville

A National Historic Landmark District in Southern Oregon

Jacksonville National Historic Landmark District
Period of Significance: 1852–1884

Listed in the National Register: 1977
Size of District: 326 acres

Jacksonville is Oregon's most extensive and complete example of a late 19th century commercial and mining community. Founded in 1852, the city was Southern Oregon's center of culture and commerce until it was bypassed by the railroad in 1884. Featuring a wide range of architectural styles applied to residential and commercial properties, the district is a near-intact relic of Oregon's horse and buggy days. Today, Jacksonville is one of Oregon's two National Historic Landmark districts and serves as one of the state's most significant heritage tourism destinations. While little new development has occurred in the district, a few new buildings have been built in recent decades as recognition of the city's unique history and character has grown.



In Conclusion...

A relatively modest investment in Oregon's historic districts offers a significant cultural, economic and environmental return. This report hopes to start conversations, initiate research, spur policy shifts, and inspire the legislation needed to make our commercial historic districts the compatible and viable models of sustainability they deserve to be.

It will require participation from public and private institutions at the local, state, and federal levels. Judging from the enthusiastic participation in the 2010 Preservation Roundtable, that support does exist.

Restore Oregon is committed to working toward the implementation of these recommendations and bringing forward additional solutions to preserve, utilize, and pass forward these wonderful and irreplaceable resources to future generations of Oregonians.

Photo Ian Sane



Dollars, Sense & Environments, *continued from page 7*

- **Owners of historic buildings spend 27% less on utilities.** Most buildings constructed before the 1920s employed techniques for passive heating, cooling, and lighting, reducing the need for resource-intensive temperature control and making them models of energy conservation.
- **It will take about 65 years for the new building to save the amount of energy lost in demolishing an existing one** (U.S. Energy Information Administration, "Commercial Buildings Energy Consumption Survey" Washington, DC, 2003). Demolishing historic buildings requires fossil-fueled equipment, sends materials to the landfill, and necessitates the manufacture of new materials.

As the state's population continues to grow, the global economy becomes increasingly complex, and scarce resources must be used more conservatively, historic districts are positioned to become centerpieces of Oregon's commitment to sustainability.

Why spend all this effort recycling cans and bottles – and throw away entire buildings?"

- Donovan Rypkema

Acknowledgements

The Special Report on Healthy Historic Districts was authored by Brandon Spencer-Hartle and edited by Peggy Moretti. The Preservation Roundtable is an initiative of Restore Oregon and its Advocacy Committee. Our thanks to all who participated in the process, including:

Hal Ayotte, Fletcher Farr Ayotte	Denyse McGriff, Portland Development Commission
Val Ballestrem, Architectural Heritage Center	Marcy McInnelly, SERA Architects
Anne Catlin, Albany Landmarks Advisory Commission	Richard Michaelson, Inner City Properties, Inc.
Stuart Colbey, SERA Architects	Liza Mickle, City of Portland
Chrissy Curran, SHPO	Rick Minor, Heritage Research Associates
Mary Czarnecki, New Traditional Architecture	Kristen Minor, Peter Meijer Architects
Richard De Wolf, Arciform	Bernadette Neiderer
Art DeMuro, Venerable Properties	Karla Pearlstein, Restoring History
Jessica Engeman, Venerable Group	David Pinyerd, Historic Preservation NW
Peter Englander, Portland Development Commission	Ross Plambeck, Portland Development Commission
Brett Estes, City of Astoria	Kate Porsche, City of Albany
Tiffany Estes, Whole Brain Creative, Inc.	Kirk Ranzetta, Entrix
Paul Falso, Carleton Hart Architecture	Christina Robertson-Gardiner, City of Oregon City
Hank Florence, National Park Service	Matthew Roman, Roman Design
Cathy Galbraith, Bosco-Milligan Foundation	Roger Roper, SHPO
Julie Garner, Innovative Housing, Inc.	John Russell, Russell Fellows Properties
John Goodenberger, SACHP	William Ryals, Modern Organic Architecture
Greg Goodman, City Center Parking	Joy Sears, SHPO
Kathy Helmer, City of Medford	Bing Sheldon, SERA Architects
Linda Herd, City of Albany	Jill Sherman, Gerding Edlen Development
Oscar Hult, Albany Downtown Assoc	Dave Skilton, Portland Bureau of Development Services
Erin Johnson, MOA Architecture	Nicholas Starin, City of Portland
Cara Kaser, SHPO	Mike Steffen, Walsh Construction
Roz Keeney, NW History Matters	Patience Stuart
George Kramer, Kramer & Company	Sheri Stuart, Oregon Main Street Coordinator
Henry Kunowski, Architectural Historian	Mike Teskey, Restore Oregon
Brian Latta, City of Corvallis	John Tess, Heritage Consulting Group
Karl Lisle, Portland Bureau of Planning & Sustainability	Cara Thompson, Umpqua Bank
Evan MacKenzie, City of Pendleton	Cindy Walbridge, Hood River CLG
Victor Madge, Architect	Mike Wellman, Architect
Brad Malsin, Beam Development	William Willingham, Chair SACHP
Keith May, Historian	Vicki Yates
Geoff McGraw, Walsh Construction	...and dozens of online & in-person survey respondents!

Notes:

1. Matt Dadswell and William Beyers, "The Economic Benefits of Historic Preservation in Washington State," Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, 2006; Donovan Rypkema, "Economics, Sustainability, and Historic Preservation" (annual conference of the NTHP, Portland, OR, October 1 2005)
2. Main Street is a 4-point approach to community revitalization developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation that incorporates Organization, Promotion, Design, and Economic Restructuring. Sixty-three communities participate in the Oregon Main Street program.
3. Oregon State Historic Preservation Office
4. Oregon State Historic Preservation Office.
5. Oregon State Historic Preservation Office
6. Historic Tax Credit Coalition, "First Annual Report on the Economic Impact of the Federal Historic Tax Credit," The National Trust Community Investment Corporation and Rutgers University, 2010
7. Richard Moe, *Forum Journal*, National Trust for Historic Preservation Spring 2009.3
8. National Trust for Historic Preservation, *Forum Journal*, Spring 2009
9. Resource Assistance to Rural Environments (RARE) is a University of Oregon program that partners graduate-level students with small communities to increase the economic, social, and environmental capacity of the place.
10. Certified Local Government (CLG) is a preservation partnership between local, state, and national governments focused on promoting historic preservation at the grassroots level. In Oregon the State Historic Preservation Office administers grant funds for this purpose. There are 58 CLGs in Oregon.
11. A state tax credit would complement the Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit program by allowing a percentage credit on the amount spent on qualified rehabilitation expenditures.
12. Historic Tax Credit Coalition, "First Annual Report on the Economic Impact of the Federal Historic Tax Credit," The National Trust Community Investment Corporation and Rutgers University, 2010
13. While not the first, Governor Kulongoski's Executive Order 10-01 directs that "state agencies shall strive to locate offices in buildings located in historic downtowns."



About Restore Oregon

The mission of Restore Oregon is to **Preserve, Reuse, and Pass Forward Oregon's Historic Resources to Ensure Livable, Sustainable Communities.** Founded in 1977 as the Historic Preservation League of Oregon, Restore Oregon is a 501(c)(3) non-profit that provides education programs, advocacy, technical assistance, and stewardship of over 40 conservation easements on historic properties across the state, protecting them from demolition in perpetuity. Our programs include:

- Previous Preservation Roundtable sessions on *Healthy Historic Districts* and *Compatible Infill Design*
- Education programs on *Preservation 101*, *How to Save an Endangered Building*, and *Adaptive Reuse of Historic Schools*
- Historic home tours in Eugene and Portland
- Legislative testimony at the local, state, and national levels
- Providing technical assistance, advocacy, and preservation seed grants to save Oregon's Most Endangered Places.

The Restore Oregon office is located in the historic White Stag Block in Portland's Skidmore Old Town National Historic Landmark District. Programming is delivered across the state.

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The Preservation Roundtable and Special Report on Healthy Historic Districts was made possible by the member-donors of Restore Oregon. Your continued generosity will make possible its implementation.

Thank you!
