



SAVING HISTORIC PLACES

MODULE  
**07**

Preservation Toolkit

# Organize and Build Community Support

Organizing and building community support can be essential for the success of certain historic rehabilitation projects. When the community and its leaders know about your project, goals, and why it matters to them, your path may be made easier in terms of securing funding, tax incentives, regulatory accommodations, and other types of support. “When communities see activity happening with heritage resources they are curious and that leads to questions and support. Any time work is happening at or with a heritage resource, it is news.”<sup>1</sup> Just planning a restoration can be news too, and can help generate “buzz.” This document will guide you through different strategies that can help you organize and build community support for your historic resource.<sup>2</sup>

1 Oregon Heritage, *Heritage Bulletin 2: How To Spread The News*, [https://www.oregon.gov/oprd/HCD/docs/heritage\\_bulletins/HB02\\_How\\_to\\_Spread\\_the\\_News.pdf](https://www.oregon.gov/oprd/HCD/docs/heritage_bulletins/HB02_How_to_Spread_the_News.pdf).

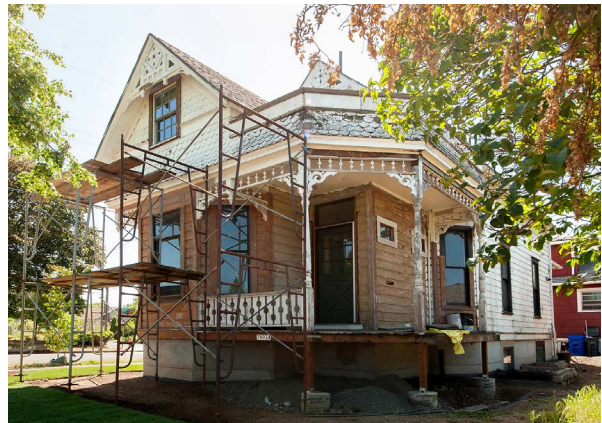
2 Supporting information was provided by the *Encouraging Public Participation in Historic Preservation* at <http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Content.aspx?dsNav=N:4294963828-4294963805&dsRecordDetails=R:CS141>.

# Collect the “Genealogy” of Your Property

If you have not already done so, gather information on the history of your property and any historic photos, drawings, or blueprints available. Write a summary about the ownership, architect, who built it, and the people and events associated with it. This information will also be useful for your Maintenance Plan (see Module 5).

## Helpful Research Tools:

- Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps
- Oregon Historic Sites Database <http://heritagedata.prd.state.or.us/historic/>.
- Local historical societies or museums
- Oregon State University Libraries Building Oregon database <http://osulibrary.oregonstate.edu/building-oregon>
- Oregon Historical Society Library
- Historic Deeds / Title Search
- Newspaper Archives
- Previous owners or their descendants



Rayworth House, Portland

# Tell (Sell) the Story

Articulate why people should care about and support the restoration and reuse of your property:

- The local history that your building embodies: cultural/societal, business/economic, design/materials, etc.
- The community benefit of its restoration and reuse, for example: adding upper story apartments will bring customers downtown; or reopening the old theater will support local restaurants and attract tourism.
- To help people see past any shabbiness or disrepair and envision the potential, illustrate it! Provide an architectural drawing of what the project will look like when complete. You might also share examples of similar projects in other communities and how they have succeeded.

## What's Good About Preservation<sup>3</sup>

Should you run up against resistance to preservation in general, here are a few important and well-documented data points to share:

### Environmental Benefits

- Preservation, restoration, and renovations consume less energy than new construction
- Reuse and rehabilitation can reduce climate change impacts by reducing CO2 emissions
- Restoration minimizes demolition and landfill waste
- Historic buildings can be made very energy-efficient, especially when their original features have been repaired and restored. The “greenest” building is the one that is already standing!



Oak Hills house, Beaverton

<sup>3</sup> National Trust for Historic Preservation, “The Environmental Value of Building Reuse,” <http://www.preservationnation.org/information-center/sustainable-communities/green-lab/valuing-building-reuse.html>.

## Cultural Benefits

- Retains a diverse and authentic built environment
- Embodies a community's history
- Offers educational opportunities

## Economic Benefits

- Rehabbing old buildings creates more jobs than new construction (a larger percent of costs is labor than materials)
- Generates private investment
- Increases property value and local tax revenues
- Attracts heritage tourism
- Revitalizes and maximizes value in already established parts of the community, avoiding new infrastructure costs.

# Organization & Outreach

Depending on the project, and especially in the case of non-profit owned historic properties, you will need some sort of organization to gather public support and to execute your plans. Some things to consider:

- Develop a volunteer base. Announce your preservation goals publicly with your contact information to invite a base of like-minded people.
- Create a "friends of" group of local professionals, community members, and volunteers. This could evolve into a registered non-profit organization which creates opportunities such as the ability to apply for grants, but will also require more oversight and structure to ensure success.



- Meet with local government such as city council members or the city or county planner. Be open to suggestions; they may be helpful in identifying and overcoming obstacles.
- Include the community. Solicit input, hold an open house, ask for photos, and hold regular public meetings about your project. Organize design discussions or lead tours of your property.
- Listen to public opinions at commission meetings to learn what projects are successful and what the community needs.
- Visit schools and involve students to become active in your project, where applicable.
- Enlist supporting organizations like Restore Oregon.

## Publicity

- Develop a marketing communications plan with a logo and tag line or organizational statement. Use it consistently in all print and digital media.
- Create a website and use social media such as Facebook and Twitter. These mediums can help share regular updates, photos, and meeting times and notes. They will also help you reach larger and diverse audiences – some supporters live outside the immediate community.
- Send out a press release to local newspapers, public radio, and local TV stations about your preservation project, its impact, fund raising events, and value to the community. Don't forget to include Chamber of Commerce newsletters and similar targeted publications.
- Publicize every step of progress, celebrate success, and recognize those who made it happen.



# A Success Story

## Egyptian Theatre, Coos Bay

An example of a historic rehabilitation that navigated the many decisions and process steps beautifully can be found in Coos Bay.



**Built:** 1922, converted to a theater in 1925

**Architect:** Lee Arden Thomas, with interiors designed by Carl F. Berg

**Designation:** National Register of Historic Places

**Significance:** Main Street, architecture and interior design, social history – reputed to be one of only 4 remaining Egyptian Theaters in the U.S.

**Status:** In 2005 the Egyptian Theatre Preservation Association (ETPA) was formed to renovate, preserve, and operate the historic theatre as a performing arts and entertainment center. In 2006, the Egyptian Theatre was purchased by the City of Coos Bay Urban Renewal Agency and signed a management agreement with the ETPA. Efforts to preserve this theatre included keeping the general public engaged, becoming a non-profit organization, having it listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and raising money. In 2010, a structural evaluation caused the Egyptian to be closed and sparked a community-wide debate over its future. It was placed on Restore Oregon's list of Most Endangered Places in 2011. The ETPA led the charge to explore alternatives, with the help of a team of qualified and experienced preservation professionals. A seed grant from Restore Oregon helped fund a market study and business plan that, together with a never-say-die attitude, resulted in the ETPA raising more than \$1,000,000 to restore the theatre.<sup>4</sup> In 2015, the theatre re-opened and immediately became a focal point, supporting local businesses and sparking renewed interest in downtown. The theatre will transfer ownership to from the City of Coos Bay to the ETPA for \$1 in 2017.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Greg Rueger, "History of the ETPA," Egyptian Theatre Oregon, <http://egyptiantheatreoregon.com/history-of-the-etpa/>.

<sup>5</sup> Devan Patel, "Theatre Ownership Transfer," The World, December 17, 2014. [http://theworldlink.com/news/local/govt-and-politics/urban-renewal-agency-approves-egyptian-theatre-ownership-transfer/article\\_cab9a27a-b924-5a36-abbb-d0ab6164441f.html](http://theworldlink.com/news/local/govt-and-politics/urban-renewal-agency-approves-egyptian-theatre-ownership-transfer/article_cab9a27a-b924-5a36-abbb-d0ab6164441f.html).



## == If Historic Places Matter to You, Join Restore Oregon! ==



Since 1977 Restore Oregon has worked to preserve, reuse, and pass forward the historic homes and buildings, bridges and barns, churches and Main Streets that make Oregon, Oregon.

As a nonprofit, our ability to advocate, deliver programs, and produce materials like the Preservation Toolkit depends on the support of people like you. We invite you to stand up for the historic places that matter to you and become a member by visiting us at [restoreoregon.org/join](https://restoreoregon.org/join).

Thank you!



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