

An Enduring City

IN 1990, THE CITY OF PORTLAND adopted a historic preservation ordinance to recognize and preserve one of its greatest assets - its rich collection of historic architecture and landscapes. The ordinance protects almost 2,000 properties throughout the city, in neighborhoods as diverse as the Old Port, Stroudwater, Congress Street, the West End, and Fort McKinley on Great Diamond Island. The intent of the ordinance is not to prevent change, but to thoughtfully manage it, so that the unique character of these historic areas is retained. Designated properties are protected from demolition, and proposed alterations or additions are reviewed to ensure compatibility with a property's original design and context. New construction within designated historic districts is also reviewed to ensure a respectful relationship between new and old.

Today, the impact of the Historic Preservation program in Portland is clear: preserving historic resources stabilizes neighborhoods, provide economic benefits, and contributes to a distinct sense of place that helps make the city such a desirable place to live, visit, and invest in. A walk or drive through any of Portland's historic districts reveals exciting changes, as more and more old buildings are carefully rehabilitated according to historic preservation standards and compatible new buildings are absorbed into the mix. In addition to the economic benefits of preservation, the sustainability implications of recycling our existing historic structures are

increasingly apparent.

While the goal of Portland's preservation efforts is to protect and enhance its historic architecture and landscapes, and by extension the character of its unique neighborhoods, implementation of the ordinance requires pursuing preservation objectives while accommodating modern expectations and requirements. These may include the demands of changing uses, budget limitations, economic development goals, evolving technologies and materials, modern building code and accessibility requirements, and many other sometimes-competing considerations. To integrate new development within historic contexts, Portland's preservation program has encouraged contemporary architecture that is a clear product of its own time, provided it respects the identifiable building characteristics that unify its historic context.

As Portland continues to grow, it will need to take care to maintain a balance of continuity and change, ensuring that the unique assets that set Portland apart are recognized and protected. Surveying and documenting Portland's architectural and archeological resources for a fuller understanding of the city's historic fabric will continue to be a vital element of future preservation initiatives, as will evaluation of planning and land use policies for their potential impact on historic resources.



SNAPSHOT:
HISTORIC RESOURCES

STATE GOAL

To preserve the State’s historic and archaeological resources.

LOCAL GOALS

WE WILL:

Recognize and protect significant historic, architectural, and archaeological resources.

Promote historic preservation as a key economic and community development strategy.

Engage visitors and residents in appreciation of Portland’s unique heritage.

Stabilize and enhance neighborhoods by encouraging quality investment in existing structures and compatible infill development.

Maintain a balance of continuity and change.

FUTURE STRATEGIES

SNAPSHOT: HISTORIC RESOURCES

1. SURVEY AND DOCUMENT HISTORIC RESOURCES

- Conduct additional architectural surveys, particularly off-peninsula.
- Undertake a city-wide archaeological survey to identify potentially significant resources associated with Portland's agricultural, residential, and industrial heritage.
- Continue to designate historically and architecturally significant resources to facilitate building rehabilitation and support neighborhood revitalization.
- Encourage compatible development in historic areas of the city.

2. ADOPT MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES

- Prepare annual reports on preservation activities and projects reviewed under the Historic Preservation ordinance for distribution to city leadership and the public.

3. DEVELOP INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

- Develop incentive programs to encourage preservation and rehabilitation of historic structures.
- Consider a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program to allow for the permanent transfer or



ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Recent research by the National Trust for Historic Preservation found that the reuse or rehabilitation of existing buildings offers significant environmental benefits over new construction. According to their report, **The Greenest Building**, each year approximately 1 billion SF of buildings are demolished and replaced nationwide, resulting in significant environmental impacts associated with demolition and waste disposal, the production of new raw materials, and new construction. The study found that reusing an existing building can result in between 4 and 46% less environmental impact than new construction, depending on the type of building, location, and level of energy efficiency. Even when new construction is designed for optimal energy efficiency, it can take 10 to 80 years for a new building to offset the negative environmental implications of its construction.

sale of unused development potential of historic landmarks or districts to areas considered more appropriate for intensive growth, allowing direct revenue from the transfers to be applied toward prescribed preservation initiatives.

- Explore a Tax Abatement Program for owners of historic properties, to allow a period for recouping investment.
- Consider grant and/or low-interest loan programs, in collaboration with local non-profits, to assist qualified building owners with the cost of rehabilitation.

4. ENHANCE PUBLIC AWARENESS

- Develop communication tools to enhance public awareness of Portland's historic neighborhoods.
- Expand and periodically update interpretive signage for historic sites.
- Explore the use of distinct street signs to identify historic districts.
- Consider the development of interpretive mobile applications.

5. DEVELOP GUIDELINES

- Develop additional design guidelines and technical briefs to address common repairs and rehabilitation projects.

6. IMPLEMENT MASTER PLANS

- Implement the recommendations of master plans for historic sites, landscapes, and cemeteries, such as Lincoln Park, Fort Gorges, and Evergreen Cemetery.

7. ENHANCE PROGRAM WEBSITE

- Improve property owners' understanding of the city's historic preservation application requirements and review process.
- Provide detailed information about the history and architecture of each historic district, including improved maps and comprehensive building inventories.
- Publish technical briefs and design guidelines for common repairs and property improvements.

8. ENSURE COMPLIANCE

- Provide adequate staffing resources to ensure broad, effective public outreach, efficient and timely permitting, follow-up to ensure that alterations to historic properties are consistent with the standards and guidelines of the historic preservation program, and enforcement of permit requirements for protected buildings.

9. PROVIDE BOARD TRAINING

- Continue to provide training on review standards and best practices to the Historic Preservation Board.
- Conduct annual reviews of completed projects.

10. FOSTER PARTNERSHIPS

- Continue to collaborate with other city departments and outside agencies and organizations to advance historic preservation goals and increase organizational capacity.

RECENT & ONGOING INITIATIVES

Since the establishment of the city's Historic Preservation Program in 1990, the city has assumed responsibility for the identification, designation and ongoing stewardship of Portland's historic resources, which include individual landmarks, residential and commercial historic districts, historic landscape districts and historic cemeteries. To date, the City of Portland has designated 11 historic districts (7 on the peninsula, 2 off-peninsula and 2 island districts), 5 historic landscape districts, 3 historic cemeteries and 73 individual landmarks. While the development review aspect of Portland's preservation program is generally well known, the program entails many other ongoing responsibilities and initiatives that are key to its effectiveness and continued public support.

ONGOING ACTIVITIES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Development Review Under the city's historic preservation requirements, any proposed development activity—including demolition, exterior alterations, building additions, signage installations, site alterations, public infrastructure improvements and new construction—affecting an individual landmark or structure or streetscape within a historic district is reviewed under the

ordinance standards and guidelines to ensure that the qualities and character of these historic asset buildings and areas are preserved and enhanced over time. Each year, more than 300 applications are reviewed by the city's Historic Preservation Board and staff. Routine or small scale alterations are typically reviewed and approved at the staff level, while larger-scale renovation or new construction projects are reviewed by the Historic Preservation Board.

Historic Resource Surveys The HP program conducts area-based or theme-based surveys to identify and document historic resources warranting potential designation and protection under Portland's historic preservation ordinance. These surveys also provide valuable information for other planning initiatives. For example, a comprehensive historic resources survey was conducted in conjunction with the India Street Neighborhood Plan initiative. This inventory process resulted in the creation of the India Street Historic District in 2015. More recently, the city supported the efforts of Greater Portland Landmarks to conduct a survey of historic structures on Forest Avenue and Stevens Avenue, focusing on their roles as early 20th century

auto-oriented transportation corridors. This survey will likely prove valuable as the Planning Department considers the potential impact of future development along these corridors and considers potential land use tools to guide the development.

Property and District Designation The designation process, particularly for a proposed historic district, entails extensive research and documentation, a lengthy public education process, an equally lengthy and detailed review process under the city’s preservation ordinance, often requiring substantive revisions to district boundaries, and preparation of design guidelines specific to the district.

Historic Landscape and Cemetery Master Planning Master plans provide a framework for decision-making as well as detailed recommendations to guide future maintenance and restoration initiatives at the city’s historic parks and cemeteries. This ensures that the original design intent and contributing features of a designed landscape are preserved and/or restored over time. Master plans have been developed for the Eastern Promenade, Fort Allen Park, Deering Oaks, Evergreen Cemetery, Eastern and Western Cemeteries, Baxter Boulevard and, most recently, Lincoln Park.

CDBG Review The HP program also reviews all proposals for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding for potential impacts on historic resources.

Certified Local Government Grant Administration In 2003, Portland was granted “Certified

Local Government” (CLG) status by the National Park Service, signifying that its historic preservation ordinance and program meet national standards for best practices. Achieving CLG status qualified the city for federal funding for its preservation activities. Since gaining CLG status, the city has secured CLG grants every year in support of local preservation initiatives. In some instances, the city has applied for funding for its own projects; in other cases, the city has applied on behalf of local non-profit organizations undertaking preservation projects. This CLG funding has frequently supported projects that have entailed successful partnerships with agencies, institutions and local non-profits. Recent CLG-supported preservation projects in Portland include the Masonic Temple Code and Life Safety Analysis, Mechanics Hall Façade restoration, Lincoln Park Treatment Plan, Tate House Site Improvements, Abyssinian Meetinghouse Restoration, and the Fort Gorges Master Pplan.

Interdepartmental Coordination The HP Program provides consultation services on all proposed public infrastructure improvements within historic districts, landscapes and cemeteries. Proposed street lights, street furniture, bus shelter installations, directional and interpretive signage, ADA tip-downs, cross-walk treatments, and other planned improvements are evaluated for their compatibility with the area’s historic character. This work requires collaboration and coordination with Parks, Public Works, Public Facilities staff.

Federal Section 106 Compliance Review The HP Program reviews all projects that receive federal



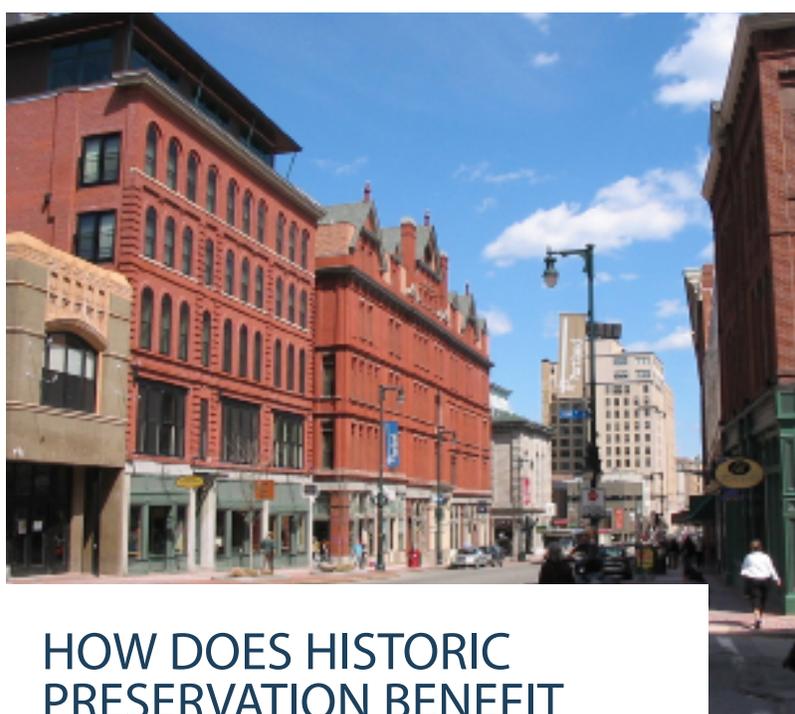
SNAPSHOT: HISTORIC RESOURCES

funding or require federal licensing and affect designated historic properties or districts under Section 106.

Historic Tax Credit Assistance Staff provides assistance with Historic Tax Credit Projects, including coordination with applicants and Maine Historic Preservation Commission staff in the review of projects.

Design Consultation and Technical Assistance Staff provides consultation to owners of historic properties both inside and outside designated historic districts. Staff routinely conducts site visits to answer questions and provide direction to potential applicants. Staff also responds to frequent requests for information from the public and the press about the history, significance and/or status of a particular property or neighborhood. This public education component of the program is critical in dispelling fears about the city's preservation requirements and review process. It also fosters an appreciation of the value and potential of Portland's historic resources.

Partnerships and Collaboration The HP Program collaborates with with local non-profit organizations, Friends groups and neighborhood organizations on preservation planning initiatives and restoration projects. The city frequently works with Greater Portland Landmarks on survey initiatives and in preparing documentation necessary for historic district designations. Working with Friends groups, HP staff often provides assistance with grant writing, developing and refining a project scope of work, design consultation, technical assistance and project monitoring. Staff



HOW DOES HISTORIC PRESERVATION BENEFIT OUR ECONOMY?

Too often, historic preservation can be perceived as an extra set of regulatory hurdles. While owners of designated historic properties do need to meet preservation review standards when undertaking such projects as building an addition, replacing windows or rebuilding a porch, they also share in preservation's significant proven benefits. By ensuring quality building rehabilitation and compatible new construction, historic preservation protects one's investment, stimulates additional commensurate private investment and increases property values. At a broader, community-wide level, historic preservation is a proven economic and community development tool that stabilizes neighborhoods and revitalizes older commercial districts. Preservation impacts the local economy by supporting small tradespeople and craftsmen, providing space for local and start-up businesses in traditional commercial districts, attracting tourism and minimizing burdens on public infrastructure. Indeed, communities like Portland that retain their historic assets and unique sense of place are at a distinct competitive advantage in attracting residents, business and visitors.



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maintains an ongoing working relationship with numerous community groups, including the Committee to Restore the Abyssinian, Maine Charitable Mechanics Association, Portland Free Masons, Friends of the Eastern Promenade, Friends of Lincoln Park, Friends of Eastern Cemetery, Friends of Deering Oaks, and Friends of Fort Gorges.

Compliance Review HP staff regularly monitor historic districts and inspect completed projects to ensure compliance with ordinance requirements.

MAJOR INITIATIVES OF THE LAST DECADE

Historic Resource Surveys

- Congress Street (Franklin Street to Bramhall Square) and immediate surrounds
- India Street neighborhood (from Franklin Arterial to Washington Avenue/Mountfort Street and from Congress Street to Commercial Street)
- House Island
- Portland Company complex
- Forest Avenue and Stevens Avenue (Landmarks led this survey with city collaboration)

Historic District Designations

- Congress Street Historic District (2009). Comprised of 200+ structures, the district encompasses Portland's "Main Street" and abutting streets that collectively constitute the city's traditional downtown. More than 300 years of development history are represented in the rich, eclectic collection of buildings in the district.
- House Island Historic District (2015). The entire 24-acre island was designated a historic district

and includes structures and artifacts associated with numerous eras of the island's long and prominent history. Historic resources include Fort Scammel, sites associated with the island's early history as a fishing and lobstering center, as well as early 20th century structures remaining from its period as a US Immigration and Quarantine Station.

- India Street Historic District (2015). The district encompasses a 10-block area within the larger India Street neighborhood and is focused on the major corridors (Congress, India, and Middle) that define the historic core of the neighborhood and around which many of the neighborhood's most significant institutional, commercial, religious and residential structures are concentrated. The district includes four newly designated individual landmarks, as well as 36 contributing structures.
- Portland Company Historic District (2016). The industrial building complex is a rare surviving example of a pre-Civil War foundry, machine shop, and car shop complex built specifically for the manufacture of railroad equipment and expanded over time to accommodate an increasingly diversified product line. (The company remained in continuous operation on the site for 137 years and was Portland's largest 19th century employer.) The complex is historically significant at the local, state, and national level related to industry, transportation, community planning, and architecture. Although sixteen extant structures remain and all were found to be significant as integral elements of the overall complex, the deteriorated condition of a number of the buildings led to

findings that their preservation would be infeasible. Following a lengthy designation process, the district as approved by the City Council is comprised of seven contributing structures and historic site elements.

Individual Landmark Designations

- Nathan Clifford School (2013). In selling the former school building to a private owner, the City of Portland ensured its long-term preservation through landmark designation. Designation also provided the new owner access to historic tax credits for its rehabilitation and adaptive reuse.
- Ann Freeman House, 147 Congress Street (2015). This high style 1857 Italianate residence is one of the only buildings on Munjoy Hill to survive the Great Fire of 1866 and is prominently located across the street from the Portland Observatory (also spared by the Great Fire).
- Abraham Levey Block, 78-88 Middle Street (2015). Located at a key gateway to the India Street neighborhood, but physically separated from the contiguous India Street Historic District, this 1922 commercial block designed by John Calvin Stevens was designated as an individual landmark.

Master Plans and Preservation Plans

- Fort Allen Park Treatment Plan (2012).
- Lincoln Park Treatment Plan (2014).
- Fort Gorges Preservation Plan (currently under development).

Digitization of 1924 Tax Photographs In 2013, over 30,000 photos of Portland properties, photographed

in 1924 as part of a city-wide property assessment, were made available online (Maine Memory Network) through a partnership between the City of Portland, Maine Historical Society, and the Portland Public Library. The photos and accompanying forms were digitized over a three-year period, thanks to support from Preserve America, local foundations, the Maine Historic Preservation Commission and significant volunteer efforts. The 1924 photographs, now readily accessible to the public, provide a fascinating and comprehensive picture of the entire city just after the turn of the twentieth century. The photographs of individual structures have proven to be invaluable in guiding building rehabilitation projects, particularly for buildings that have lost much of their historic character as a result of previous renovations.

Commercial Façade Improvement Program Since 2010, the Historic Preservation office has collaborated with the Economic Development Department in offering a Commercial Façade Improvement Program. This CDBG-funded program is aimed at revitalizing traditional commercial corridors in the city and provides technical assistance and design consultation to building and business owners. Focused on storefront rehabilitation projects, the Program supports the comprehensive redesign of deteriorated or previously “muddled” storefronts, new signage and new awnings. For the past six years, the Façade Program has targeted the Congress Street corridor, much of which is located within the Congress Street Historic District. Commercial properties within the recently created India Street Historic District will now qualify for the benefits of this funding program.