

## Summary Notes

### Historic Resources Code Project Roundtable II: “New Tools for Inventorying and Adapting Historic Resources”

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Thursday, January 11, 6:00pm-7:30pm

Architectural Heritage Center, 701 SE Grand Ave.

On Thursday, January 11, 2018, the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability held its second roundtable for the Historic Resources Code Project (HRCP) at the Architectural Heritage Center on SE Grand Avenue. The second of four initial input sessions, this roundtable engaged participants in discussions about inventorying historic resources and expanding zoning code incentives to encourage the rehabilitation and continued use of historic resources. Approximately forty Portlanders attended.

Project manager Brandon Spencer-Hartle led the event with a brief presentation describing the HRCP’s goals and timeline. He also described Portland’s current Historic Resource Inventory (HRI), which has not been updated since 1984 and no longer represents a comprehensive catalogue of the city’s significant historic and cultural resources. The presentation concluded with a summary of Portland’s current zoning code incentives for designated historic resources.

Following the staff presentation, participants divided into three breakout groups, each facilitated by Bureau of Planning and Sustainability and Bureau of Development staff. Topical discussions began with the Historic Resource Inventory, concentrating on its purpose, methodology, and format. City staff from each group recorded feedback onto large notepads, which are transcribed below. Following a half-hour of discourse and comment collection, groups transitioned to a discussion of zoning code incentives available to historic resources. Current incentives were analyzed for effectiveness and accessibility, and new incentives concepts were solicited and discussed.

For the conclusion of the event, all participants and facilitators reconvened and shared top points of conversation with the group at large. Discussions relating to the Historic Resource Inventory largely identified the HRI as a tool to support defined, objective goals and to provide accessible information to the public, City staff, and professional researchers. Most participants favored inclusion of a broad range of resources—not only buildings but landscapes, individual trees, objects of utility and art, archaeological sites, and interior features—representing diverse areas of historic significance. Several participants expressed a desire to inventory a broad spectrum of vernacular resources, while some expressed concern that the inventory may become too large to allow for a focus on the most significant resources. Two of the three breakout groups expressed value in compiling umbrella inventory context statements for geographical areas and/or themes, emphasizing that an effective inventory should reveal underlying connections between Portland’s myriad historic and cultural resources. The desire for public participation in resource identification was another recurring theme. Finally, each small group had suggestions for the configuration of a completed HRI. Many agreed that the inventory should be made easily accessible to the public, perhaps through a GIS-based platform, and many expressed interest in allowing for public submissions.

Feedback from the conversation on zoning code incentives revealed a particular interest in use flexibility for historic resources, as well as added incentives to encourage affordable housing and seismic retrofit of unreinforced masonry (URM) structures. Individual groups suggested removing parking requirements

for historic buildings, expanding certain incentives to properties listed on the HRI, and adding incentives for tree preservation. Additional comments suggested reducing or eliminating covenant requirements for accessing incentives, allowing for greater diversity of housing types when preserving historic resources, and expanding review to the interiors of buildings when incentives are used. Interest was also shown in city-level tax programs and building code leniency (while these two concepts fall outside of the HRCP's scope, they were recorded for future deliberation).

Transcribed notes from each breakout group are provided on the pages that follow.

## Transcribed Notes (captured from roundtable chart pads)

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Group 1 Notes (Megan Walker, BDS, facilitator; Jill DeCoursey, BDS, scribe)

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### HRI

- Finish inventory
- What should inventory address:
  - Age of buildings
  - Architectural style + cultural sig.
  - Involve wider group—what's important to you?
  - Dominant housing type
  - Q: How do you capture common building types?
  - Attention to neighborhoods (history of neighborhoods = history of PDX)
  - HRI → has to reach public/property owners to be useful
  - Historic context
    - Context statements for neighborhoods
  - Tying in properties to zoning
    - Anticipating zoning issues/threat of demo
  - Current photos!
  - Organize by neighborhood
  - HRI to capture neigh. trends/character
  - Include layer of construction history in HRI
  - Challenge : commercial buildings
  - Should HRI buildings inform new development design
  - How to elevate low/unranked buildings?
    - Should reassess '84 inventory ranking
    - And some should be removed—major changes
  - On HRI → 120 demolition protection
  - Individual vs. district significances
    - District elevates single bldgs.
  - Ranking system confusing—tie to national register system?
    - Not helpful if not updated
  - HRI as database
    - User friendly access to information
    - Use current technology
    - Citizen participation in adding info
    - How to address update cycle—simple to update
  - Non-building resources
    - Trees
    - Scale (small curb cuts—neighborhood characteristics)
    - Signs
    - Parks
    - Resources that are gone
    - Size + use bld

- Density
- Overlooked commercial blds
- Commercial corridors to complement residential neighborhoods
- Neighborhoods + themes
- Context statement
  - City could/should help identify historic districts

## Incentives

- McD. example—doesn't benefit from density incentives (is hurt by—would need to sell rights)
- More flexibility for commercial uses
- Commercial + res. have different needs/incentives
- Ability to change use to save building for any buildings on HRI
- Bdl code challenges when changing use
- STCs an obstacle—add flexibility
- No one-size-fits-all option
- Support neighborhood differences
- When historic use is significant?
- PDC—Prosper PDX—storefront loans
- Designating historic
  - Support needed for future owners
- Covenants—maybe for limited period—20 years—assuming updates of HRI
- Design guidelines for all neighborhoods
- Seismic upgrades
  - If historic provide resources to assist
  - Tax incentives
  - Ability to help owners spread out costs
- Ability to sell air rights
- Affordability

### Historic Resource Inventory

- Things should be removed if not significant
  - ↳ Only the most significant
- Go beyond architecture
  - ↳ Cultural
  - ↳ Transportation
  - ↳ Social
  - ↳ Architect
  - ↳ Sig. people
  - ↳ Historical
  - ↳ Age
- Context—place, not just bldg.
  - ↳ Architecture
  - ↳ Community history
- Story behind the building
- Unique expressions of communities
  - ↳ Chinatown as example
- How does building tell Portland story
- Ethnic history
- Craftsmanship
- Objective info
- Rank and/or evaluate for sig.
- Infor on broader range of properties could be valuable
  - ↳ Story recorded to tell a neighborhood's story
- Focus on most significant resources
- Defining criteria is critical
- Everything on Inventory, even if not determined significant
  - ↳ Photograph record of city
  - ↳ Filtering for research (example: bldg. types)
- Baseline building info, start w/ existing info
- Idea: Wiki model to add info/photos
  - ↳ Start w/ 1984 records + add to them
- Landscapes, gardens, non-building resources
- Full info for development issues
- Need clear purpose

### Incentives

- Remove parking req's
- Expand incentives to districts
- New England example of coalition of affordable housing + preservationists
  - Property tax surcharge
- Incentive for affordable housing in historic bldg.
- URM buildings + foundations

- Facilitate upgrades
- Conversions to aff. housing
- Bring back boarding house
- Allow return to orig. use
- Req preservation when reused more intensively
- Façade-only options if done well
- Interior review
- Broaden incentives to HRI, even if not designated
- Make permitting easier + cheaper + faster
  - Alter fees for doing right thing
- Zoning review → will land use allow uses needed to preserve? Refine
- Industrial zone feasibility
- Seismic upgrade triggers challenge reuse feasibility
- Historic pres. tax → maybe for URM + affordable

### Purpose

- State goal prioritizes inventorying resources
- Instill a sense of pride
- May encourage more preserv.
- Research
- Providing context
- Simplifies other policy discussions
  - URM, RIP
- Planning for future
- Document broader cultural significance (not just arch)
- Gives agency to those who don't have resources to do research on their own
- Adds value—financial + otherwise

### Info

- Name, yr built, condition, use—hist + current
- More background info
- Infor about natural hist. before development
  - Effects of dev. on natural resources
- Should address areas of significance beyond architecture
- Retaining info for lost sites
- Art associated with property
- Should include context statements rather than just ind. listings
- Include Younger than 50 yr? Yes because significance can be est. prior to 50

### How to make more accessible?

- How to get on HRI + ease of use—two-fold
- Should be outreach program, inc. spec. to underserved communities + areas of PDX
  - Go to the neighborhoods
- City-wide events could include highlights

### Categories besides arch?

- Legacy (generational) businesses
- Events
- Other cultures not represented
- Spaces w/ no address—spots (Kirk Reeves)

### Incentives

- Challenges to Fed Rehab Tax Credit
  - Investment level + comm. Use
- City property taxes—could help local heritage business owners
- City should syndicate FAR to make it easier
  - Create a bank
  - Noting on prop. info

- Tiered incentives for diff. levels of designation
- Plaque program
- Incentive for hosting community events + meetings
- Tree preservation