

Historic Resources Walking Tour Summary

Southeast Quadrant Plan

November 12, 2014

Introduction

This event was created as a chance for City staff to engage with Landmarks Commissioners on the topic of historic preservation throughout the district, with Southeast Quadrant Stakeholder Advisory Committee members invited to attend and join the discussion. In terms of the history of the buildings and also the responsibilities of the City when it comes to protecting them, there are two separate areas of the Southeast Quadrant to study:

1. Contributing buildings within the East Portland Grand Avenue Historic District which the City is required by state law to protect, and
2. A huge number of historic but largely unprotected buildings outside the historic district that were usually built for industrial purposes.

The tour was designed to visit buildings from both these groups so staff and Landmarks Commissioners could learn more about specific buildings and better understand the roles they are playing in the evolution of the district. Val Ballestrem from the Architectural Heritage Center provided details about the history of the buildings and the area. Discussions during the tour focused on gaps in City policy and other issues limiting the rehabilitation of buildings.

Tour Details

- Leader: Val Ballestrem, Architecture Heritage Center
- Landmarks Commission: Brian Emerick (Chair), Jessica Engeman (Vice Chair) and Kirk Ranzetta.
- BPS: Nicholas Starin, Sallie Edmunds, Troy Doss, Loral Lillard, Mark Raggett, Derek Dauphin.
- SE Quadrant Stakeholder Advisory Committee: LeAnn Raschke (on behalf Mike Tevis/Intrinsic Ventures).

Itinerary

Stop	Area	Intersection	Buildings/Topics
1	Historic District	701 SE Grand Ave	West's Block Building Old Citizens Bank Building (702 SE Grand) Nathaniel K. West Family Buildings
2	Historic District	6th and Alder	Eastside Mortuary Orient Lodge Woodman of the World City Water Office Building 6th Ave Green Loop alignment
3	Historic District	6th and Morrison	Weatherly Building Clifford Apartments – PDC URA project McKinley Apartments
4	EOS	3rd and Morrison	Royal Hotel (Bistro Montage) City Liquidator Buildings
5	EOS	1st and Morrison	Studebaker Building Jones Cash Store (Rose City Storage & Wine) John Deer Building (Portland Storage)
6	EOS	3rd and Alder	Rinella Produce Building Portland Seed Company (near rail)
7	EOS	MLK and Stark	Chamberlain Hotel (Shleifer Furniture)

Note: Under "Area", "Historic District" refers to the East Portland Grand Avenue Historic District and "EOS" refers to the Employment Opportunity Subarea overlay zone covering the blocks west of 3rd Ave to the river.

Map



Summary

Topics discussed during the tour are summarized below. See the Appendix for a full stop-by-stop summary.

- The historic district and EOS have a long history of mixed use and residential uses with parts of the district returning to more residential uses today.
- Many older structures have been modified in ways that completely mask their historic character.
- The green loop could travel through portions of the Historic District along 6th Ave where there are relatively few remaining loading docks and uses are more mixed use than elsewhere in the district.
- Morrison Street has much more historic significance than is visible or recognized today. Much of the built history is hidden from view due to bridge ramps.
- The historic industrial district is remarkably intact and buildings are of a consistent character due to the concerted effort to construct a “new warehouse” area. This character currently lacks protection.
- Height and massing may need to be reassessed in the historic district in specific areas such as around the Weatherly Building.
- Noise and safety issues near 1st Ave have an impact on whether historic buildings can be rehabilitated. Examples like the Jones Cash Store suggest that even where buildings can be rehabilitated they will be very difficult to tenant without addressing noise and safety issues. The result is that this building and others are being used for storage and there is even less activity to enliven the area.
- A large number of historic industrial buildings are being used for storage with their features covered over by paint or boards. As property values increase, these structures may be restored after years of use for storage and may face special challenges.
- There is a rich history in the EOS that is present in the many fabric buildings, but is not clear to visitors.
- Fill underlying much of the district west of MLK may make rehabilitation, seismic upgrades, or even redevelopment more costly in this area than in other parts of the district.
- There are relatively few of the historic Produce Row buildings left and they have little protection even though they are important to the area's history

Landmarks Commissioners suggested that City staff identify a list of the top five issues they would like the Commission to weigh in on and provide this for the Commissioners to consider. The SE Quadrant team will visit the Commission in early 2015 to hear their comments.

Appendix: Full Tour Summary

Stop	Notes
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group learned about the buildings on either side of Grand Ave. • Most of these buildings were mixed use when built with ground floor retail/commercial activities and upper floors with either apartments or single room occupancy housing for workers and visitors to the district. • Many of the apparently modern buildings along Grand Ave such as the US Bank building at Grand and Alder are actually historic structures that have been re-cladded for a variety of reasons. • Crossing Grand Ave, the group noted the lack of crosswalks or other crossings for pedestrians and wondered if this was always true or if this was a result of modern auto-oriented planning.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group learned about the three buildings at this intersection, most of which have already been rehabilitated and are actively used. • The Orient Lodge Building is a copy of a building in London (Voysey House) designed by architect CFA Voysey. The Lodge Building is currently being rehabilitated by John Weil Architecture (Reference: 14-210781-000-00-LU). It was built as a mixed use development by the International Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF) who occupied the upper floors with the ground level being rented out to provide the Order income. The ground floor had been used by the Portland Police Athletic Association (it still has a historic neon sign with these initials), a stationary supplier and most recently by Citizens Photo among other uses. • The group also discussed the possibility of the Central Citywide Green Loop pedestrian/bicycle system traveling through the Central Eastside along 6th Ave (one of three alignments being studied for the district) and the relationship between this potential infrastructure and the historic and commercial nature of the area. • As the group walked to the next stop, it discussed the City Water Building (Alder and 7th) which has been rehabilitated and used as offices for a law firm. Behind the building is a surface parking lot that was originally used for loading of the building when it still featured a pass through for wagon access. Today it serves as car parking for the law offices. • The group also walked past buildings along Morrison that were built as hotels and also a few historic warehouses, some of which have been converted to restaurants or other retail uses (e.g., Trifecta).
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group learned that Morrison was once a key east-west main street leading into the downtown area of the City of East Portland as well as to Portland on the west side of the river. This explains why buildings along Morrison throughout the Central Eastside are often designed for residential uses and feature elaborate entrances onto Morrison which today is largely used to access the Morrison Bridge. • The Weatherly Building is therefore a tower built at the prime intersection of the old City of East Portland where its two main streets, Morrison and Grand, meet. • The group learned that many buildings on the west side of Grand on either side of Morrison were removed as the bridge ramps were built creating the current underutilized lands around the Morrison Bridge head. • The group discussed the issue of building height for the historic district. It is often noted that the 12 story Weatherly Building is the unofficial height limit for the area, but the Commissioners commented that they were not sure this was reasonable. The group discussed the idea that the Weatherly should remain taller than surrounding buildings so as to avoid diluting its role in the area as a landmark feature from an important period in the development of the City of East Portland. • The group also discussed maximum height allowances which allow for considerable height (up to 200 ft) along various portions of Grand/MLK. One idea mentioned was that tall buildings should be limited to one block or so from Grand/MLK and then stepped down beyond this. • Concern was expressed about the lack of continuity of the historic district's boundaries. Much of the district was built and used during the same time period as the MLK/Grand Ave area, but was not included in the district.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group learned about the Royal Hotel which currently houses Bistro Montage on the ground floor with housing units above it. • The group also learned about the history of this area, which was purposely built as a "new warehouse" district during the first decades of the 20th Century. Continued industrial uses until recent decades has resulted in a remarkably intact historic industrial district that is in many ways more contiguous and intact than the East Portland Grand Ave Historic District. • City Liquidators owns many large historic buildings in this area, nearly all of which have been whitewashed. It was unknown what uses all the buildings have today.

Southeast Quadrant – Historic Resources Walking Tour Summary (11/12/2014)

- The group learned that this area is built on considerable amounts of fill, with a few areas exposing the depth of this material (e.g., a small piece of land in the middle of the block bound by MLK, 3rd, Morrison and Belmont where the ground sinks almost an entire floor behind a parking lot). This makes new development here more costly and also may mean that buildings are more susceptible to earthquakes if not built on sufficient pilings.
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- The group learned about the buildings surrounding this intersection (Morrison and 2nd) including the John Deer Plow Company Building (now Portland Storage), and more City Liquidator buildings, one of which is the only intact wood warehouse structure in the Central City (2nd and Morrison).
 - The buildings front onto the historic portion of Morrison that is now covered by the ramps onto Morrison Bridge. The result is that the grand entrances of the historic buildings are hidden and windows and other ornamentation faces the bridge structure.
 - The group discussed that the wooden warehouse building and whether such a structure would actually be easier to rehabilitate over unreinforced masonry buildings. The building has a high level of ornamentation including sculpted faces. Large windows have been boarded up along the ground floor.
 - The group also visited the nearby Jones Cash Store which is now the Rose City Storage and Wine Building (1st and Morrison). Commissioner Engeman described the process of rehabilitating the structure on behalf Venerable Properties. The project had many hurdles including the huge amount of noise from being next to the train tracks, the cost of replacing the large historic windows which were often broken by thrown rocks (the current owner has installed metal screening to protect the windows), and the strange nature of the structure itself. The area also feels unsafe, particularly at night.
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- On the walk to this stop the group walked down 1st to Alder and saw the Portland Seed Company building, more City Liquidator buildings before arriving at the corner of 3rd and Alder.
 - The group learned that the Rinella Building is probably the only smaller historic buildings that has been continuously used for produce uses since the early days of the district. The structure currently has a small restaurant on the ground floor.
 - Other buildings in the area have uses that include antique furniture and a showroom for a variety of building finishing materials (plaster, paints, wallpaper, etc.).
 - The group noted that this is an area where there are new widened sidewalks and other right-of-way improvements adjacent to a number of industrial users that use small and medium sized trucks.
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- The tour ended with the group hearing about the Chamberlain Hotel where Shleifer Furniture is now located. Originally, commercial uses were in the ground floor along Grand Ave with the hotel above them and is entrance on Stark. Shleifer Furniture now uses the full building, although it was unclear what the upper floors were used for if anything.
 - The group noted the presence of a food cart pod on one of the surface parking lots and heard that when electric connections were being put in for the foodcarts, digging unearthed bricks from the original building in this location. Much of MLK had buildings that are no longer present.
 - The group also noted art deco and mid-century modern buildings along the way including the Goodwill Tire building (currently Quadrant Systems) at MLK and Stark which has intact art deco style façades.

The tour adjourned at approximately 11:45 a.m.