

## Summary Notes

### Historic Resources Code Project Roundtable I: “Why Portland’s Historic Places Matter”

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Thursday, December 7, 6:00pm-7:30pm

White Stag Block, 70 NW Couch St.

On Thursday, December 7, 2017, the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability held its first public roundtable for the Historic Resources Code Project (HRCP) at the White Stag Block, a historic and adaptively reused building in the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District. The first of a series of four initial input roundtables, this event asked participants to identify and affirm the City’s historic preservation goals and values. Approximately fifty Portlanders attended.

The event began with a presentation by project manager Brandon Spencer-Hartle, who introduced the HRCP and asked participants to consider a particular Portland location that they considered significant. Attendees then divided into four groups, each facilitated by Bureau of Planning and Sustainability or Bureau of Development Services staff, to share their reflections. Places identified by participants included Vista Bridge, the Armory, Bagdad Theatre, Park Blocks, and various streetscapes and neighborhoods throughout the city. Breakout group discussions then transitioned to the values, goals, and benefits of historic preservation in Portland. Participants spent the better part of an hour sharing their thoughts while facilitators recorded major themes. As conversations came to a close, each group was asked to select three of the most significant preservation benefits or values their group had identified; the four groups then reconvened and shared these with all roundtable attendees. City staff recorded feedback onto large notepads which were then hung at the venue’s exit. As participants left the event, they were asked to place stickers on the two values they deemed most important.

Through the exercise, roundtable participants defined a broad range of cultural, social, economic, environmental, and aesthetic preservation values, with a particular focus on local benefits of historic resources. Many participants identified the conservation of a unique sense of place as a significant value advanced by historic preservation initiatives. Other values identified in the final group exercise were: providing diverse and affordable housing options; sharing diverse stories through historic resources; promoting the well-being of Portlanders through the walkability, architectural character, and human scale of historic locales; promoting small businesses; and supporting sustainability initiatives by preserving embodied energy. Themes that were not emphasized in the final exercise but which appeared frequently in small groups’ notes included the aesthetic value of older architecture, the local economic benefits of restoration and reuse, and the educational value of historic resources.

## Transcribed Notes (captured verbatim from roundtable chart pads)

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### Large Group Response: Why do Portland's historic places matter?

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- Affordability, need to provide incentives to make it happen (8 dots)
- Preservation is for people—need to tell diverse stories (10 dots)
- Storytelling and education (0 dots)
- Sense of place—character, livability, walkability (7 dots)
- Diversifying housing choices and preserving materials through adaptive reuse of historic resources (5 dots)
- Preserving human scale (3 dots)
- Small business encouragement (5 dots)
- Affordable housing in historic buildings (11 dots)
- Sense of place and identity, what it means to be part of a community, belonging (18 dots)
- Higher design quality in historic places (2 dots)
- Architectural, cultural, social sense of place (5 dots)
- Sustainability, preserving embodied energy (3 dots)
- Elevating society, inherent soulfulness (7 dots)

*84 dots total, indicating 42 respondents.*

## Group 1 Notes (Megan Walker, BDS, facilitator)

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- Newer bigger better isn't always better; maintaining that is more important than newest biggest most modern
- Prevention of waste generation
- Keep character
- Telling American stories—need to tell diverse stories
- History isn't just in places, it's in landscape
- Educational opportunity
- Sense of place—retain + tell story of PDX
- Understand our roots + optimism about where we are going. Respect where we have been.
- Teaches respect
- Economics of rehab--\$ stays local
- Preserving materials → sustainability goals
- Thinking about what future generations are going to enjoy—our landscapes
- Intangible values, value to community—not just about economic.
- Social equity
- Buildings can tell the stories of underrepresented
- Telling other stories about the history of community (making it accessible)  
preserving mistakes—leaving landmarks that tell whole story not just pretty parts
- Intangible resources (archeological)
- Having communities make decisions on what should be preserved
- Preservation of a view + open spaces
- Ways to interact w/ individuals + add stories (open-online) to share the authority
- Heritage businesses
  - Festivals
  - Community events
- Dev. tools, guide for new construction that is respectful of the historic context
- How do we incentive preservation
- City is profiting from new construction
  - Price/org of permit fees
- There are more people interested in preservation b/c they can't afford new Portland
  - Cost of rents
  - Cost of operating
  - Af. vouchers
  - Special assessment
  - Historic tax credit
- Making historic housing more competitive
- How to balance affordability concerns w/ concerns about compatibility?
  - Development of guidelines

### Balance

Skidmore Dist, Sunnyside shotgun houses, Eliot, Eastmoreland, 32<sup>nd</sup>/33<sup>rd</sup>/Division, Vista Bridge, Armory, Hillsdale, Old PDX houses, Old Cotton Club

- Older, established walkability (Ladd's)
- Front porches
- Diversity—proactive toward culture, fixated on arch.—cultural significance
- Detroit—Motown HQ historic value
- Honors industrial heritage—small houses/cottages get looked over—past w/o individual stories, get lost
- Inexpensive houses shipped in, built by owners—losing these quickly
- Little houses more affordable
- Cultural significance in neighborhoods
- Red-lining also negative history—preserved today through zoning
- Preserving bldg. because of significance not aesthetics
- Distinct neighborhoods—offers choices for everyone
- More flexibility for
- New development looks same every time—faux craftsman, “Sacramento” or another glass box
- Concern over new bldgs will not convey sense of place
- Bungalow now revered, was challenging at time
- Bung. typ. plan book design—common in many cities
- Lots of renters in GH [Goose Hollow], apt bldgs. at risk in face of new regulations for new towers
- City needs to help communities w/ design guidelines—need to help more neighborhoods
- Organic feel to city, buildings—texture, quality of architecture
- Subdividing homes one way to accommodate young people
- Young people still want houses. Older homes offer way to start building equity in house
- Avoid demolishing—encourage retention
- Increase flexibility for conversions
- Single family zoning not dense enough to work for walkability
- W/in distance of transit lines, should be increased densities
- Outward expression of city
- Displacement ← address
- Allow ADUs on same lot
- Human scale of community connection

## Group 3 Notes (Nicholas Starin and Caity Ewers, BPS, facilitators)

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- Memory—connecting to the past, to previous communities
- Flexible zoning → multiple allowable uses
- Character
  - Architectural merit
  - Age/passage of time
  - “Story”/embodied history
  - Spirit
- Livability
- Preserving quality of design
- Increasing density in affordable, desirable neighborhoods (in more affordable older buildings)
- Common spaces, gathering areas
- Saving affordable, existing spaces (“gentle densification”)
- Tool for social justice and equity
- Beauty in the built environment (→ desire to maintain)
- Walkability
- Environmental sustainability (reduction of landfilled waste)
- identity, captured + embodied in architecture
  - Vital for cultural, ethnic groups
  - Socially and culturally significant spaces
- Retaining meaningful value of spaces; keeping spaces active + in use
- Allowing relocation, requiring deconstruction
- Compatible infill
- Street presence
- Aesthetic value
- Demolition is wasteful and the replacement is not consistent with neighborhood context (historic context + physical context)
- Can create more affordable housing by reusing historic homes
- People tend to prefer historic architecture and may find new construction “ugly” or uncomfortable
- Historic buildings are more beautiful
- Physical wellbeing of residents
- Sense of place, identity
- Diversity of architectural style
- Preservation of quality, irreplaceable materials (e.g., old growth timber) and high-quality craftsmanship
- Historic resources are unique, often produced with special care, not mass produced
- New construction doesn’t have patina or the context of a historic building (moving buildings can also remove them from their context, including landscape)
- Human context and connection between place and time—human element

## Group 4 Notes (Hillary Adam, BDS, facilitator)

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- Our Heritage
- Sense of Place
- Tourism
  - Higher Paying jobs
- Cultural Identity
- Affordable Housing
- Affordable Comm. Space
- Most sustainable thing you can do to be “green”
- Demos a concern—lead poisoning + everything else listed
- Sustainability
- Conservation of resources
- Embodied energy
- Social Sustainability
  - Building a sense of place/community
  - Fosters bonding + a connected network
- Maintaining character
- Supports local businesses
- Elevates society beyond its economic function = Soul
- Authenticity
- Telling our stories
- Significant architecture + craftsmanship
- Having control over inappropriate remodels
- So you can have guidelines
- Reminds us of significant places + events + the City’s history
- Having a diversity of building stock
- The fact that they are there provokes questions about what happened there
- If utilized it can help tell the story of underserved communities
- Focusing on cultural history helps younger people feel connected to their community
  - sense of belonging
- Loss of buildings = loss of identity
- Sense of pride
- Open spaces are communal spaces, gathering spaces, need green spaces
- Cemeteries tell you a lot about the town
- Burial history, customs, gravestones
- Headstones/gravestones reveal a lot about history/class
- Street trees + streetscape tells the story + adds sense of place
- Horse rings prompt questions – why are those there?
  - Tell the story of transportation
- Connects us to our past + sometimes they inform + shape our decisions today
- Taking care of our stories for future generations