

SALEM LANDMARK

Newsletter of the Salem Historic Landmarks Commission



HISTORIC CODE TO BE UPDATED



In 2009, the City of Salem applied for and received a grant from the State Historic Preservation Office to prepare a Historic Preservation Plan for the City of Salem. The purpose of the plan is to guide the work program for the Historic Landmarks Commission and City staff over the next ten years, including identification of projects and programs that will benefit the owners of the 452 historic resources within the City's four historic districts and the 107 individually listed historic properties in Salem.

Consultants Roz Keeney and Julie Osborne were brought on board to assist with plan development by working with the Landmarks Commission, historic property owners and City staff. In addition to reviewing all the existing applicable plans, codes, and processes relating to historic preservation in Salem, a needs assessment was developed through extensive public outreach including public meetings, an on-line survey, monthly meetings of a Technical Advisory Committee, and e-mail messages to neighborhood associations and other stakeholders.

The overall result of this effort was the creation of a plan that furthers the City's commitment to historic preservation. The plan provides an overall vision for historic preservation in Salem along with strategic guidance as to how the City can maintain, strengthen, and expand its preservation activities in a manner that is consistent with other City objectives to identify and maximize mutual benefits.

The plan proposes solutions to identified needs in the existing program, such as, improved historic design review standards and guidelines and potential incentive programs. Based upon public outreach, revision of the historic code was identified as the first priority.

Some of the important elements/concepts being addressed by the proposed amendments include:

- Identifying a broader range of projects that can be reviewed administratively.
- Establishing clearer general design standards.
- Creating separate design standards for non-contributing resources. Clarifying standards for window replacement.
- Incorporating design standards for energy efficiency.
- Adding a new process to address demolition by neglect (i.e., allowing an historic resource to deteriorate to the point of becoming a dangerous building).

The proposed amendments will be made available for public review to gather input and comments through meetings throughout October with the Historic Landmarks Commission Historic Preservation Plan Technical Advisory Committee and the affected Neighborhood Associations.

To view the proposed amendments please go to: www.cityofsalem.net/Departments/CommunityDevelopment/Planning/Historic/HPP-HPC/Documents/Proposed_Historic_Code_Amendments.pdf

Work sessions on the proposed amendments will be held with the Historic Landmarks Commission on October 28, 2010, and jointly with the Planning Commission on November 2, 2010.

Formal initiation of the proposed amendments by the City Council is anticipated for November 8, 2010, with a recommendation to set Council's public hearing on the amendments for December 6, 2010.

HONORS ROLL IN FOR THE RAILROAD BRIDGE *~Ellen Miller, Commissioner*

The awards and celebrations continue for the restored Union Street Railroad Bridge. Since the Union Street Railroad Bridge's restoration project began and the bridge became a bike and pedestrian way, it has received three awards, for engineering, heritage and planning,

Soon after the bridge opened to cyclists and pedestrians on April 18, 2009, the bridge was awarded the Engineering Excellence Grand Award for Transportation from the American Council of Engineering Companies in Oregon. City officials, along with the trail connection designers HDR Engineering, accepted the award at a ceremony in Portland, Oregon.

Almost a year to the date of the opening of the bridge, the Oregon Heritage Society honored the bridge with a 2010 Oregon Heritage Excellence award. Presented by the Oregon First Lady, Mary Oberst, the award recognized the City's ability to produce the most from available resources and skill. Receiving the award on the City's behalf was Mayor Janet Taylor, Project Coordinator Todd Klocke, and citizen, Hazel Patton.

Most recently the Union Street Railroad Bridge received the 2010 Transportation Planning Excellence Award. This award was sponsored by the Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, and the American Planning Association. The criteria for the award were community and public involvement, equity, implementation, innovation, intermodalism, livability/sustainability and partnerships and collaboration. Out of 80 nominees, the Union Street Railroad Bridge was one of the 11 award recipients across the country. The award was presented to Mayor Taylor and Peter Fernandez, Director of Public Works, at the Transportation Research Board's Joint Summer Meeting in Minneapolis, Minnesota this past summer.

This celebrated historic bridge has been recognized by professional associations and enjoyed by many in Salem. The celebrations continue as the planning is underway for the 100th birthday of the bridge in 2013. Photos, history of the bridge, and project information are available at www.cityofsalem.net/unionbridge

HISTORIC INTERIORS *--Kristi Neznanski, Commissioner*

Although the Historic Landmarks Commission has no jurisdiction over interior changes, they do represent an important part of the historic character of a building and should not be overlooked. When looking for a house to buy, I was drawn to the homes that had many of the original interior finishes and fixtures.

Although no one really wants a toilet from the early 1900's, details such as picture rails, glass doorknobs and lighting fixtures contribute to the overall character of the space. Often these historic pieces are lost in kitchen remodels or when minor home improvements are made, but they need not be. The house I live in was built in 1936 and although it's not in a historic district, it's the coved ceilings and the plaster arches that give the space the character that was a part of the time period.

Maintaining the historical significance of a home takes more research and time. Plaster repair can be a pain, but it's not that much more difficult than tearing out the old plaster and replacing it with modern gypsum board. Moreover, it's sustainable in the wake of the green movement to reuse existing materials rather than buying new.

While the local big-box home improvement store might not be the place to find a historic light fixture, there are resources all over the Willamette Valley. The State offers a preservation contractor directory on their website.



If you're a do-it-yourselfer, Aurora Mills Architectural Salvage has all kinds of reclaimed fixtures and windows; Rejuvenation in Portland has both new and reconditioned historic lighting and hardware; and you'd be surprised what you can often find at the local Habitat for Humanity ReStore.

The historic character of a building, whether a single family home or a commercial space downtown, is bolstered by the interior element. So, before you toss that funky looking thing-a-ma-jig, try to find out if it's a small piece of the history of the space and worth a second look.

SALEM'S POSTWAR PUBLIC BUILDINGS

~~lan Johnson, Commissioner

Between 1945 and the early 1970s the role of local and federal government in Americans' everyday lives expanded greatly to offer new services while expanding others. During the period new facilities, often designed by locally and nationally well-known architects, were constructed in a variety of styles, including International, New Formalism, Brutalism, and Expressionism. In many cases these designs were no less grand or architecturally daring than those of prior generations. These new buildings had little ornamentation, and emphasized strong geometric shapes and the use of modern materials such as glass, metal, and concrete. The public spaces constructed during this period reflect the optimism and aesthetic of this era, and are representative of the historic growth in government services during the period.

Like the rest of the nation, Oregon's economy and population expanded steadily from the close of WWII through 1975. Between 1940 and the end of the era, the population almost doubled to 2.1 million. Growth was especially rapid in the Willamette Valley. In response, the size of state and local governments grew dramatically, offering an increasing number of services for a growing number of Oregonians. As the state capitol and county seat, perhaps no other city in Oregon experienced the expansion of government as intensely or retains such an intact architectural record of public architecture as Salem.

Located north of the Capitol Building, the State Transportation Building was completed in 1951 during the height of federal and state highway construction. Designed by the Portland architectural firm of Whitehouse, Church, Newberry & Roehr Architects, the "stripped classical" style building was designed to complement the State Capitol Building and Library. The five-story, symmetrical, smooth, and minimally decorated white Vermont marble main façade sits on a dark granite base and is punctuated by the regular placement of dark bronze-frame windows and doors, presenting an imposing mass that is broken only by three carved panels above the main entry depicting transportation-related themes.

Constructed in 1954, the Marion County Courthouse replaced the 1873 Second Empire-style seat located at the same site, providing a modern and more spacious location for County business. The Courthouse has a symmetrical façade geometrically divided by raised panels, and exhibits aspects of the International style, including a box-like shape, expansive windows, smooth Vermont marble walls and a main volume partially supported by unadorned square columns. Designed by recognized master architect Pietro Belluschi, this building is representative of his later work, as is the former First National Bank in downtown Salem. The noted landscape firm of *Lord & Schryver* designed the grounds for the Courthouse.

Salem's Civic Center includes the city hall, main public library



Salem Civic Center, 2002

and a fire station set in a well-planned, park-like setting. This massive complex was completed in 1972 in an effort to centralize the previously scattered city offices into a single location. The Brutalist design presents all the hallmarks of the style, characterized by a "weighty massiveness," rough-surface concrete exterior, large unbroken wall surfaces, and deeply recessed windows. Sitting at the center of the site, the rectangular city hall features a stepped parking structure with rooftop plaza and an interior multi-story covered courtyard. The Council Chambers sits forward of the main mass on concrete columns and is connected to the rest of the building by elevated walkways.

While not as ornate as earlier public buildings, these three examples of state, county, and local government are no less important for their association with the growth of government after WWII and their distinct architectural aesthetic. There are already four designs by Whitehouse, Church, Newberry & Roehr, the architects of the State Transportation Building, listed in the National Register. Recently the ODOT building was determined to be eligible for National Register listing. Some of Oregon's most celebrated architectural statements were created by Pietro Belluschi, whose career spanned many decades. Further inquiry may find that his design for the Marion County Courthouse also merits national recognition.

The Civic Center is only 37 years old and as of yet unevaluated, but the building's distinctive architecture and its association with Salem's growth may be historically significant and is certainly worth further study. These three examples are merely representative of the many publically-owned and potentially National Register-eligible buildings around the state. To date, few have been formally recognized, but no doubt many more will be in the future.

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***From the Chairman of the
Salem Historic Landmarks Commission...***

Greetings everyone!

I have noticed increased maintenance activity in the last month, getting ready for winter. Summer ended too quickly for us all. As the days get shorter, it's time to think about learning more about preservation, and there are several upcoming opportunities. We are going forward with our master preservation planning for Salem's future, so watch for upcoming announcements. The State Historic Preservation Office is offering web seminars on historic preservation topics -- check these out at oregonheritage.org. A Historic certification course for Realtors will be held November 16 & 17 here in Salem. Look for even more to come next Spring!

Take care,

Joy Sears



We're on the Web!

[www.cityofsalem.net/Departments/Community
Development/Planning/Historic/Pages](http://www.cityofsalem.net/Departments/CommunityDevelopment/Planning/Historic/Pages)

Salem Historic Landmarks Commission

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