

**FINAL REPORT
OREGON MAIN STREET PROGRAM
RECONNAISSANCE LEVEL SURVEY
OREGON CITY, OREGON
FEBRUARY 9, 2009**

Historic background: Oregon City, known as the first incorporated city west of the Mississippi, rivaled Portland for early supremacy in the area, and played a significant role in the early history of Oregon. Established in 1829 by Dr. John McLoughlin, chief factor of the Hudson's Bay Company, as a lumber mill near Willamette Falls. Oregon City was named and laid out in 1842 and was designated as Oregon's territorial capital in 1848 until 1852 when the seat was moved to Salem. During the 1840s and 1850s it was the destination for those wanting to file land claims after traveling the Oregon Trail as the last stop on the trail. It is located southeast of Portland on the east side of the Willamette River, just below the falls.

The industrial economic base of the city dates from 1856 when the first paper mill was started and continued to grow substantially with, in 1864, the Jacob Brothers established a woolen mill. Industry was located primarily at the south end of Main Street nearest the falls, with commercial, governmental and social/fraternal entities developing to the north along Main Street. Religious and educational structures also appeared along Main Street, but tended to be grouped north of the commercial core. Residential structures filled in along Main Street, as well as along the side and cross streets. As the city grew, the commercial, governmental and social/fraternal structures expanded northward first, and with time eastward and westward to the side and cross streets. The first interurban electric railroad in the United States began in 1893 with a line between Portland and Oregon City.

Oregon City's unique topography with three basalt terraces affected its development. The town is divided into upper and lower areas; the lower area is on a bench next to the Willamette River, and the upper area atop a bluff composed of Columbia Plateau basalt. For many years, Indian trails connected the two, but stairs were built in the 19th century. In 1915 the town built the water-powered Oregon City Municipal Elevator to connect the two parts, which was converted to electricity in the 1920s. In 1954, a new electric elevator was constructed with the specification that it was to be "as plain as possible and without ornament." As of the census of 2000, there were 25,754 people, 9,471 households, and 6,667 families residing in the city.

Oregon City is a "Performing Main Street Participant" and has a website dedicated to the Oregon Main Street Program. Detailed information about the program, the work plan, the people involved, meeting notices and minutes, maps, and city support are provided at <http://www.orcity.org/community-develop/main-street-oregon-city.htm>. The Main Street Oregon City Mission Statement is: To enhance our pioneering efforts by creating a strong diverse business district, through developing a positive downtown image, preserving historic and cultural landmarks, while stimulating economic vitality and investment in our Main Street district.

Project Objectives and Justification: The reconnaissance level survey of the downtown commercial district within the Main Street Oregon City boundaries established by the city was conducted to document the area by photographing, describing the physical characteristics, and evaluating the eligibility of each building for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. This effort provides the foundation from which the specifically unique qualities that speak to Oregon City's sense of place can be best incorporated

into the Main Street Program's four point approach and upon which the community can build upon the program's comprehensive approach to downtown commercial district revitalization.

Boundary Justification: the city of Oregon City and the Oregon Main Street program coordinator established the boundaries. The boundaries include the original historic business district located between 5th and 11th and extend to the End of the Trail Interpretive Center near 18th Street, connecting the south and north ends of town. The boundaries south to north between 5th Street and 18th Streets include all properties along McLoughlin Boulevard and Main Street; between 12th and 17th, along Center Street; between 14th and 18th, along Washington Street; and between 14th and 15th Streets along John Adams Street. From east to west, properties were surveyed along 5th through 18th Streets, and east along Abernethy to the 1000 block.

Survey Results: The City of Oregon City has three distinctive areas of commercial/industrial development.

- 1) A concentration of traditional downtown historic storefront buildings dating from the late 1800s to the early 1900s is located along Main Street between 5th Street and 11th Street.
- 2) A number of large manufacturing, warehouse, and automotive related buildings located along McLoughlin Boulevard and Main Street between 12th and 17th Streets, and the east side of Washington Street between 16th and 17th Streets.
- 3) An area of mixed residential and early to mid-twentieth century commercial development along 12th, 14th, and Abernethy between Main Street and Jefferson Street, and along Washington and John Adams between 14th and 17th Streets.

Properties that were approximately 45 years and older (constructed by 1965) are considered to be within the historic period if they retain their historic integrity, and therefore considered eligible for listing in the National Register. Of the 133 buildings inventoried, 35% were evaluated to be eligible/contributing and 11% (or 15 buildings) as eligible/significant; 85% of the buildings were constructed before 1965. Buildings that have been significantly altered and lost historic integrity comprised approximately 39% of the inventoried buildings, with another 14% considered not eligible due to age. For more specific information refer to the Historic Building Report/Counts list included with the database information.

Buildings within the Main Street boundaries that are listed include:

- 212 14th Street – Harris House, 1904, Local Register
- 216 14th Street – Clark House, 1867, Local Register
- 220 14th Street – Healy House, c.1900, Local Register
- 309 17th Street – Wood House, c.1889, Local Register
- 308 18th Street, Williams House, Local Register
- 41517th Street, Hackett House, National Register
- 714 Main Street, Petzold Building, National Register

Recommendations:

To build on the existing built environment strengths of the city we recommend:

- Prepare Intensive Level Surveys (ILS) for the resources considered to be eligible and significant, including:

- 500 Abernethy – Englebrecht House (Krueger House)
- 1420 John Adams – Steele Medical Center
- 801 Main – Clackamas County Courthouse
- 1625 Washington – Krueger Lumber
 - Restoration of the storefront portion of the building may need to occur prior to its being eligible for listing in the National Register on an individual basis.
- Prepare a National Register nomination for a Downtown Historic District, roughly bounded by 6th Street on the south, 11th Street on the north, Railroad Avenue on the east, and McLoughlin Blvd. on the west. As the nomination process proceeds, the specific boundaries will be refined based on research and further evaluation of the significance of the buildings within this area.
- Resources recommended for individual listing in the National Register include:
 - 300 7th – Oregon City Municipal Elevator
 - 214-218 6th Street – Greyhound Bus Depot
 - 619 Main Street – Andresen Building
 - 712 Main Street – McCald Building (Old City Hall)
- Resources recommended for a Multiple Properly Listing (MPL). The following properties have a common theme that describes the history of the mid-1900s in Oregon City when the auto industry was booming. There does not appear to be a concentration of this property type of historic buildings to form a historic district, therefore, through the development of a MPL, individual properties can be more easily listed based on the significance of the property as it related to the underlying context. Contact SHPO for additional information.
 - The buildings recommended for this MPL that are focused on the automobile itself include:
 - 1009 Main Street – Clackamas Auto Parts
 - 1010 Main Street – Napa Auto Parts
 - 1224 Main Street – AWS Service
 - 1301 Main Street – Factory Motor Sports
 - 1516 Main Street – Miles Fiberglass & Plastics
 - 1401 Washington – Auto Repair
 - 1729 Washington – Maverick Welding Supplies Company
 - Currently considered non-contributing due to replacement siding and windows. Restoration of historic materials could make it eligible for listing.
 - The buildings that are recommended as retail storefronts or properties that were built during the mid 1900s in response to the increase in automobile traffic, include:
 - 1316 Washington - Tony’s Fish Market
 - 1500-1512 Washington – Misc. retail shops
- Feature the three houses at 212, 216 and 220 14th Street. Remove chain link fence and provide a more historically accurate treatment to provide a more street friendly appearance. Developing these houses into a small office complex would provide a historic continuum between the

downtown core and the north end of the Main Street area by providing a physical link that helps tell the story of Oregon City.

- Emphasize the only “vertical street” in North America, and one of only four municipal elevators in the world, by listing and highlighting the Elevator. Use walking tour brochures to connect the downtown commercial core with the McLoughlin Historic District and the downtown historic core by placing them in the historic elevator to link the two areas and provide heritage tourism visitors a more complete experience.
- Connect the north and south ends of the Main Street area through events that tie into the historic development of the city. The industrial area on the south end is where the mills started and the town development initiated in the 1800s. The downtown commercial core was developed primarily in the early to mid-1900s. The north end of town was developed in the mid-1900s with the focus on the automobile.
 - Celebrate the auto showroom/service buildings through events – auto show or something similar – 1009 Main, 1010 Main, 1224 Main, 1301 Main,
 - Utilize 1625 Washington as an event warehouse – connect the lumber mill on the south end to the lumber company at this location -
- Focus on storefront restoration rather than street enhancements. Contact the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) in Salem (503-986-3800) about possible historic preservation planning, grants and other historic preservation incentives to meet preservation guidelines for rehabilitation using the Secretary of the Interior’s Guidelines for Historic Preservation. Visit Oregon’s SHPO Webb site for more information, www.oregon.gov/OPRD/HCD/SHPO/.
- Oregon City has an excellent grant program in place that provides funds to *Locally Designated* historic buildings. Details can be found at <http://www.ci.oregon-city.or.us/community-develop/planning/documents/OregonCityRenovationGrantApplication.pdf>. It is recommended that this program be expanded to include funds for awnings in the Main Street area, as well as low-interest loans. Contact staff at the Urban Development Department, City of Salem (503-588-6179) for information about the loan program they implemented approximately 6 years ago.
- Rehabilitate the following buildings so they can be considered eligible as contributing properties within the historic district or listed within the context of the Multiple Property Submission.
 - 1201 Washington – Restore the storefront windows and remove the secondary siding materials on the 12th Street side of the building.
 - 215 13th St. – Restore the entryway to its historic appearance and rehabilitating the large overhead doors to minimize their appearance and allow the focus to be on the historic features.
 - 517 Main – Expose transoms, replace windows with non-reflective glass and thinner mullions, resurface stucco.
 - 622 Main St – Remove wood façade and expose original fabric and design.
 - 703 Main – Restore storefront by reducing size of bulkheads, and exposing and restoring transoms.
 - 716 Main – Remove vertical wood siding and exposing and repair historic fabric.

- 719 Main – Remove the stucco on the upper portion of the building and repair the historic fabric.
 - 818 Main – Paint the building (or remove existing paint meeting preservation guidelines) to reveal the decorative brickwork at the parapet level, expose and restore transoms, and recess the entrance.
 - 1702 Washington – Restore windows in existing openings.
- Buildings that currently are considered contributing buildings within the proposed historic district area, but that could significantly benefit from façade restoration and provide greater strength to the district include:
 - 603 Main – Remove brick facing and restore window openings on ground floor
 - 702 Main – Rehabilitate first floor façade – increase pedestrian friendly quality by opening lower level by reintroducing storefront-type windows
 - 802-804 Main and 812 Main – Replace the rigid metal awning with a more historically accurate style is recommended to enhance the historic character of the district.
- Apply for a Historic Site sign from Oregon Travel Information Council. Visit their website at www.oregontic.com/sales/signs-tods for more information.
 - Traffic patterns and the speed of automobiles is one of the primary issues communities face in their downtown commercial districts. *Main Street, When a Highway Runs Through It*, (egov.oregon.gov/LCD/TGM/docs/mainstreet.pdf) provides some helpful information about minimizing the conflict between automobiles and pedestrians. It is recommended that some analysis of the areas along Main Street, along 7th Street where the bridge drops into downtown, and especially along McLoughlin, be conducted to attempt to reduce the automobile and pedestrian conflicts. Restoring storefronts and providing more pedestrian amenities, such as planters and benches, may increase pedestrian traffic.

Explanation of Fieldwork Techniques: The Oregon Main Street Program funded the project. The survey was conducted by Julie Osborne and Rosalind Keeney architectural historians/historic preservation planners who meet the professional qualifications outlined in 36 CFR 61 during the week of December 8, 2008. They:

- Obtained the SHPO database. Approximately 80 sites in the Main Street survey area had been previously surveyed.
- Obtained a map from the City of Oregon with building footprints, addresses, and boundary information.
- Discussed the survey boundaries with Christina Gardiner-Robertson, the city's Main Street contact person.
- Obtained background information, including the town's history to help determine dates of development.
- Prepared a project description handout for the city contract to help with inquiries while conducting the field work.
- Met with Christina Gardiner-Robertson on January 20, 2009 at the Cypress Restaurant to discuss the survey process and to obtain additional information about the town's history and buildings.
- Took field forms, map and camera into the field
- Systematically documented each property, covering both sides of the street.

- Photographed each building to illustrate the architectural qualities, taking into consideration the angle of the sun and other weather-related issues
- Labeled the photographs according to SHPO labeling convention
- Prepared a final map with address and eligibility determination according to SHPO guidelines
- Entered the data into the Oregon Historic Sites Database according to SHPO guidelines
- Prepared a final report.

References:

Oregon City, Planning, www.ci.oregon-city.or.us/community-develop/planning/

Welcome to Oregon City – www.el.com/to/oregoncity/

Dennis, Michelle. Historic Context Statement, 2000 - http://www.orcity.org/community-develop/planning/historical_context.htm

Appendices:

Cover Sheet

Printed Summary Reports

Printed Data Sheets

Marked Survey Map

USGS Quadrangle

Photographs