

Historic Oregon City



Oregon City Elevator and Main Street Buildings

Welcome to Historic Oregon City! As the oldest incorporated city in the state of Oregon, Oregon City residents take particular pride in their city's history. Take some time to visit your historic neighborhoods—have a meal at a restaurant or coffeeshop along 7th Street. Visit one of Oregon City's many historic museums such as the End of the Oregon Trail Museum or the McLoughlin House—now operated by the National Park Service; Or ride the municipal elevator—one of the only vertical streets in the United States—to Mail Street and explore Oregon City's historic business center.

As a historic property owner, you are contributing to the economic redevelopment of Oregon City's historic core. Thoughtful preservation and rehabilitation of older buildings are bringing new life into the city. It is only with your help and vision can Oregon City retain its deep and sought after sense of place. Please take some time to read over the material provided in this newsletter and try to find ways that you can contribute to the overall livability of this area.

-Rick Winterhalter, Chair, Historic Review Board

How You Can Promote Historic Preservation in Oregon City

1. Rehabilitate a historic house.
2. Shop in a historic district.
3. Eat at a restaurant in a historic building.
4. Visit a museum or a place where history was made.
5. Walk around a historic residential neighborhood.
6. Stay in a historic hotel or Bed and Breakfast.
7. Attend a live performance or movie at a historic theater.
8. Support a historic downtown building by locating your business there.
9. Encourage an ethic of stewardship and high quality rehabilitation work in your community.
10. Encourage friends and neighbors to learn about historic preservation.
11. Learn about the different architectural styles present in Oregon City.
12. Volunteer with organizations where preservation makes a difference such as the planning commission, Chamber of Commerce, or Historic Review Board.
13. Visit a local museum to learn more about our unique place in Oregon's history.

Why is Historic Preservation Important?

Each and every historic building plays a significant part of the continuing preservation of Oregon City's local heritage. Historic buildings reflect the lives and aspirations of past generations, defining the community in many ways. Thoughtful stewardship of our buildings and surrounding environment can ensure that our sense of identity is passed along to future generations. However, historic preservation is more than a nostalgic necessity, it provides numerous tangible benefits.

Economic Development: Restoration and rehabilitation of older buildings provide usable space for residents and businesses, and an increased assessed value as properties are improved.

Energy Conservation: Historic preservation encompasses recycling older buildings and conserving or adapting them for new uses. Older neighborhoods are usually closer to mass transit systems, established commercial centers and public facilities. Many older buildings can easily and inexpensively be made fuel efficient.

Housing: The rising cost of new housing and land development make the preservation of older housing and residential neighborhoods a necessity. Healthy communities require good housing provided by older and established neighborhoods.

Recreation and Tourism: Historically significant areas provide recreational opportunities and are among the top three tourist attractions in Oregon.

Land Conservation: The recycling of older business structures and preservation of older residential neighborhoods ensure maximum appropriate use of inner-city areas and aid in discouraging the untimely conversion of more land to urban use. Inner-city deterioration actively encourages new development outside the City as people move outward in search of enhanced livability.

Historic Preservation League of Oregon,
Landmarks Commission Workbook

The McLoughlin Conservation District

Residential development began in the McLoughlin Conservation District around 1850. Many of the earliest homes were owner built structures with gabled roofs and minor exterior detail. However, a minority of residences replicated the architectural styles of colonial or classical New England with picturesque gothic details.

By 1892, the area between the bluffs and Washington Street had become dotted with residences. The large houses had richly detailed exteriors, towers, and elaborate porches. In contrast, a segment of homes built from the 1870's to early 1880's had an Italianate style with rectangular forms, exaggerated details, low-pitched roofs, and thin windows.

By 1900, the neighborhood encompassed over 300 homes with an eclectic mix of styles. By this period over half the structures on 7th Street had become non-residential. The growth was perpetuated, in 1913, with the installation of an elevator connecting 7th Street with downtown Oregon City.

By the 1930's, grading and fill efforts had significantly altered the northern end of the neighborhood. Much of the canyon had been filled and houses were increasingly diverse. Older architectural styles were seated next to bungalows, large boxy homes, English cottages, and those of colonial influence. In the 1950s and 1960s, the remaining homes on lower 7th

Street were replaced by commercial structures.

Today, the street remains as a main arterial linking downtown to the Hilltop area. The neighborhood housing stock continues to display a gamut of styles, and preserve the City's historic foundation.



Carnegie Library, 606 John Adams

Benefits of National Register Listing



Canemah National Register District

What is the National Register of Historic Places?

- The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of historically significant buildings, structures, sites, objects, and districts that are considered worthy of preservation by the Secretary of the Interior. The National Register is part of a nation-wide program that supports public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect our historic and archaeological resources. The register is

administered by the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). A Governor appointed advisory body, known as Oregon State Advisory Committee on Historic Preservation, aids the SHPO staff.

What are the benefits of listing a property or District on the National Register?

Federal and State financial incentives have been developed to encourage National Register property owners to preserve these significant historic resources. Less tangible benefits include neighborhood and community pride, economic development as a result of heritage tourism and a strong community foundation, and special recognition and attention. In the State of Oregon, properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places or contributing properties in a Historic District can be considered for:

- The Federal Investment Tax Credit (ITCs) program for income producing properties (20% tax credit)
- The State's Special assessment Program. The assessed value of your property is frozen for 15 years as part of an approved rehabilitation program with the State Historic Preservation Office

More information can be obtained from:

OREGON STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
725 SUMMER STREET NE, SUITE C
SALEM OR 97301
(503) 986-0688

The first moonshine whiskey still in Oregon was built near the future city in 1836 or 1837. That apparently prompted formation of the first temperance society in the Oregon County in 1837

Canemah National Register Historic District

Located just above the Willamette River falls, Canemah holds a unique place in Oregon's history as a boat-building center and gateway between the upper Willamette Valley and the rest of the world.

Prior to white immigration, the flat area above the falls was a Native American encampment claimed by the Callapooyas, called *kanim* or "canoe place".

In 1844, Ohio-born Absolom Font Hedges recognized the areas potential as a harbor and transfer point, staking his claim for land. Five years later he laid out lots along the river and up the hill, inviting settlement to his new town, which he called Falls City. The town began to grow and became referred to as Canemah, the anglicized version of its native name *kanim*.

In 1882, the first public amusement park in the country was established on the land above the Willamette River falls.

In the 1850s, Canemah became an important boat building center on the upper Willamette. Riverboat captains built their homes in the Classical Revival style, fashionable throughout the state at the time.

In 1861, an ensuing flood washed away many of the buildings along the river in Canemah. As a central portage point, the town was quickly rebuilt and river transportation was rapidly restored. Post-flood improvements attracted new residents of whom built houses in the picturesque Gothic Revival style, enclosing their lots with picket fences to keep wandering livestock out of their gardens.

Changes in transportation in the 1870s forever altered Canemah's development. In 1873, the Willamette Locks were finished and a newly completed railroad began handling traffic around the falls.

In the last two decades of the nineteenth century, Canemah began to assume the character of a residential

community. With the subsiding freight traffic on the river residents found work in local mills. The houses were usually simple in form and detail, reflecting the economic downturn.

With the advent of the interurban service and the opening of the paper mill in 1908 the town experienced modest growth, evident today in the number of bungalows along the highway and in the hills. After 1900, Canemah increasingly relied on Oregon City for services and employment. In 1928, Canemah petitioned for annexation and became a part of the City of Oregon City.



What Does it Mean to be an Historic Home Owner?

If you are an owner of a house that is designated a Historic Site, there is a special review required for all exterior alterations that affect the outside of the structure (windows, doors, changes in siding material, and additions). These alterations require review by the Planning Division and/or Historic Review Board depending upon the extent of the proposed change to the structure. Interior alterations to designated sites do not require review by the Historic Review Board. Owners of designated properties can make some exterior improvements to their structure without City involvement by complying with the Historic Review Board Policies on the next page. Call the Planning Division (503.657.0891) or go to the Planning page of the City of Oregon City's Website (www.orcity.org) to see if your property is locally designated.

Properties Not Designated as Historic Sites

If you own a house that is not designated a Historic Site, you need not go through the Historic Review process. However, the Historic Review Board is always available to answer any design questions you have regarding the preservation and rehabilitation of your house. Additionally, if your house is over 50 years old it may be considered a designated structure in future inventories. The Historic Review Board encourages you to make exterior alterations that will maintain your structure's integrity and be compatible with the neighborhood

New Construction and Demolition

Finally, all new construction and demolition of buildings in the McLoughlin Conservation District and Canemah National Register District require approval by the Historic Review Board.

In 1889, the nation's first long-distance electrical transmission line extended between Oregon City and Portland.

Historic Review Board Policies

HRB Policy 1 –

Construction and Repair of Foundations

The finished floor elevation of the structure shall not be raised or lowered in relation to the ground level as a result of foundation construction or repair. Any new foundation must be covered with skirting that matches the original skirting on the structure.

HRB Policy 2 – Storm Windows & Doors

Storm window frames and members shall be made of wood, baked enamel, or anodized aluminum. If wooden or enameled, the frames and members shall be painted to match or complement the color of the existing window trim. Mill finish aluminum storm windows are not permitted. Interior storm windows are encouraged.

HRB Policy 3 – Repair or Replacement of Siding

New siding shall match original siding both in material and style. A sample must be submitted for review.

HRB Policy 4 – Gutters and Downspouts

Replacement wooden gutters and downspouts are permitted. Galvanized or enameled aluminum gutters and downspouts shall be painted to match the house. All support straps shall be painted to match the house. New downspouts shall be located to avoid visual interference with architectural features of the street façade. Plastic gutters and downspouts are not permitted. If the downspout empties onto the ground, splashblocks shall be placed at the outflow to disperse the water away from the foundation.

HRB Policy 5 – Roofs

Structures must be re-roofed with wood shingles, 3-tab composition shingles, or “architectural style” composition shingles. If the roof slope is less than 4/12, rolled composition roofing may be used. Red, dark green, black, dark brown or green and white composition material is encouraged. Slate, tile or tar and gravel roofs may be re-roofed with like materials. The following roof materials are not permitted without Board approval: metal, fiberglass, plastic, corrugated roofing, or shake shingles. Any alteration to the overhang, soffit, or rake board requires Board approval.

HRB Policy 6 – Construction of Fences and Walls

The following policy is hereby adopted by the Oregon City Historic Review Board regarding the construction or alteration of fences and walls within Historic Districts, on designated sites in Conservation Districts, or on individual sites designated as landmarks.

Fences and Walls in Front Yards

<u>Acceptable</u>	<u>Not Acceptable</u>
Iron Picket	Chain-link
Ornamental Cast Iron	Post and Rail / Split Rail
Brick	Concrete Block
Combinations of Iron and Masonry	Stockade
Wood Picket – flat boards or square vertical	Plywood / Hardboard or Asbestos Panel
Woven Wire if installed according to height	Hollow, Twisted Wrought Iron
Posts and rails	Mixed Material Diagonal Board (e.g. brick / wood/vinyl)

Fences Interior Side Yards, Alleyways & Rear Yards

<u>Acceptable</u>	<u>Not Acceptable</u>
All that are acceptable above	All not acceptable above
Concrete Block	—
Horizontal Board	—
Staggered Vertical Board (good neighbor)	—
Solid Wood – flat-topped clipped top or capped vertical	—



Historic Review Board Policies Continued

Fence or Wall Height

Front yard fences or walls and corner side yard fences or walls should be no more than 42 inches in height and shall not create a traffic site obstruction (as defined in Chapter 10.32 of the Oregon City Municipal Code). Along rear yards and interior side yards (beyond the front yard setback), fences or walls may be up to six (6) feet in height.

Fences or walls that are listed in the “Acceptable” category may be reviewed and a decision made by staff. The primary criterion to be used by staff shall be compatibility of the proposed fence or wall with the style and period of the designated structure. If the proposal is not designated, the primary criterion shall be compatibility with surrounding historic structures. Either staff or applicant shall have the option of referring the plans to the Historic Review Board for resolution of doubtful or contested application of standards. Fences or walls that are not listed, or that are specifically listed under the “Not Acceptable” category must be submitted for review and decision by the Historic Review Board.

HRB Policy 7 – Construction of Accessory Structures

Accessory structures which are 200 square feet or smaller may be reviewed and decision made by staff. The primary criteria to be used by staff in making the decision shall be as follows:

- The building/structure materials shall match the primary resource structure
- The roofing materials shall match the material on the historic/primary resource structure; if the roofing material on the historic/primary structure is not compatible, Historic Review Board Policy #5 shall apply
- The accessory structure shall be painted to match the historic/primary resource
- The structure shall be placed a minimum of three (3) feet from any interior lot line as per Section 17.54 - Accessory Structure Standards

Any structure that does not meet this standard shall be referred or submitted to the Historic Review Board for review and decision.

HRB Policy 8 – Exterior Alterations to Buildings in National Historic Districts, or Structures in Conservation Districts or Landmark Structures

Additions shall be reviewed by the Historic Review Board. Other alterations are subject to administrative review. Alterations are permitted if they duplicate existing building materials and styles. Wood siding is encouraged if the siding is replaced. Aluminum and vinyl siding and vinyl and aluminum mill finish windows are not permitted, unless the building was originally constructed of such materials and they are the predominant materials on the building. Wood sash doors are encouraged. Roof alterations shall conform to Historic Review Board Policy #5.

HRB Policy 9 – Screen Doors

Screen doors shall be compatible with the material, style and period of the designated structure.

Policies 1-9 were reviewed and revised by the HRB at work sessions on October 12, 2000, November 9, 2000, and December 14, 2000, and were formally adopted on December 14, 2000 at the HRB’s duely noticed public meeting.

HRB Policy 10- Window Repair & Replacement

Original wood windows are important architectural features in any historic building. They are the “eyes” of the structure and they convey a sense of handcraftsmanship and detail that cannot be achieved with substitute materials. The Historic Review Board maintains that original windows should be retained and repaired whenever possible and replacement of windows should be with in kind materials. For all exterior alterations, involving windows, to: all structures in the Canemah National Register District, designated structures in the McLoughlin Conservation District and other local Landmarks, the applicant will provide a determination of the window’s architectural significance and condition to assist the Historic Review Board to determine the repair and replacement options for the property. Owners of non-designated structures are also encouraged to follow this policy for window repair and replacement.

(Adopted October 25, 2001)



Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the difference between "Maintenance" and "Changes"?

Ordinary maintenance and minor repairs involving identical materials and design do not require an application. Painting previously painted surfaces is a common example of what does not need approval. However, repairs that will use different materials, that would change the existing character of the building, or which are extensive enough to require a building permit, must be approved before work begins. If there is any doubt, owners should consult with the Historic Preservation staff by phone or in person.

2. Are there Alterations which will not be Approved?

- Alterations which are typically denied are:
- Installing vinyl or aluminum siding over wood or other historic materials
- Installing vinyl or aluminum windows
- Painting a masonry surface which is not currently painted and blasting pressure grit washing, or high pressure water washing
- Removing or changing distinctive architectural details
- Use of pressure treated wood as a finish material

3. What Standards does the Historic Review Board use to Evaluate the Applications?

The Historic Review Board is required to apply the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings. The Commission has also adopted local guidelines. In addition, the Secretary of the Interior has published Guidelines based on the standards, which may be helpful to an applicant considering how to make appropriate changes to an historic structure. The local policies and guidelines interpret the federal Standards on issues which arise frequently in Oregon City.



Captain George Jerome House, 215 Jerome Street

4. Are the Economics of Repairing My Property Considered?

The economic burden of necessary renovations is considered in two ways: There is no requirement to restore original features, which have been lost prior to the historic designation of the property or a previous owner. However, if you do choose to change a non-historic alteration, it must be with historically appropriate materials. For example a 1970s aluminum slider window cannot be replaced with a contemporary vinyl window, even if it will look slightly better than the previous window. All new changes are reviewed on how they impact the significance of the historic building. If repair or maintenance of an existing feature will impose an *extreme* economic burden, an exception to the standards can be considered; the Board will look at:

- The cost of the rehabilitation work compared to the value the property will have once repaired
- The record of the applicant's effort in ongoing maintenance
- Alternative means of preservation or restoration available to the applicant

5. Are There Any Tax Benefits Available for Historic Renovations?

If you are planning major improvements to your historic home in the Canemah National Register District or if you are individually listed on the National Register, the State of Oregon offers a tax freeze program at http://www.shpo.state.or.us/services_rehab.php. For substantial commercial, industrial and rental housing rehabilitation projects (which comply with the Secretary of Interior's standards) federal tax credits of up to 20 percent are available. The application process is fairly complicated (you must be on the National Register or be a contributing building in a National Register Historic District), but the tax credits can make the difference in a successful project.

Oregon City was incorporated on Christmas Eve in 1844.

In 1845, Asa Lovejoy and Francis Pettygrove attended a dinner party in Oregon City where they tossed a coin to name Portland, that other city down the Willamette.

In 1854, Oregon City became the first northwest municipality with a fire department.

What is the Process for Historic Review Board Approval?

1. Pick up an application.

Pick up an application at City Hall located at 320 Warner Milne Road) or online at www.orcity.org.

2. Consult with the Historic Preservation Staff.

If there is a question, consult with the Historic Preservation staff person. Ask for all HRB guidelines, submittal checklist and other technical assistance. Larger projects may require a preapplication conference.

3. Fill out the application.

Fill out the application. Address the applicable guidelines and include a complete description, drawings, photos, materials lists and building materials brochures or samples, which will help the Historic Review Board to understand what you plan to do.

4. Submit the application by mail or in person.

Submit the application by mail to P.O. Box 3040, Oregon City, Oregon 97045 or in person to 320 Warner Milne Road with the appropriate fee and Application Checklist completed. If the application will be reviewed by the Historic Review Board, you will be notified of the date of the next meeting (usually the fourth Tuesday of each month, at 7:00 p.m.). Complete applications normally must be submitted at least 30 days before the meeting at which they will be considered.

5. Be present at the Historic Review Board Meeting.

Try to be present at the Historic Review Board meeting. It is helpful for the applicant or a knowledgeable representative (such as a contractor or architect) to be present. When a representative is present, questions can be answered which will allow a decision to be made immediately. If there is a problem, it is possible for the Board and the applicant to agree on a change in the proposal which will lead to an approval. Otherwise, applications often have to be tabled with a request for more information.

6. A Certificate of Appropriateness will be issued.

A Certificate of Appropriateness will be issued by staff when an application has been approved. It is mailed to the applicant. If it is denied, the Board will be happy to advise the applicant on changes which would be acceptable.

7. It is possible to appeal a denial?

It is possible to appeal a denial to the City Commission. There are few appeals, because most concerns can be resolved between the Board and the applicant with some modifications of the proposed changes. Consult with staff on the procedures for reconsideration by the HRB or an appeal to the City Commission.

The Historic Review Board was created in 1980 and reviews approximately 15 applications a year ranging from window alterations to complete restorations. Staff typically approves an additional 15 applications annually for requests not requiring Board approval. Both the Board and Staff have established a reputation of working with applicants to arrive at the best solution that will meet the needs of the residents and the City alike.



View of the McLoughlin Conservation District from Promontory Avenue

Oregon City Facts

- In 1828, the Hudson's Bay Company (a powerful fur-trading operation) deemed it necessary to occupy lands as far south as possible to secure a strong bargaining position. Canadian-born Dr. John McLoughlin managed company operations from Fort Vancouver and ordered construction of three log houses next to the Willamette River Falls in the winter of 1829, becoming the first development in Oregon City.
- Oregon City housed the first flour mill in the state in 1832 as well as the state's first sawmill.
- In 1846 Oregon's first hat factory was built in Oregon city as well as the first newspaper (*The Spectator*).
- In 1848 Oregon became United States territory with Oregon City as its capital.
- The official plat for San Francisco, California was filed in Oregon City in 1850.
- Oregon City joined the Union in 1859.
- The first paper mill in Oregon opened in Oregon City in 1866.



For Additional Information, Please Contact
Christina Robertson-Gardiner,
Associate Planner
City of Oregon City
503.657.0891

"Preservation...is not just a romantic indulgence in nostalgia. It is a physical restatement of the long hollowed American values of frugality, good craftsmanship, and community responsibility"

-Bruce Chapman, National Trust for Historic Preservation

How Do I Get A Plaque For My House?

The white plaques you see on historic homes throughout Oregon City are a project of the Old Home Forum. The Old Home Forum is a group of homeowners and residents who promote interest in historic preservation and restoration of old buildings. Plaques are available to members of the Old Home Forum. To become a member your house must be listed as an architecturally or historically significant building in the City's Historic Inventory. If you are interested in finding out more about the Old House Forum and its projects, please call Denyse McGriff at 503.656.3912.

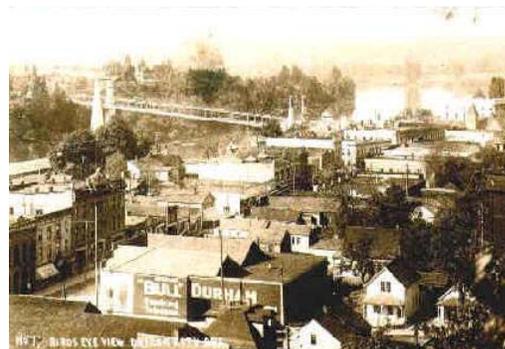


Francis Ermatinger House, 619 6th Street

Online Resources

For more information regarding historic preservation, please visit the City of Oregon City website at www.orcity.org/community-develop/planning. A wealth of resources are available under Historical Information such as:

- Information on historic buildings
- Historical photos
- History of Oregon City
- A list of where to go for historic building materials and services
- The 2002 McLoughlin Conservation District Resurvey
- Frequently asked questions
- The Historic Review Board Policies
- The process for approval
- Design Guidelines for new construction
- Design Guidelines for alterations and additions
- The National Register of Historical Places Inventory
- Links to historical websites



View of Downtown Oregon City c.1915

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