

Greater Portland Landmarks: Guiding Portland's Future

Portland's new leadership has a tremendous opportunity to take the city to a new level of prosperity. Greater Portland Landmarks offers our assistance and encourages support for these core principles:

1. Preserving Portland's historic buildings and landscapes is critical to sustaining its competitive advantage as a world class city.

Portland is consistently rated among the top livable cities in the country. While many factors play into the vitality and economic prosperity of the city – good jobs, housing, educational opportunities, and more – Portland's distinctive built environment is one of our greatest competitive advantages. Portland's authentic historic buildings and landscapes, in combination with its active seaport, and spectacular natural setting create an outstanding Quality of Place that is central to the City's identity, its livability and its economic strength in attracting and retaining businesses, visitors, and residents.

2. Portland's historic preservation ordinance and designated districts and landmarks have proven their success, over 21 years, as catalysts for economic development and revitalization.

Historic preservation contributes to economic health by providing stability within neighborhoods, and by promoting tourism and vital retail activity in historic business districts. Designated historic districts such as the Old Port and West End are being revitalized and have become highly desirable areas to live and work. Twenty-one years of consistent historic preservation board reviews have helped assure property owners that their investments will be supported and enhanced by other quality investments. These investments include dynamic new buildings such as the CIEE Building in the Old Port and Peleton Labs on Congress Street, both approved by the historic preservation board. Many rehabilitation projects in historic districts gain significant financial support through historic preservation tax credits.

3. As the City strives toward its vision of a "Sustainable Portland" – a clean environment, economic well-being and a vital community – historic preservation and adaptive reuse are very important components of its sustainability strategy.

The reuse and maintenance of buildings, rather than construction of new structures, saves energy, especially when the costs of extraction and fabrication of materials are considered. Frequently, the greenest building is one which is already built. Similarly, rehabilitating buildings in areas with an already established infrastructure is preferable to less environmentally sound "sprawl" development. While approaches to energy efficiency for existing buildings differ from new construction, they can be as cost effective, resulting in reduced consumption and supporting a culture of repair, recycling, and reuse. Since 1990, the cumulative effect of numerous individual decisions made by the City's Historic Preservation Program and a legion of private citizen stewards of historic resources combine to propel Portland toward its vision of a sustainable environment, economy and community.

4. It is critically important for the City to invest adequate resources in its historic preservation and planning staff, and its own historic structures and landscapes.

The City's planning and historic preservation staff offers essential expertise and service to residents and business owners who are rehabilitating and revitalizing historic buildings. Similarly, City owned buildings and parks require ongoing care and maintenance, staff support, and capital investment to protect these public resources. Preserving the city's own landmarks – such as City Hall, Portland High School, and the Portland Observatory – and its beautiful landscapes – such as the Eastern Promenade, Deering Oaks, and Evergreen Cemetery – encourages future private investment, so that the city will continue to win awards, and attract businesses, tourists, and residents.