

Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission

November 16, 2022

Agenda Item: 7a **Information**

Topic: Heritage Division Update

Public Comment Allowed: Yes

Presented by: Christine Curran, Deputy Director, Heritage Programs

Oregon Main Street Conference Held in Klamath Falls

Oregon Heritage held the first in-person Oregon Main Street Conference since 2019 in beautiful downtown Klamath Falls on October 5-7. Over 150 people attended, which is a strong showing considering the ongoing disruptions created by COVID and the many demands on staff and volunteers. The event brought local main street volunteers and staff, local government representatives, state partners, and those who care about their downtown together from around the state. The format changed this year to include short crash courses, traditional breakout sessions, deep-dive interactive sessions, and a variety of walking tours. The event featured the Excellence on Main Awards that celebrate the exemplary people, projects, and activities that enhance the vibrancy of Oregon's historic downtowns. The conference also hosted the first "Open Door Pitch Contest," which was conceived to support local main street program's efforts to create inclusive and welcoming urban environments. Communities submitted applications to share their idea for a project to make their organization or downtown more welcoming, but just didn't have the funding to move the idea forward. Five programs were then selected to make their pitch before an expert panel with representatives from AARP Oregon, Oregon Transportation Growth Management, Place It!, and Foundry Collective who provided feedback to the contestants. Final voting was by the audience with the winner, Oregon Frontier Chamber of Commerce, taking home the top prize of \$5,000. A second-place award of \$3,000 was made possible through the support of AARP Oregon and went to the Dallas Downtown Association.

What's Upstairs in Oregon's Downtowns? Space Available for Reuse

Oregon Heritage, in partnership with University of Oregon's Institute for Policy Research & Engagement (IPRE), recently released the report *What's Up Downtown? A Playbook for Activating Oregon's Upper Stories*. The report inventories the status of core buildings in some 33 Main Street communities across Oregon, specifically, their upper floors. The project addresses a clear trend of growing vacancies in the upper floors of historic and downtown buildings. The objective was to determine the extent of available building spaces and to explore how to increase their use. City and nonprofit organizations and property owners within the network of Oregon Main Street communities participated in surveys and interviews in spring 2022. The survey results affirm that upper story vacancy is common. Nearly 50% of upper floors

in surveyed main street areas are unused and 19% are usable, but unoccupied. Many of these buildings are historic, and at least a third of the communities surveyed have a National Register Historic District in their downtown. The most common problems with redeveloping upper floors were cost and the perceived complexity of code compliance. The report makes recommendations to address the issue at the state and local government levels in partnership among government agencies, property owners, and local advocates. In addition to the report, the project provides tools for communities to revitalize their upper-stories, including an inventory guide and resource list and templates for project planning. The project team completed a pilot inventory with the Lebanon Downtown Association and used it to develop the guide to be used in communities throughout the state.

Protecting Cultural Resources at Collier State Park

Assistant State Archaeologist, Jamie French and Built Environment Review and Jessica Gabriel, Compliance Specialist, recently met with OPRD staff including Mountain Region Archaeologist, Steve Jenevein to visit Collier Memorial State Park and discuss preservation issues resulting from the 2020 Two-Four-Two fire that damaged the park. Several actions relating to fire cleanup and changes in the park as a result of fire impacted significant archaeology resources in the park, which include culturally modified trees, historic refuse scatters, water conveyance features, rock cairns, ground stone, and lithic scatters. OPRD and SHPO worked together to visit impacted sites and troubleshoot potential solutions such as rerouting new linear paths, converting gravel trails to ADA-accessible paths that better protect archaeological sites, and working with private business enterprises to assist with cultural resource concerns throughout the park. The team also identified potential development projects that could be executed in a culturally sensitive way.



Culturally Modified Tree at Collier Memorial Park

Prior Action by Commission: none

Action Requested: none

Attachments: none

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