

ISSUE PAPER #6.4 PRICIPLES OF HISTORIC STEWARDSHIP

BACKGROUND

Many Portland Public School buildings are historically significant and they are often integral to the fabric and character of Portland’s neighborhoods. These historic buildings help to make our communities more livable as well as instilling civic pride and a sense of place. By maintaining these buildings we also maintain the original fabric of the community they serve, which preserves this culture of place. Historic rehabilitation within Portland Public Schools is a primary consideration and key component to thoughtful, sustainable, cost effective development.

RELEVANCE FOR FACILITIES PLAN

Pursuant to the school facility planning statute, ORS 195.110:

(5)(a) The school facility plan must cover a period of at least 10 years and must include, but need not be limited to, the following elements:

(C) Description of physical improvements needed in existing schools to meet the minimum standards of the large school district

(E) An analysis of:

(i) The alternative to new school construction and major renovation

The best practices of “reduce, reuse, recycle” can be applied to our historic school buildings. Among all the energy-saving, environmentally sensitive strategies that can be employed, reuse is the most sustainable. In regards to issues such as solid waste disposal, energy conservation, embodied energy,

recycling, walkable neighborhoods, community-centered education, and the local economy, maintaining and rehabilitating historic school buildings is a high priority strategy.

By investing in our existing heritage, the goals of PPS become consistent with the goals of the City of Portland as a whole, which is highly regarded as a model livable city of sustainable development.

1. PROTECTION AND COLLABORATION

Seek out expertise and guidance to protect historically significant school buildings.

- a) Inform and consult with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to avoid inadvertent impacts to historic properties (in accordance with Oregon Revised Statute 358.653). Impacts may be the result of construction projects, as well as the transfer of properties out of public ownership.
- b) Build a strong relationship with the Portland Landmarks Commission, which provides leadership and expertise on maintaining and enhancing Portland's historic and architectural heritage.
- c) Work with other local preservation partners and gain community collaboration in decision-making.
- d) Prioritize maintenance and repair to avoid deterioration of historic buildings.
- e) Utilize the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Structures to develop an approach to maintain and improve the condition of historic schools.

2. RECOGNITION OF HISTORIC CONTEXT & ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

Acknowledge the significant relationships between people, buildings and the surrounding physical landscape as well as the social and economic forces that shape them.

- a) Appreciate that historic buildings are the memory of a place conveying significance, meaning and value. The 2009 PPS Historic Assessment includes the cultural meaning of the building within its context.
- b) Instill pride by acknowledging local and national designations. The school district includes Portland Landmarks (Benson, Duniway and Woodstock), contributing resources to NRHP Historic Districts (Irvington, Abernethy and MLC), and contributing buildings to City of Portland Conservation Districts (Kenton, Woodlawn, Irvington and Jefferson).
- c) Preserve, rehabilitate and reuse features of older and historic buildings which cannot be duplicated.
- d) Prioritize repairing and maintaining original windows to the extent feasible over replacement. Prioritize restoring the character lost in original window replacements. Windows are frequently the most character defining feature of an older or historic building. The energy savings and environmental impact of replacement windows should be analyzed prior to decision-making.
- e) Recognize that nearly all PPS school buildings are over 50 years old, while approximately half of our school buildings are considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) nomination. Approximately 68 of PPS buildings were recorded at the reconnaissance level by the City of Portland beginning in the 1980's.

3. MODERNIZATION OF HISTORIC SCHOOLS

Adapt to current educational and cultural goals while meeting modern building standards.

- a) Reflect current needs of all students to meet the challenges of the global economy.
- b) Strengthen and expand the uses of each school as central to community.
- c) Implement accessibility upgrades and universal design elements to ensure access and inclusivity for all students, staff, families and community members.
- d) Require energy efficient upgrades to ensure cost effectiveness and contribute to sustainability.
- e) Seismically improve buildings for life safety and to protect these resources.

4. EXISTING IS SUSTAINABLE

Reuse is more environmentally responsible than new construction¹.

- a) Evaluate and balance the potential lifecycle savings of new construction with the embodied energy investment of existing historic buildings.
- b) Require full feasibility studies of renovating older and historic schools by design professionals with historic renovation expertise prior to considering demolition of school buildings. Investing in historic school buildings saves construction and demolition debris from landfills.
- c) Recognize that building reuse conserves energy.
- d) Deconstruct buildings when necessary (versus demolition) to reduce waste.
- e) Require salvage and reuse of historic features, many of which are irreplaceable.

5. TEACHING THE VALUES OF REUSE

Students, parents and teachers cultivate the sense of ownership that naturally results from reuse and rehabilitation, galvanizing the community as a whole.

- a) Recognize that historic district designations and historic rehabilitation help to maintain and increase property values over time.²
- b) Acknowledge that historic rehabilitation creates more local jobs than new construction, with a greater proportion of construction costs in labor and less in materials.³
- c) Recognize that neighborhood schools encourage walking and biking in a city that values walkable neighborhoods.
- d) Require feasibility studies which include environmental impacts to compare reuse options of historically significant buildings as compared to new construction.

SUMMARY

Portland Public Schools recognizes the importance of historic buildings and their place in our community. Their renovation supports the sustainability goals of the District while supporting local communities and preserving our history.

References

- ¹ Preservation Green Lab, National Trust for Historic Preservation. 2012. The Greenest Building: Quantifying the Environmental Value of Building Reuse. http://www.preservationnation.org/issues/sustainability/green-lab/lca/The_Greenest_Building_lowres.pdf
- ² Rypkema, Donovan D., 1994. The Economics of Historic Preservation
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- Portland Public Schools Historic Building Assessment, by Entrix, 2009. <http://www.pps.k12.or.us/departments/schoolmodernization/1627.htm>
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- The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, Weeks and Grimmer, 1995, Heritage Preservation Services, 2003. http://www.nps.gov/hps/tps/standguide/overview/choose_treat.htm
- Why Johnny Can't Walk to School: Historic Neighborhood Schools in the Age of Sprawl, by Constance E. Beaumont with Elizabeth G. Pianca, National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2000.
- Helping Johnny Walk to School: Policy Recommendations for Removing Barriers to Community-Centered Schools, by Renee Kuhlman, National Trust for Historic Preservation <http://www.preservationnation.org/issues/historic-schools/helping-johnny-walk-to-school/helping-johnny-walk-to-school.pdf>