



Chapter 9. Historic Preservation Element

Introduction

This Historic Preservation Element of the Comprehensive Plan coordinates and directs the protection of sites, objects, and buildings central to the founding of the City of Longview (City). It also provides coordinated protection of sites 50 years or older with architectural, cultural, historical, and/or community heritage. This Element brings together basic concepts and components to preserve and restore the historic heritage of the City. Our historic heritage has proven to be a key link to City values, promotion, livability, tourism, downtown revitalization, neighborhood pride, and economic vitality.

Historical Background

The Cowlitz Valley first had been recorded by Lewis and Clark, who camped at the mouth of what they called the “Cow-elis-kee” River. Following the explorers, missionaries and Hudson’s Bay Company employees arrived. The first party of pioneers, led by Darby Huntington, paddled up the river in 1849, filed claims on land that would be bought by Long-Bell, and established a trading post near the spot

where Lewis and Clark had camped. Huntington named the settlement “Monticello” in honor of Thomas Jefferson’s Virginia estate. It was the site of the Monticello Convention in 1852 where leading citizens of that portion of Oregon Territory lying north of the Columbia met to petition Congress for separation. That petition and earlier ones induced Congress to make the division that created Washington Territory. The convention is believed to have gathered near a tree growing adjacent to the Cowlitz River that is still standing.

Longview is a planned city born out of the City Beautiful movement and R.A. Long’s vision as its city founder. As Chairman of Long-Bell Lumber Company, this new city was to be more than just a factory town to house its workers, but a permanent and model city. This was achieved by assembling a team of nationally recognized city planners directed by planner J.C. Nichols, a close personal friend of R.A. Long. Nichols chose George Kessler, a city planner noted for his contributions to Kansas City, Mexico City, and the 1904 St. Louis Exposition. The respected landscape architectural team and town-planning firm of Hare & Hare were also hired. Together they drafted the actual plan and plats for the new City. Covenants and restrictions on the plats controlled development and building use throughout the City.

The final plans for the City of Longview were implemented with a flurry of construction between 1922 and 1927. Today, our City’s heritage is directly tied to the work that R.A. Long constructed with his team of planners and engineers. Mr. Long’s work remains in many of the Longview community’s buildings, street patterns, boulevards, parks, library, the Monticello Hotel, Civic Center, Columbia Theatre, churches, downtown buildings, the (Old) West Side, St. Helens, Highlands neighborhoods, and public works infrastructure we have today.

For more information on the history of Longview, books such *R.A. Long’s Planned City: the Story of Longview* by John M. McClelland Jr. are excellent sources of information.

Identification of Historical Trends

The model city and its permanence are being challenged daily. Modernization, renovation, and energy issues regarding original window removal are primary factors. Changes in the intensity of land use, short-plats, zoning, and traffic projects also contribute to this challenge. Only through sound historic preservation principles, community recognition, and a respect for our City’s heritage can we continue to maintain our historic identity and historic resources.

Over the years, there have been some significant losses of historical sites. The railway station, Kessler School, St. Helens School, downtown buildings, and an Old West Side residence have been demolished. However, the Monticello Hotel, Library,

Post Office, several downtown buildings, and the Columbia Theatre have been restored.

The existing Preservation Ordinance adopted in 1987 provides a framework to implement historic preservation within the City. This ordinance primarily emphasizes education however some enforcement measures are included. Since it has been almost 20 years since the ordinance was adopted, the adequacy of the enforcement measures should be re-evaluated.

Certified Local Government Status (CLG) was attained through the Washington State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation in 1988. This has provided grants over the years for an historic video of Longview, plaques for historic buildings, and inventories.

Assessment of Historic Preservation Needs

Assessment of Existing Data

Several resources and inventories have been compiled on Longview that form the basis of historic preservation data. These are highlighted on the City website, Historic Preservation section, under the Community Development Department. Full inventories are in the Community Development Department, and some are available at the Longview Public Library.

Inventories and Historic Registers include the following:

- The National Register Nomination contains all inventories of properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places, 1985;
- Early Commercial Area: Downtown Longview Survey and Inventory, 1988;
- Old West Side Inventory, Phase 1 1600 Blocks, 2004; Phase 2 1200 Blocks, 2005; Phase 3 1500 Blocks, 2006;
- Preliminary Inventory of Lake Sacajawea, 2001;
- Longview Register of Historic Places; and
- Washington State Register of Historic Places.

Other Documents and Records include the following:

- Historic Preservation Ordinance, Longview Municipal Code (LMC) 16.12;
- Building Records, Community Development Department;
- Longview Room and Polk Directories, Longview Public Library;
- Long-Bell Room (private), 1339 Commerce Avenue;

- Draft Downtown Historic Preservation District Ordinance and Brochure;
- Longview Central Commercial Redevelopment Plan, 1982;
- Design Guidelines: Downtown Longview, Action Design Team, 1983;
- Longview’s Downtown Plan, 2001;
- A video titled “The Planned City – The History of Longview, Washington” (1989) is available for checkout at the Longview Public Library or Longview Community Development Department; and
- Civic Center and Downtown Historic Walking Tour (Revised 2003).

Status of Local Preservation

The Longview Historic Preservation Commission is the body of expertise charged with identifying, evaluating, and protecting Longview’s historic resources through placement on the Longview Register of Historic Places. These properties are subject to obtaining a Certificate of Appropriateness for design review from the Commission, which assists owners in the decisions concerning restoration of their buildings, sites and objects. The reviews are intended to preserve and/or minimize negative impacts to the historic character of the properties that made it significant and eligible for local designation.

Special Valuation Tax Program

The Cowlitz County Assessor administers the Special Valuation Tax Program for Historic Properties in Longview. This program allows a credit to historic renovation and rehabilitation projects for buildings listed on the National Register or Longview Register of Historic Places for a period of 10 years. The work must exceed 25% of the building’s value (excluding land value) to become eligible for application. The Longview Historic Preservation Commission approves the initial plans through review of a Certificate of Appropriateness. “Before” and “after” pictures are taken to verify the work by the owner. The owner submits all receipts and photos of eligible work for verification by the Commission. The Commission approves or modifies the amount of tax valuation requested by the owner and returns the form to the County Assessor’s Office.

Downtown Longview

Downtown Longview continues to be a centerpiece for preservation in Longview. The historic character of the buildings provide for an opportunity to create economic synergy through restoration and sensitive remodeling. The primary focus of historic restoration is to maintain and restore buildings to their original architectural character. This would create a special sense of place for downtown, unlike shopping malls or big box retail developments. Regional and national tourism could also be

captured when the area officially becomes a Historic District. An official Historic District would stimulate and encourage all downtown building owners to not only unify their vision of downtown but to implement it. District status would, by its nature, create a coordinated effort to restore buildings highlighting their original character, which is the basis for National Main Street programs. This has been already proven through the successful building renovation and historic signage guidelines for Longview's current historic downtown buildings. Downtown Astoria, Oregon has unified its vision and historically transformed by becoming a National Historic District.

Without an official Historic District, haphazard renovation and improvements will continue on the majority of buildings. This pattern will undermine the work to accomplish a unified approach and will forego the vision and economic opportunity that other cities and Historic Districts capture.

The Old West Side Neighborhood

The Old West Side Neighborhood was recently confronted with demolition plans of three homes. This action and other concerns have united neighbors to form "The Old West Side Neighborhood Association." One goal is to maintain the neighborhood character of the Old West Side by an inventory of homes documenting the architectural and community heritage of the neighborhood and its relationship and importance to the City's founding. The inventory is accomplished through extensive historical research of changes made to the structures and noting all owners and occupants of homes since their original construction. The inventory of the 1600 blocks (Phase 1) of single-family homes was completed in 2004. The 1200 blocks (Phase 2) was completed in 2005. A third phase, covering the 1500 blocks, is underway and will be completed in 2006. The City is in the process of applying for a grant for the fourth phase, which would cover the 1400 blocks. A Historic District would protect the original character of the homes in their setting, while allowing restoration, renovation, and additions that are in keeping with the original structure.

Issues Affecting Local Historic Properties in the Future

The Longview Historic Preservation program has several challenges. The staffing limitations do not enable a preservation program to comply with ordinance requirements to survey the entire City boundaries and protect resources. Funding also limits the amount of marketing and projects that can be accomplished.

Community perception plays a paramount role in the value of Historic Preservation within our Community. Although City promotions show the historic aspects of Longview directly tied to livability, owners of buildings must value the underlying

aspects of the building’s architectural and historical character. Many people believe Longview is not old enough to have historic value. Out-of-town owners may not value Longview’s livability and historical founding.

A historically registered property is an honorary designation. With that designation is a requirement to have all changes, except routine maintenance, documented on a Certificate of Appropriateness and approved by the Historic Preservation Commission. The Secretary Standards for Rehabilitation and Treatment of Cultural Landscapes guide decisions. Preservation program marketing describing the value of Longview historic preservation and its benefits should be targeted annually to the owners of registered historic properties, downtown, and the general public.

Old buildings require continued maintenance. Lack of maintenance creates a great opportunity to renovate and rehabilitate buildings, especially downtown. However, the City’s Unfit Dwelling Code (which applies to all buildings) does not require owners to maintain buildings unless there is a hazardous condition. As the buildings age, there is a greater chance for deterioration of eligible historic properties.

Civic Center zoning adjacent to the Civic Center National Register Historic District between 16th Avenue and Olympia Way was changed to General Commercial during a rezone request. A change of ownership and use of the general commercial property may detrimentally affect the character of the National Historic Civic Center District in the future.

Historic Preservation Goals, Objectives, and Policies

- Goal HP-A** Achieve state and national recognition of Longview’s unique place in the history of American city planning.
- Objective HP-A.1** By the end of 2010 develop a commercial historic district for the downtown area along Commerce Avenue.
- Objective HP-A.2** By the end of 2012, inventory all potential historic sites in residential, commercial and industrial areas for future historic registration.
- Policy HP-A.2.1** Continue development of the register of historic buildings for the early commercial area of downtown and other historic properties within the city through the Historic Preservation Commission.
- Policy HP-A.2.2** Add to the historical structures inventory, the inventory forms prepared for structures included in the thematic group nomination. The registered locally defined district should be reflected in the inventory as well.

- Policy HP-A.2.3** Encourage and assist owners of historic properties within the Longview planning area to apply for individual listing on the local, State, and national registers of historic places.
- Goal HP-B** Preserve and enhance the notable buildings, parks, and other sites established by or associated with the Long-Bell Lumber Company and notable local examples of architectural styles of more recent times.
- Objective HP-B.1** By the end of 2010, develop a program to implement and maintain an inventory of historic sites and potential historic sites electronically on a Geographic Information System database.
- Policy HP-B.1.1** Promote preservation of local historic properties and materials as desirable for public awareness concerning the City's beginnings and its uniqueness in City planning history, aesthetic appreciation of architecture and landscape architecture, maintenance of community identity, and furtherance of tourism and economic activity.
- Policy HP-B.1.2** Encourage historic renovation of buildings and sites 50 years or older through public awareness, neighborhood and business partnerships, the involvement of residents, brochures, reference materials and internet sites, and incorporating historic preservation planning in City departments.
- Policy HP-B.1.3** Encourage owners of both registered and unregistered historic properties to take advantage of rehabilitation tax incentives and any available grants.
- Policy HP-B.1.4** Enforcement measures should be periodically evaluated and the search for mechanisms and resources to enhance enforcement needs to be an ongoing process.

