

4. *Historic Resources*

Policy:

The City Center should preserve its historic landmarks to maintain a link with the community's heritage and to help contribute to the economic development and vitality of the City.

Background

Historic resources make up a key part of the City Center's character and represent tangible links to the past. The historic buildings that exist in the City Center are assets that should attract tourists, shoppers, businesses and residents. This can foster rehabilitation of buildings and support renewed economic activity.

The values associated with the preservation of historic resources include:

- Providing a link with the past
- Establishing a distinct market image
- Quickly making a building available for occupancy
- Providing an attractive image
- Supporting heritage tourism strategies
- Reinforcing the City Center's ambiance

What are historic resources?

What makes a property historically significant? In general, buildings should be at least 50 years old, although exceptions do exist. In addition, a property may be significant for one or more of the following reasons:

- Association with events that contributed to the broad patterns of history, the lives of significant people or the understanding of Bellingham's history.
- Construction and design associated with distinctive characteristics of a building type, period or construction method.
- Expression of particularly high artistic values or an example of an architect's or master craftsman's work.
- Integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association that forms a distinct area, as defined by the National Park Service.

How extensively are historic resources found in the City Center?

The City Center boasts an important collection of buildings and sites that contribute to the special identity of the area. Many of these have historic significance and are important resources to acknowledge and utilize in determining and strengthening the character of the City Center. In addition, the City has designated a number of structures (e.g., the Mount Baker Theatre, the

Key Downtown Development Workshop Report Recommendations

- Initiate design improvements of downtown buildings.
 - Institute a program that will encourage the renovation of downtown buildings, especially historic buildings and structures.
 - Develop historic walking tour signage for sites in Old Town

B.P.O.E. Building, the Whatcom Museum) as historic landmarks and they are listed in the National Historic Registry.

There are other buildings that serve as key “reference points” and accents to the fabric of downtown. While they are not necessarily old or historically significant, they are often used as locators for orienting oneself in the City Center.

The map on page 4-4 highlights those buildings that are historic resources or key reference points in the Civic Center.

Key “Reference Points”

The following buildings serve the City Center as local reference points (see the map, following, for locations):

- A. Municipal Court Building
- B. Police Headquarters
- C. Health Department
- D. “Copper” Building



Many structures retain historic features that contribute to the interest of downtown. The Crown Plaza Building (former Bon Marche) is an example. It was constructed in 1912. (#35)

- E. Senior Center
- F. Bellingham High School
- G. *City Hall
- H. Post Office
- I. Court House
- J. Library
- K. Children’s Museum
- L. *O.R. Hollingsworth Funeral Home
- M. *Bellingham Towers/ Bellingham Hotel
- N. Commercial Street Parkade
- O. Bus Terminal
- P. *Bellingham Herald Building
- Q. *YMCA Building (new)/ Exchange Building
- R. *Community Food Co-op/ Lewis Building

Historic Resources

The following are some of the buildings that serve the City Center as historic resources (see the map, following, for locations):

- 1. Aftermath Club
- 2. Lottie Roth Block
- 3. Pickett House
- 4. Great Northern Depot Building
- 5. T.G. Richards Building
- 6. Andall Building
- 7. U.S. Hotel
- 8. Union Block (Moose Lodge)
- 9. Stenger Hotel
- 10. Waterfront Tavern Building

- 11. Washington Co-op Egg & Poultry Association (WCEPA) Feed Mill & Warehouse
- 12. WCEPA Hatchery
- 13. Van Kirk Building
- 14. Wilson Business College
- 15. Salvation Army
- 16. Fire Station #1
- 17. Old City Hall/Whatcom Museum
- 18. Diehl & Simpson Ford Building
- 19. Apartment Hotel Cissna (Mt. Baker Apartments)
- 20. Gilbert Flats
- 21. Glencairn Apartments
- 22. Mount Baker Theater
- 23. Thiel & Welter Warehouse (Griggs)
- 24. Oakland Block
- 25. B.B. Furniture Building (VECO)
- 26. Northwest Hardware Co.
- 27. Holly/Bay/Prospect Building
- 28. The Home Store
- 29. Countryman Building
- 30. Kershaw-Moultray Building
- 31. Clover Block
- 32. Red Front Block
- 33. Kirkpatrick Building
- 34. Luther Building
- 35. Montague-McHugh (Crown Plaza)
- 36. Carnegie Library Comfort Station
- 37. Beau Arts Building



The railroad dept, at Holly and E Streets, is an important landmark in the City Center. (#4)

38. Federal Building
39. Home Telephone Building
40. Zobrist Building
41. Union Printing
42. Leopold Hotel
43. Bellingham National Bank
44. Bellingham Public Market
(Rite Aid)
45. Hagen & Hogberg
46. Elks Club
47. Washington Grocery
Building
48. Horseshoe Café Building
49. Sanitary Meat Market
(Bagelry)
50. Bellingham Candy Co.
51. Howard's Stop & Shop
52. The News Stand Building
53. Stockton's Paints
54. Montgomery Building
55. Milwaukee Road Freight
Depot
56. Northern Grocery Company
57. Spokane Block
58. Curt Pless & Co. Building
59. Northern Pacific Railroad
Freight Depot
60. Daylight Building
61. Dahlquist Building
62. Betschart Block
63. Puget Sound Power & Light
Building
64. 20th Century Bowling
Building
65. Fussner Monument Building
66. Hotel Laube/Windsor
67. Fine Arts Building
68. Old YMCA Building
69. Whatcom County Railway &
Light Power Station
70. Masonic Hall
71. Maple Block and Pacific
Block
72. Morse Hardware
73. B.B. Jones Block
74. First Church of Christ
Scientist

* Other buildings of historic
interest

Area Reference Points and Historic Resources

**PLACEHOLDER FOR 11 X 17 HISTORIC
RESOURCES MAP**

Designation of Historic Resources

Two methods of listing historic buildings are used in Bellingham—the National Register and local listing. The *National Register of Historic Places* lists sites and properties of historic significance. Properties so listed may have national significance, but they may also be listed if they are determined to have significance at a state or local level.



In 1911, the government purchased a site, that was originally a sandstone hill, for the location of the Bellingham Federal Building.

The National Register is administered by the National Park Service and nominations are submitted through the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), using criteria adopted by the U. S. Secretary of the Interior. The National Register designation does not impose any responsibilities upon a private property owner for maintenance or restoration, but rather can be a source of pride for many communities and property owners.

The National Register formally recognizes properties possessing a documented level of significance and that contribute to the understanding and appreciation of the history and prehistory of a community, the state or the nation. By honoring such important sites, the National Register:

- Increases pride of ownership and expands community interest and appreciation of its cultural resources.
- Stimulates local preservation planning.
- Develops local interest and support of neighborhood and commercial revitalization.



The Post Office, IRS and Customs Service still inhabit the building, and it could be considered for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

- Creates a body of information available for community promotion purposes by local and state agencies such as chambers of commerce and tourism departments.
- Encourages the renovation of income-producing properties and revitalization of historic commercial districts and residential neighborhoods through tax incentives.
- Permits easement donations. Buildings, structures and open spaces listed on the National Register qualify under federal income tax regulations (the conservation easement statute) as certified properties for the donation of a conservation easement. Such a donation enables the property owner to protect a property in perpetuity and allows for a charitable contribu-

Historic Preservation Policy:

“Identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites, and structures, that have historical or archeological significance.”

1995 Bellingham Comprehensive Plan

tion deduction.

- Qualifies a property to receive federal assistance for historic preservation, when funds are available.

By contrast, the local designation process is established through the police powers of the City's zoning ordinance. Criteria for designation are set forth in the City code, and designated properties are subject to protections outlined in the ordinance. These can include demolition and design review.

Issues and Opportunities

While historic preservation is a stated goal for downtown, some issues do exist.

Building Code Compliance

Building codes can have a measurable impact on rehabilitation projects. When extensive rehabilitation work is planned for an older building, it may trigger code compliance actions that increase costs and discourage investment. Complying with some of these code requirements also may have a negative effect on an historic building. For example,

“A large number of historic structures remain, providing a sense of place and history for existing and future citizens. Incentives assist in retaining and restoring historic structures and encouraging new development which is complementary in terms of architectural style and scale. These incentives may include property tax breaks, zoning and building code flexibility for adaptive uses, and density or other bonuses that encourage good design.”

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an historic door may be too narrow to meet code requirements, but replacing the door with a wider one might damage the detail and trim elements that surround it.

The City’s Code Enforcement Officials have flexibility in in-



The BPOE Building (1912) at 1414 Cornwall Avenue is seen decorated for a fraternal club gathering.

terpreting building codes when applied to all existing buildings as well as property that is officially designated as a historic resource. This flexibility is contained within existing provisions of the Building Codes which specifically address the use of alternate means and methods of construction and adaptive compliance alternatives for historic buildings. Nationally adopted standards, such as the Existing Buildings Code and Guidelines for Rehabilitation of Existing Buildings contain a range of compliance options, and these standards are accepted by the City’s Building Services Division. Recent successful rehabilitation projects—Oakland Building, DIS Building, Daylight Block, and Crown Plaza are examples of successful, flexible Code compliance achievements which can be models for future projects.

Incentives

The City may offer a variety of financial incentives to stimulate investment and to assist property owners in executing preservation projects. (See Appendix A.) Federal income tax credits are available to



The BPOE Building still provides a sense of place and history for existing and future citizens.

owners of qualified income-producing properties that are appropriately renovated. Typically, 20% of eligible costs may be taken as a credit.

Heritage Tourism

Nationally, a growing force in economic development is heritage tourism. Heritage tourism includes travel to natural, historic and cultural attractions and focuses on historical authenticity, sustainability and local involvement.

Heritage tourism balances visiting interesting places with preservation of history and the built environment. By visiting heritage sites, visitors join the local community in preserving these resources for the enjoyment of future generations.

Bellingham is well positioned to benefit from the expanding heritage tourism market. Providing an attractive streetscape and shopping environment, rehabilitating historic buildings and developing an overall marketing package will help sell the historic character of the City Center.

Resource Designation in the City Center

Although the City Center contains a large number of historic resources, the area is not eligible as a historic district because of its relatively high number of noncontributing structures. Most of the historic resources, however, could be individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places. However, nominating each property individually is inefficient and may discourage some property owners from

considering designation.

One option is nominating several resources in a Multiple Property Listing. This is a method used in the National Register to list a series of related, but independent, properties at once. In the case of the City Center, a series of buildings representing early commercial development in Bellingham could be listed together, using one general historical overview statement. This process saves time and resources in compiling a nomination.

By utilizing the database provided by the Multiple Property Listing, the number of potentially eligible structures could increase substantially. If acceptable to the building owner and the City Council, these could be added to the local registry and be eligible for City or local funds. Currently there are only eleven structures on Bellingham's local register of historic landmarks.

Preservation Awareness

One of the biggest obstacles to historic preservation is the lack of understanding about what it accomplishes and why it is so important for a community. Two key reasons for historic preservation are:

- To provide a direct link with our past, helping to see how our ancestors lived, worked and played.
- To reuse or "recycle" historic buildings.

The energy used to create a building the first time is not lost through demolition and reconstruction, but rather enhanced through continued use.

Providing the resources and expertise to assist in educating the public about historic preservation should be a primary goal for the City.

Recommended Actions

1. Provide flexibility in code compliance for historic buildings.

- 1A. Adopt the Existing Buildings Code.
- 1B. Provide a designated Downtown project staff person with technical expertise.
- 1C. Develop an Integrated Design approach to downtown projects.
- 1D. Continue Code Review and Technical Evaluation (CREATE) program.

Flexibility in code compliance for historic buildings can sometimes make or break a project. For many it may be difficult to bring an historic building completely "up to code" without removing or damaging character-defining features. Therefore, it is important that building inspectors enhance their skills in applying flexibility in the codes where preservation of historic features are involved.

2. Facilitate nominating properties as historic by completing the work underway to produce a Multiple Property Listing.

- 2A. Survey the historic resources within the City Center.
- 2B. Secure consent from supportive property owners and nominate selected

structures to the National Register.

- 2C. Expand the local register of historic resources.

The City of Bellingham should take a leadership role in the public/private partnership of creating a National Register nomination. This process benefits from professional judgment during the survey and nomination phase. Commonly the concerns are broad, notably researching and writing the historic context, setting geographic data, as well as describing the building types, their significance and the registration requirements.

The nomination effort then changes focus from determining the qualities of the geographic area to identifying the characteristics of individual resources. It is customary to include only a selected set of buildings with the initial nomination documents. Others may be added at a later time by property owners.

3. Create a City-administered grants and loan program for historic resources in the City Center.

The City of Bellingham should establish a funding mechanism for facade rehabilitations, repairs and maintenance of historic resources within the City Center.

These funds could then be competitively secured based upon an open selection process. They can be generated from a one time disbursement from the City's current expenses, a special bond pro-

gram, or utilization of the state’s hotel/motel tax that can be used for planning purposes but not construction.

Regardless of the funding source, the distribution method, or the potential beneficiaries, the City of Bellingham, in partnership with private property owners and federal programs, has an opportunity to use the tools of preservation to the benefit of the City Center.

4. Apply design standards for rehabilitating historic structures.

- 4A. Adopt the design standards for projects in the City Center
- 4B. Enforce compliance with the standards

Design standards help preserve historic buildings as records of our heritage in a consistent and fair manner. Design standards provide for unbiased and uniform review of proposed work. They provide standards by which all projects are evaluated, minimizing the influence of individual tastes.

Design standards also can establish a climate for investment for businesses, residents and property owners because the associated review process provides assurance that alterations and new construction by others will reinforce the preservation goals of the City Center.

Standards also can serve as educational tools, providing useful information about reha-

bilitation procedures and design concepts that are appropriate for historic buildings. They often provide practical guidance, helping property owners make well-informed design decisions.

5. Develop a heritage tourism marketing plan.

- 5A. Develop and install interpretive markers.
- 5B. Integrate the interpretive markers into the City’s sign system.

Heritage tourism should be an important part of the City Center economy. Capitalizing on those resources, which already exist is relatively easy to do. Developing a “unified image” that lets a visitor know that they are in a special place is the primary goal. Establishing a signs and wayfinding system, as well as marking important historic resources, will help accomplish this goal. (See Chapter 5.)

Historic building markers may take on several forms. Permanent plaques describing the significance of a structure may be attached to designated resources. Plaques are a relatively low-cost investment with a high return on visibility and education for present and future generations.

An interpretive marker system—typically including a photograph or drawing—provides additional information about a site and usually is related to a brochure or walking tour guide. These are most effective when they conform to a uniform design that falls within

“Downtown Bellingham retains its role as the community’s center through preservation and increased use of its fine historic buildings. Professional offices, government services, cultural, art and entertainment facilities support services, retail uses and higher density housing combine to create the complex mix that is downtown. Access to these features is supported by an integrated parking and alternative transportation system that is responsive to its users. New development adds to the existing building stock, complementing it in scale and quality. Public buildings set a standard of design quality that positively contributes to the community.”

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the standards of the area and reinforce to the visitor that the area is “special.”

6. Develop an educational program to build awareness and provide technical information about historic preservation.

- 6A. Provide technical training opportunities.
- 6B. Conduct “how-to renovate” workshops.
- 6C. Conduct “hands-on” renovation projects.
- 6D. Produce technical publications on preservation.

A key segment of an educational component is to provide technical training in proper restoration procedures. Property owners and tradespeople need information about available renovation procedures and materials.