

Ashland's Historic Districts

Ashland has four National Register Historic Districts encompassing the historic area of town as it existed prior to World War II. The districts were listed on the National Register of Historic Places between 1999 and 2002. There are over 1700 properties in the districts including nearly 900 significant historic resources.

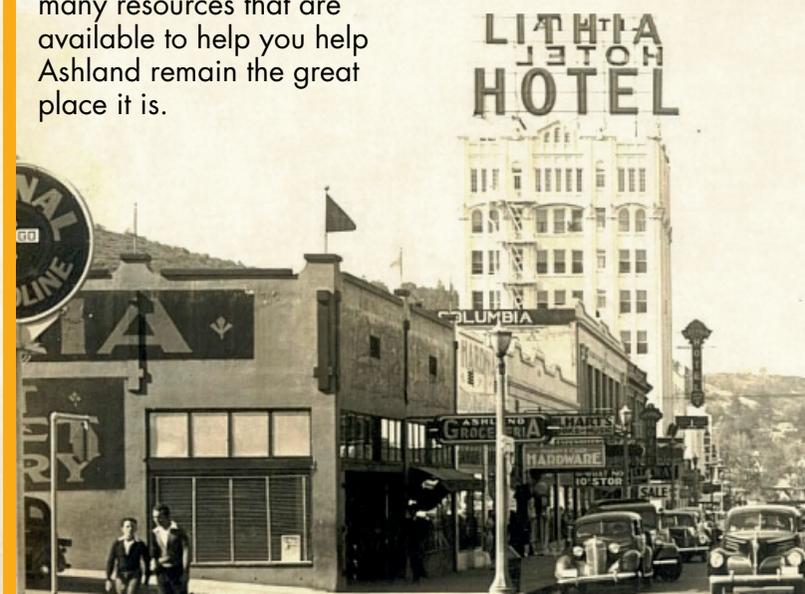
- **Ashland Railroad Historic District**
North of East Main and Lithia Way, south of the Railroad Tracks, between 8th and Oak streets.
- **Ashland Downtown Historic District**
From Gresham to Church, between Lithia Way and Hargadine, including the entire Plaza area.
- **Siskiyou-Hargadine Historic District**
Roughly, from Beach/Morse streets to Gresham, between Holly and East Main streets.
- **Skidmore Academy Historic District**
Roughly, from Granite to Maple streets, between Scenic and the railroad tracks.

Detailed maps of the districts and individual survey forms and historic documentation for all properties are available from the Community Development Department or online at www.ashland.or.us/historic.

Ashland's History

Established at the site of a Shasta Indian Village, Ashland was founded in the mid-19th century by a group of men including Abel Helman and Eber Emery. They decided to harness the power of Ashland Creek, first constructing a saw mill and later a flour mill near the entrance to Lithia Park. As more settlers arrived they would gather near the mill. Soon a permanent road was built and the town became known as Ashland Mills. In 1855 Helman donated 12 building sites near the mill to create a central business district. The place soon became known as the plaza. In 1872 what is now Southern Oregon University was established. Ashland grew significantly after the railroad arrived from the north in 1883. When the line over the Siskiyou was completed, Ashland boomed. The railroad brought the Chautauqua, a seasonal lecture circuit, beginning Ashland's legacy as a theater town. Theatre professor Angus Bowmer began putting on Shakespeare plays in the old Chautauqua Dome in 1935. Ashland soon developed a reputation for the arts, fine dining, and a high quality of life that continues.

A large part of that quality stems from Ashland's long tradition of respect for its history and historic buildings. Nearly all of the original portions of town are included in Ashland's four National Register Historic Districts. As a historic property owner, we encourage you to understand the historic design review process before you begin planning a project. Please review the material in this brochure and take advantage of the many resources that are available to help you help Ashland remain the great place it is.



Where can I get more info?

Additional information regarding Historic Preservation including the Historic Building Brief series is available at www.ashland.or.us/historic. Information on local history, appropriate design and preservation can be found at these sites.

Oregon State Historic Preservation Office
www.oregon.gov/OPRD/hcd/pages/index.aspx

Southern Oregon Historical Society
www.sohs.org

Restore Oregon
www.historicpreservationleague.org

Old House Journal
www.oldhousejournal.com

Preservation Directory
www.preservationdirectory.com

INCENTIVES

There are financial and technical incentives available to historic property owners, here is short list:

State of Oregon Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) Grants
<http://www.oregon.gov/OPRD/HCD/SHPO/pages/index.aspx>

Diamond in the Rough grant: grants are to restore or reconstruct the facades of buildings that have been heavily altered over the years. The purpose is to return them to their historic appearance and potentially qualify them for historic register designation (local or national).

Preserving Oregon grant: matching grants for rehabilitation work that supports the preservation of historic resources listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Special Assessment: Ten year "freeze" on properties assessed value prior to substantial improvements.

Federal Grant Opportunities <http://www.nps.gov/tps/tax-incentives.htm>

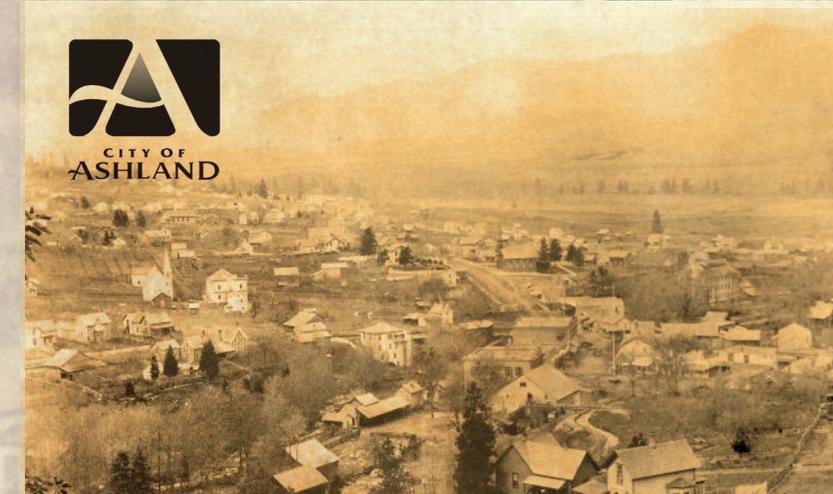
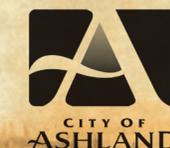
Federal Historic Preservation Tax: A 20% income tax credit is available for the rehabilitation of historic, income-producing buildings that are determined by the Secretary of the Interior, through the National Park Service and SHPO, to be "certified historic structures." Available for commercial properties only.

The project is financed with Federal funds from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, and is administered by Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). The City of Ashland is a Certified Local Government (CLG), and receives Federal financial assistance for identification and protection of the historic properties through the CLG program. The CLG program is designed to promote historic preservation at the local level. It is a federal program (National Park Service) that is administered by SHPO.

Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, the U.S. Department of the Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability or age in its federally assisted programs. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility as describe above, or if you desire further information, please write to: Office for Equal Opportunity, National Park Service, 1849 C Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20240.

Caring for your Historic Home

A home owners reference guide to home improvements



Why Historic Preservation?

- **Re-using older buildings creates value.** Historic properties are generally valued higher than equivalent new construction. Restoration and rehabilitation creates skilled jobs and supports the local economy.
- **Retaining and upgrading existing buildings conserves energy.** The “greenest” building is the one that has already been built. Restoration conserves embodied energy and helps keep tons of old growth lumber, metals and other reusable material out of the landfill.
- **Established neighborhoods save public investment.** Reuse and compatible infill in established neighborhoods reduces the cost of government by using existing streets, utilities and other costs that rise significantly when cities expand their footprint.
- **Walkable neighborhoods are healthy.** Traditional development, with housing and nearby shopping, encourages car-free living, reducing air pollution, conserving fuel and helps to keep people more active.
- **Traditional development builds strong community.** Historic development patterns, with front porches, low fences, alleyways and smaller lots, encourages a feeling of neighborhood and helps build stronger ties between residents.
- **Maintains history.** Preservation assures continuity providing a connection to the past. Walkable, tree-lined neighborhoods and our downtown core are among Ashland’s most attractive, and valuable, community assets because they connect the past and the present.

Making Changes Maintaining Character

Established in the early 1970s, the City of Ashland Historic Commission (AHC) is a nine-member citizen advisory panel appointed by the City Council and charged with oversight of Ashland’s historic properties. The AHC reviews proposals for exterior alteration, that require a building permit, new construction, sign permits, pre-application conference submittals and land use applications for properties in Ashland’s Historic Districts. The AHC also advises staff, the Planning Commission and City Council. If you own property in the historic districts and want to make changes to the exterior requiring a building permit, the AHC will review your proposal for compatibility with the area’s historic character.

The goal of the AHC is to facilitate compatible changes to the properties within the historic districts. Guidelines for restoration are provided by the US Department of the Interior, National Parks Service, Standards for Restoration and Rehabilitation. Using these guidelines regarding acceptable restoration practices, and to help property owners design in ways that meet their goals while maintaining character. The National Park Service identifies seven aspects of integrity that together help define character.

LOCATION: Is the building on its original site?

DESIGN: Does the building reflect the combination of elements that create its form, plan, or “style?”

SETTING: Has the surrounding physical environment or area changed?

MATERIALS: Are the original materials (siding, roof type, windows) still present?

WORKMANSHIP: Is there physical evidence of the craft that made the building?

FEELING: Does the property convey its aesthetic or historic sense of having been built or occupied during an earlier time?

ASSOCIATION: Does the property successfully convey a link between today and the historic period or events?

Successful historic preservation occurs when change over time is well managed and undertaken in a way that enhances a building’s historic character. The replacement of original wood windows with vinyl windows, in-compatible door design, installation of new roofing and the replacement of original siding with newer materials often does not require permits yet may have the most detrimental effects on historic character. Thinking carefully about retaining and preserving these functional and decorative architectural features is important.

Doing “The Right Thing”

If you are lucky enough to own property in one of Ashland’s historic districts and are thinking about making a change to any part of your property that is visible from the public right-of-way that is subject to a building permit or land use application, your plans are subject to review by the AHC. The review process works like this:

TALK: Your first step is to stop by the Community Development Department and talk with either Planning Division staff or the AHC about your project. There are resources available to help you understand the history of your property. Staff can assist you in identifying appropriate strategies and materials to change it while maintaining character. Some links are included in this brochure. Staff will be able to help you understand if your project will require a building permit or a land use application.

DRAW: Now that you have some idea of what the right approach might include, work with your contractor, designer or architect, or on your own, to develop a plan for the project. Try and consider the historic character of the property and think about “compatibility” as you make the changes you are seeking. Remember that changes to the main, visible, elevations can have a great impact on the overall character. The AHC can provide you with feedback before you get too far in design, to make sure you are on the right track.

APPLY: If your project requires a building permit and not a land use application, the proposal may be reviewed during the City of Ashland’s “over the counter” permit day, on Thursdays between 8:30 and 11:30. The Historic Review board meets later in the day to review the building permits.

LAND USE APPLICATION REVIEW: Upon receipt of a complete application, the project proposal is noticed in accordance with State law. The AHC reviews the proposal at their regular monthly meeting. At the meeting a staff report is presented by city staff. The applicant is allowed to present their proposal and the Commission may ask questions. Other citizens may also participate in the public hearing. The Commission then closes the public hearing and deliberates on the proposal. The Commission may recommend approval, recommend approval with conditions or recommend denial of the application.

Some FAQs

Do I need a permit to work on my property? Possibly, anytime you are considering exterior changes to your property, you should consult with AHC. AHC reviews changes that require a building permit.

My property isn’t historic, it’s just inside the district. Do I need AHC approval? Yes, the AHC reviews all proposals of exterior change, even for non-historic properties. Your property plays a role in the district’s character too.

Can I be compelled to restore my property? No. The AHC only reviews proposals for alteration or change, it does not require any repair or restoration.

Do I need AHC approval to change the interior? No. While you are encouraged to consider the historic character of your interior, the AHC only reviews exterior changes.

Do I need to get a permit to paint my house or use a certain color? No. The AHC encourages the use of historic appropriate colors but does not review paint colors.

I’m building a new house, do I need AHC review? Yes, the AHC reviews new construction in the historic district to maintain their character and assure compatibility with the rest of the neighborhood.

How often does the AHC meet? The AHC meets monthly on the first Wednesday proceeding a Tuesday at 6:00 PM at the Community Development /Engineering Services building at 51 Winburn Way. A 3-member subcommittee meets weekly on Thursdays by appointment to review proposed projects, building permits, pre-application conference submittals and sign permits.

