

Preserving Forest Grove

Newsletter of the Historic Landmarks Board

“The Historic Landmarks Board is an excellent resource, in part because the application process is easy and straight forward.”

2013-14 Renovation Grant Program Recap

by Jennifer Brent

Over the last nineteen years, the Historic Landmarks Board (HLB) has given out 126 renovation grants, equaling a total of \$142,261. The funds are derived from Community Enhancement Program (CEP) grants allotted yearly by the Forest Grove city government. I had the privilege of interviewing three historic property owners who were awarded Historic Renovation Grants during the 2013-14 grant cycle to help offset costs related to roofing, seismic upgrades, and chimney repair.

The *Agnes Moore House* had its roof replaced, including removal of two layers of cedar shakes, and three layers of asphalt shingles. The roofing contractor installed the house's first plywood sheathing and roof vents. The owners were extremely pleased with the contractor, Forest Grove's Andy Purdew Contracting, as they executed a very complex roofing job. Andy's crew brought the house to the 21st Century,

while preserving the original character of a historic home the owners love.

The owners felt that the application process for the CEP grant was straight forward. After they made their presentation to the board, they thought the questions asked of them by HLB members, "were thoughtful," and that the board was, "very easy to work with." The owners are excited to be done on the front of the house for a while, but said they would definitely apply for a grant again for their next project.



Agnes Moore House, Painter's Woods, Roofing Project

Owners of the *Lucas House* went with seismic upgrades this year. They chose contractor, Eco-Tech, and were very pleased with the results. All tasks were completed on time and very professionally. Neither the possibility of future earthquakes, nor the HLB grant process shook them up.

When asked if the owners would do another grant request for their house, which has become

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their, "labor of love," they replied with a resounding, "Yes!" They also thought that board members asked, "good questions," during their presentation to the HLB.



Lucas House, Clark Historic District, Seismic Upgrade

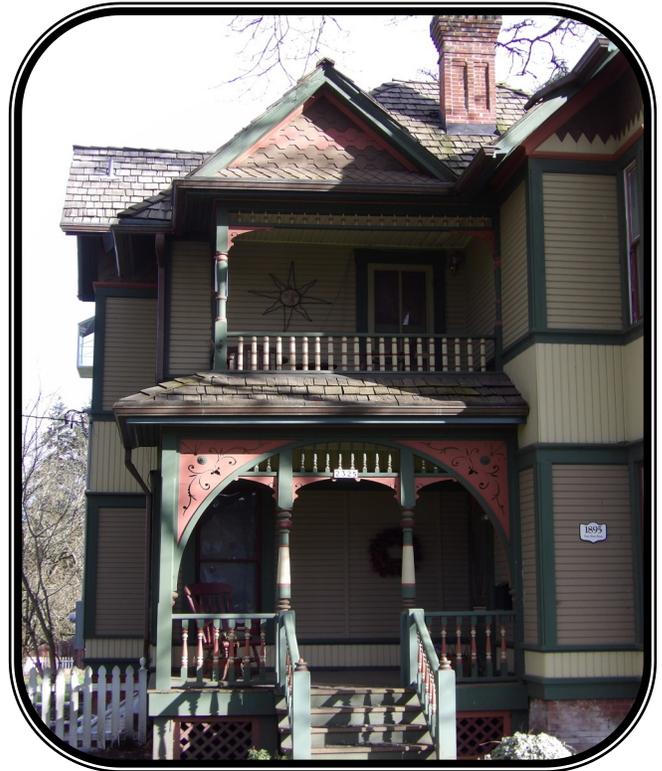
Owners of the *Oscar Brown House* were also pleased by how, "easy to work with," they found the HLB to be. They had their chimney re-pointed this year to renew its external mortar joints in their efforts to maintain the original character of their home rather than tearing down or replacing the chimney. As of this writing, they are planning a front door restoration, and will be applying for more grant funds in the future. The owner remarked that the board, "is an excellent resource," in part because, "the application process was easy and straight forward." The owner also suggested that if a prospective Preservation Grant applicant is uncomfortable with the process, they should, "try going to a few HLB meetings to get the hang of it."

These projects represent the tip of the iceberg for what property owners can do with a home in a historic district. For the current CEP grant cycle, the Forest Grove City Council made \$4,585 available for the HLB to award to qualifying historic property owners between July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015. **So far, \$3,085 remains to be granted to qualifying applicants.** Up to \$1,000 or half the cost of the

project can be awarded (whichever is less), depending on the project.

The HLB's Renovation Grant Program makes funds available to property owners of Registered historic buildings who desire to make *exterior* rehabilitation or renovation improvements. Structural improvements may also qualify. Historic Contributing and Historic Non-Contributing structures in the Clark, Painter's Woods, and Walker-Naylor National Historic Districts are also eligible. The conditions of the program require that all improvements and projects be in keeping with the architectural integrity of the structure. Design assistance is also available free of charge from the HLB.

If you have a planned upgrade, improvement, or repair, please check out information about the Renovation Grant Program at <http://www.forestgrove-or.gov/city-hall/grants.html> or call City Planner, James Reitz, at **503-992-3233** for more information.



Oscar Brown House, Walker-Naylor District
Chimney Re-point Project



HLB Gains Support for Historic Standards and Guidelines

by Kaylene Toews

Unlike most towns, Forest Grove has retained its connections with the past because of a commitment to anchoring the community's identity and economic viability in historic preservation. But, without clear guidelines and standards for remodels and future developments, we would be at risk of irrevocably damaging the historic characteristics of existing structures and fragmenting our historic neighborhoods with insensitive infill. The Forest Grove Historic Landmarks Board set out to protect and preserve our three historic districts, while setting fair and equitable expectations for development.

We contracted leading architectural consultants, Dortignacq Architecture, known for design standards adopted by historic towns such as Oregon City, to write comprehensive direction for builders, remodelers, and property owners. The design standards and guidelines will provide a framework for protecting our historic buildings and responsibly developing properties for the future. The design standards consist of verifiable, objective requirements that protect our districts. Recognizing that some circumstances may warrant deviations, the design guidelines provide flexible guidance on how, with approval of Forest Grove's Planning Department, construction may vary from the standards.

We needed citizen feedback to ensure the design standards and guidelines fully address our community's historic preservation needs. So, on Oct. 1, we opened a 30-day comment period, and through a newsletter article, editorial in the *Forest Grove Times*, and direct mail, we asked for your input. The comments you provided gave us exactly what we needed.

First, you confirmed the importance of our historic districts, and the need to protect them.

"I love how the homes in Old Town look, and I love the neighborhood..."

"I am in favor of guidelines because they help the community and the individual that wants to remodel. The guidelines would help create a uniform

city design."

Then, you confirmed that the guidelines and standards are on the right path.

"I think the standards and guidelines are fair and a good plan."

"I generally agree with most of the standards and design things listed."

"They are reasonable and maintain the historic integrity and character of Forest Grove."

But most importantly, you posed questions and made *suggestions*. With your input, we improved the formatting, clarified code requirements, responded to questions, better explained the relationship of the guidelines and standards, and gathered additional input from the business community.

Based on your input, we updated the guidelines and standards. On February 9, the HLB had a joint work session with the City Council and Planning Commission. The HLB's City Staff liaison, James Reitz, summarized the guidelines and standards, largely by way of photographs indicating sensitive and insensitive examples of historic restoration projects. He pointed out ways the design standards would promote harmonious changes while preventing disjointed additions. Architect Robert Dortignacq answered questions and HLB members elaborated on points made. James also provided attendees with an extensive packet containing the design standards and guidelines, along with copies of all citizen feedback. Meeting attendees seemed impressed and supportive, but Mayor Truax stressed that decisions are never made during work sessions. Rather, the Planning Commission is expected to complete their recommendations as early as their April meeting, after which the City Council will have final say, with possible adoption as early as late May or early June. If adopted, the final version of the design standards and guidelines will be incorporated into the city's development codes and design guidelines handbook.

Thanks to your input, our new design standards and guidelines will provide a framework for preserving and protecting our historic buildings, while ensuring development of new construction on vacant lots that harmonizes with our historic buildings.

Community Enhancement Grant Funds

If your house is on our local historic register, or a contributing building in one of the three historic districts, your house may be eligible for restoration / rehabilitation grant funding. The Historic Landmarks Board may have funds to help you with your projects. If you are planning any exterior restoration work, have structural work to do such as foundation or porch repairs, even exterior painting or re-roofing, we'd love to help. We fund projects up to 50% of the cost of the job per grant, up to \$1,000 (less for painting and roofing). We can also help you find historically appropriate solutions to challenges you may have. Contact James Reitz at 503-992-3233 or jreitz@forestgrove-or.gov.

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The Historic Landmarks Board has openings for new members. If you have interest in volunteering, please contact James Reitz at 503-992-3233 or jreitz@forestgrove-or.gov.

Preserving Forest Grove is a quarterly newsletter published by the Forest Grove Historic Landmarks Board to help fulfill its duty of public education regarding the preservation of cultural resources. If you would like to be on the mailing list, please call James Reitz at 503-992-3233 or jreitz@forestgrove-or.gov.

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