THE BOSCO MILLIGAN FOUNDATION

In partnership with the

National Trust for Historic Preservation

HISTORIC PRESERVATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Portland, Oregon

February, 2009

Bosco-Milligan Foundation • 701 SE Grand Avenue Portland, Oregon 97214
503-231-7264 • www.VisitAHC.org

Introduction and Needs Assessment Summary:

The **Bosco-Milligan Foundation** (BMF) is a 501-(C)-3 non-profit historic preservation education and advocacy organization, and is a **Local Partner** organization of the **National Trust for Historic Preservation**. The BMF owns and operates the **Architectural Heritage Center** (AHC) in the historic West's Block Building, at **701 SE Grand Avenue**, in the *East Portland/Grand Avenue National Register Historic District.* A leader in local historic preservation for almost three decades, the BMF has offered more than 330 historic preservation education and training programs throughout the community since 1992 and has attracted a membership base of nearly 1,000. Since the opening of the AHC in early 2005, many programs are offered at the Center.

In 2008, the BMF was awarded a matching **Partners in the Field** matching grant from the National Trust. The BMF outlined a three-year course of action for expanding field services and technical assistance to begin in July, 2008 with a **Portland city-wide historic preservation needs assessment**. Designed to help residents more effectively participate in efforts to save vintage buildings, this project asked Portlanders to share what they know and think about historic preservation in their neighborhoods and the larger community, through a series of Historic Preservation Needs Assessment meetings held around the city during Fall, 2008.

Organizing & Scheduling the Needs Assessment Meetings:

The City of Portland has 95 neighborhood associations. These in turn are grouped into seven regional coalitions, each with a director, a city employee who coordinates activities within their coalition. BMF staff, **Cathy Galbraith**, *Executive Director* and **Val Ballestrem**, *Education Manager*, determined that five city-wide public gatherings would provide sufficient opportunities and geographic proximity for people to participate by attending any of the Needs Assessment meetings. A preservation consultant hired to facilitate the needs assessment was asked to organize the five meetings, publicize them, attend and participate in each meeting and prepare a summary report. An initial important proviso was the need to be sure to distinguish the BMF Historic Preservation Needs Assessment meetings from the abundance of other public-sector meetings (including the Portland Central City Plan) taking place during the same period of time.

Meeting Site Selection and Publicity:

BMF hired preservation consultant, **Eileen Fitzsimons**, to facilitate the Needs Assessment. Her responsibilities included organizing, publicizing, and participating in each of the five meetings and preparation of findings from a questionnaire, developed by BMF and the consultant. She contacted each coalition director in person or by phone to introduce the project, elicit support, determine meeting dates, discuss possible meeting locations and how to best publicize the meetings through coalition contact systems. The seven directors were supportive of the needs assessment project, and provided assistance but were relieved that additional demands on their time was not required. The consultant planned meeting locations to make attendance as physically accessible as possible for the public.

Many of the coalition directors regularly attend monthly neighborhood association meetings within their coalition areas. The consultant attended several of the neighborhood association meetings in

order to publicize the project. On several occasions, coalition directors were in attendance and spoke favorably about the project. In addition, they readily sent e-announcements to their e-mail lists and published them in their newsletters. Meetings were also publicized through the BMF website.

Information Gathering and Meeting Format:

In order to ensure that the 90-minute meetings were completed as scheduled and that attendees discussed the same questions at all five meetings, BMF staff and consultant designed a three-page questionnaire, supplemented with handouts to help guide the discussion. Large maps were mounted for display showing neighborhood association boundaries and the age of Portland's building stock. Meeting attendees were guided through the questionnaire and clarification about some of the questions was provided. Following completion of the questionnaire, the remainder of the time (usually 40 minutes) was used for open discussion about preservation issues. Attendees were encouraged to make additional comments/observations on a page provided for that purpose. While submitting the forms at the end of each meeting was preferred, some forms were returned by mail. In addition, some in attendance took blank forms for neighbors to complete and return. At the conclusion of the project's meeting schedule, the form was posted in electronic form on the BMF website in order to elicit additional responses, with a due date for inclusion in the assessment.

Results of Needs Assessment Meetings:

Broad public interest in the process was demonstrated by **more than one-third (38 of 95) of Portland's neighborhood associations being represented among respondents to the questionnaire.** Members of the *City of Portland Historic Landmarks Commission* were also supportive in the project and a commission member attended four of the five public meetings. Some of those who did attend came to a meeting that was physically inconvenient for them (i.e., not the closest one). Some neighborhood associations with conflicting meeting schedules made sure that a local resident attended to provide input and complete a questionnaire. The discussions that took place after completion of the questionnaires were extremely lively. Participants valued the opportunity to discuss historic preservation issues and compare experiences with those from other neighborhoods. *Many of them volunteered to act as points of contact for their neighborhoods.*

However, despite the extensive publicity campaign utilizing area newspapers, electronic notification and reminders, BMF's resources and the consultant's personal attendance at several neighborhood association meetings and events, the number of completed questionnaires was less than hoped for.

Value of Preserving Historic Buildings:

At all five meetings, those attending spoke passionately about the value they place on the histories of their neighborhoods and the older buildings within them. They are *most concerned about a perceived lack of recognition by "the city"* (elected officials and managers of the Planning Bureau and Bureau of Development Services) *of the value of the existing historic fabric of Portland neighborhoods.* While perhaps challenging to quantify, residents stated time and again that *historic buildings add to the quality of everyday life.* Vintage buildings connect them to their neighborhoods, other residents, past and present, and strengthen their affection for their city. They are pleased when a building is restored

and upset when one is threatened or demolished, instead of being rehabilitated. *They do not understand why preservation and reuse of older buildings is not at the top of the city's much touted "green buildings" and "sustainable development" programs.* Many do not know if the city has any preservation goals or even broad preservation policies. They believe the Portland Historic Landmarks Commission should have more than an "advisory" role.

In general, respondents did not reject the necessity for increased density in order to preserve farmland and natural areas outside the city boundaries. However, they *decry the lack of design review for new, larger-scale infill construction within their older neighborhoods, as well as poorly designed additions/alterations of older structures.* They are also concerned about these issues in areas outside of their neighborhood boundaries. There is a feeling that *neighborhoods seen as poor or weak (less organized) have been burdened with cheaply built, "cookie-cutter," high-density development.* Other structures, which may be historic, are allowed to deteriorate so they can be redeveloped. It is *generally believed that developers and new development are favored by the public sector to the detriment of existing neighborhood fabric.*

Interest in Historic Districts:

While few respondents live in National Register Historic Districts or city-designated Conservation Districts, *there is considerable interest in forming additional districts.* However, this is sometimes driven less by a desire to formally recognize a cohesive group of historic structures than by a desire to secure some design review of proposed additions or infill. Many Portland neighborhoods are large and include buildings of a variety of styles and eras. Consequently, it is difficult, complex, and time consuming to establish a historic district. However, as the city lacks even voluntary design guidelines for infill in older neighborhoods, *residents expressed a willingness to attempt to establish a historic district in order to have some input into the design of new or infill buildings in their neighborhoods.*

Considerable support was expressed for *the city's updating of the Historic Resources Inventory*, which is now almost thirty years old. During the 1980-83 Inventory, some neighborhoods were hastily or inadequately documented. A number of buildings have subsequently been demolished and replaced and some neighborhoods, more recently annexed to the city, have had no inventory at all. Many of the needs assessment participants were unaware of the original inventory, but saw its potential to inform them about their neighborhood history and help to establish preservation priorities.

Lack of Information about Historic Preservation in More Recently Annexed Areas:

Based on the National Register's 50-year age of structure requirement, there are a wide range of historic resources within the city's 95 neighborhoods. The greatest concentrations of surviving, older buildings are predictably located in those neighborhoods that were developed earliest within Portland's history, c. 1870s-WWII. Neighborhoods that were annexed into the City of Portland in the 1980s contain great numbers of c.1920s-1960s structures from the post-streetcar era development. There are undoubtedly historically significant buildings in these areas, including those that have reached the 50-year benchmark. However, *they were annexed after the City's early 1980s Historic Resources Inventory and so they have not been inventoried or evaluated.*

Individuals in these neighborhoods were often surprised to learn that their small bungalows, split-level and ranch-style homes might be "historic." In spite of substantial publicity efforts, these areas had the lowest attendance and least number of questionnaires returned. These are also neighborhoods in the midst of public meetings for the East Portland Plan, a comprehensive plan for the area sponsored by the City of Portland. These geographic areas include the neighborhoods that people are moving into, after being gentrified out of some "re-discovered" inner city neighborhoods. There is an abundance of rental housing, including new multi-family developments, in these outer Portland neighborhoods, and some buildings and neighborhoods are earmarked by the City of Portland for major redevelopment.

Summary - Needs Assessment Questionnaire

The **Portland Historic Preservation Needs Assessment** questionnaire was developed by BMF staff and the consultant to determine factual information (such as length of residency), determine preservation issues of concern in neighborhoods and city-wide, and assess preservation needs, including specific training needs. Questionnaires were completed by participants at the meetings (although numerous attendees did not complete one), and others were mailed in or completed on-line.

38 out of 95 Portland Neighborhoods were represented at the meetings. *Four inner Southeast* Portland neighborhoods had the highest attendance (Hosford-Abernethy, Sellwood, Mount Tabor, Richmond), equaled by *two Outer Southeast* (Hazelwood, Foster-Powell), and *one Northeast Portland* (Rose City Park/Roseway) neighborhoods.

Number of years in their neighborhood varied from less than one year (8%) to 40 years; 33% of participants have lived in their neighborhood from six-ten years, 30% from 11-20 years, and 23% more than 25 years.

Number of years in the City of Portland ranged from one year (4%) to 75 years; 15% have lived in Portland from 6 -10 years; 19% from 11-20 years, and 44% more than 25 years.

PART II – Preservation Issues in Your Neighborhood:

How common are <u>these</u> issues in your neighborhood?

1 = None 2 = Some, but acceptable 3 = Some, negative impact 4 = Too many to count

A. **Tear-down of older buildings/homes for bigger, new development**:
56% feel that there are some tear-downs of older buildings with negative impacts or too many to count. 44% feel that this is not a big issue in their neighborhood.

B. **Historic buildings not being maintained (including absentee owners)**:
52% said that the maintenance of historic buildings in their neighborhood is not a concern, while 48% felt there are negative impacts or too many to count.

C. **Poor quality or poorly-designed building renovations (no design standards)**:
A substantial number of participants (69%) identified poorly built or designed building renovations as a major concern, 31% felt this is not a big issue in their neighborhood.

D. **Poor quality or poorly-designed new buildings (no design review)**:

60% of participants identified poorly built or designed new buildings as a major concern, 40% said it is not an issue, or the impacts are acceptable to date.

How common are these issues in your neighborhood?
1 = None. 2 = Some, look ok. 3 = Some, are incompatible. 4. Overwhelming. 5. Not sure.

A. **New developments that increased density**.

19% felt that new developments at higher densities are not an issue at all in their neighborhoods and 44% said that impacts to date are acceptable. 37% felt that the new densities are incompatible or overwhelming.

B. **New development in open space:**

A number of participants (26%) did not respond to this question at all which may have indicated that it was difficult to answer. 44% felt that new developments in previously open space in their neighborhood is not a concern; 30% felt that it is an important issue.

C. **New commercial development:**

46% of participants felt that new commercial development is not a concern; 35% felt that the new commercial development is incompatible in character or overwhelming in scale.

D. **Do you or your neighborhood feel overwhelmed with land-use related notices?**

The issue of land use notices is undoubtedly related to those who are in communication with their neighborhood associations' land use committees, or not. 12% did not respond to this question, and 52% said this is not an issue for them. 36% said that they do feel overwhelmed by notices, with a few stating that was the case until the recent economic downturn.

Concerns about neighborhood school buildings:

Roughly the same percentages of participants have concerns about the school buildings in their neighborhood (49%) as those that do not (51%). A number of specific schools were cited by multiple participants, as shown in parentheses:

Elementary Schools: Abernethy (4), Llewellyn (4), Buckman (3), Boise-Eliot (2), Edwards (2), Fernwood (2), James John (2), Ainsworth, Alameda, Arleta, Brooklyn/Winterhaven, Bridlemile, Chapman, Collinsview/Riverdale, Columbia, Duniway, Glencoe, Grout, Harvey Scott, Hosford, Irvington, Laurelhurst, Lewis, Marysville, Peninsula, Richmond, Rose City Park, Sellwood Middle School, Woodlawn, all schools in Foster-Powell neighborhood.

High Schools: Lincoln High (2), Roosevelt (2), Franklin, Marshall, Washington-Monroe (no longer used as a school).

Concerns about neighborhood churches:

Concerns about church buildings in neighborhoods are also evenly divided, at 50% for those with concerns, and 50% with no identified church buildings they are concerned about. Specific concern was expressed for a number of church buildings:

Northeast:
All Saints Catholic Church – 3847 NE Glisan Street;
Allen Temple Christian Methodist Church – 4236 NE 8th Avenue;
Central Lutheran Church – 1820 NE 21st Avenue;
Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church – 3131 NE Glisan Street;
Old Mount Olivet Baptist Church – 1734 NE First Avenue;
8th Church of Christian Scientist – 3505 NE Multnomah;
Woodland Park Chapel – 1914 NE 102nd Avenue;
Many churches in Albina;
Rebuild of Morningstar Baptist Church (destroyed by fire) – 106 NE Ivy;
Several churches in Concordia/Vernon neighborhood

Northwest:
First Immanuel Lutheran Church - 1816 NW Irving

North:
N Delaware near Baldwin; N Central & St. Johns; Corner, N Lombard & Albina

Southeast:
St. David's Episcopal Church – 2800 SE Harrison Street (9);
Bethlehem Lutheran Church – 1244 NE 39th Avenue (2);
Sunnyside United Methodist Church – 3520 SE Yamhill Street;
Mt. Tabor Presbyterian – 5441 SE Belmont Street;
Old St George Orthodox Church - 3830 SE 62nd Avenue;
St. Philip Neri Catholic Church (historic buildings) – 2408 SE 16th Avenue;
Chinese Presbyterian Church – 4937 SE Woodstock Blvd;
Baptist Church - near SE 35th Avenue & Yamhill;
Lincoln Street Baptist Church – 3240 SE Lincoln Street;
Lincoln Street Methodist Church – 5145 SE Lincoln Street;
Sellwood United Methodist Church – 1422 SE Tacoma;
Nazarene Church - SE 17th Avenue near Lambert;
10th Christian Scientist Church – 5736 SE 17th Avenue;
Calvary Open Bible Church - 901 SE Spokane Street

Southwest:
Ascension Episcopal Church – 1823 SW Spring Street;
St. Marks Presbyterian Church – 9750 SW Terwilliger;
Mt. Carmel Lutheran Church – 515 SW Maplecrest Drive

Part III – Neighborhood History & Resources:

One a scale of 1-5 (1 being very little), How much history do you know about your neighborhood?

A substantial 73% of participants feel that they know from some to a lot about the history of their neighborhood; 27% said they know none or very little.

Historic preservation training or workshops that would be helpful to you and/or your neighborhood: (*NOTE: * indicates program topics that have been offered by the Bosco-Milligan Foundation, at the Architectural Heritage Center or around the community.)*

Inventory, Regulatory, Advocacy: (numbers in parentheses indicate multiple same responses)
What works - advice from other neighborhoods regarding preservation (7)
How to maintain neighborhood scale (5)
How to ensure that the City follows its own regulations (4)
How to register historic buildings (especially for neighborhood association land use committee chairs) (3) *
How to persuade policy makers of the value of preservation (3)
How to link sustainability and green buildings to preservation (3) *
How to balance zoning & preservation (2)
How to establish historic or conservation districts (2) *
How to spread increased density into all neighborhoods, don't just dump it in poor, vulnerable ones (2).
Historic building inventory – how to conduct, how to fund *
How to understand state/local preservation regulations
How to work with developers to attain/improve compatibility of new buildings

Research, Writing History:
How to write a neighborhood history/context study (13)
How to write a building/house history (7) *
Walking tours to learn more about historic buildings (5) *
Histories of early transportation (3), early industries, ethnic settlers
How to appreciate the architecture of modern buildings (2) *
Building history of 1930s-1940s
Buildings with mixed uses - success stories
Historic streetscape details

Hands-On Vintage Home Repair How-To Workshops:
How to repair/maintain historic windows (7) *
How to maintain historic homes (2) *
How to appropriately renovate older homes *
Gardens for historic houses

Part IV – Portland Citywide:

How well do you feel the City of Portland is doing in balancing Historic Preservation goals with other development related goals?

Respondents were evenly divided as to how they feel the city of Portland balances historic preservation with other development goals, with 51% rating the city's balancing act as Poor, and 49% as Moderate or Pretty Well.

How would you like to see the City of Portland help address <u>your neighborhood</u> historic preservation issues? A substantial number of people responded to this question thoroughly and with much creativity. Responses have been grouped to reflect comments and ideas that are related, where appropriate.

Historic Preservation as an Important City Value:

"See the value of historic preservation, *not just in economic terms*, but as *a livability issue* that: (A) improves everyday quality of life and; (B) so strengthens resident's ties to their neighborhood and the city of Portland."

"Our life is amazing due to preservation of the rich diversity in our district. The Hawthorne & Division business districts thrive due to many 1920s-1930s era commercial buildings that are perfect for *pedestrian-oriented retail*. The mix of historic single family homes, duplexes and 1920s apartment buildings creates a multi-generational and vibrant *mixed income neighborhood*. The historic schools, libraries and churches create *civic life and community gathering spaces*."

"Like having a vibrant arts community, retaining & maintaining historic buildings is a sign of cultural maturity. *Demolishing your own history is short-sighted and wasteful; it is anti-green, too!* Why shouldn't Portland have lots of 200-year old buildings, like European countries?"

Historic Resources Inventory and Neighborhood Histories:

Fund and train residents to update their historic building inventories (8 respondents.) In this way they can focus on their most important structures. It also informs potential re-developers about what should be left alone. Neighborhoods (perhaps there is some grouping that could take place) need histories/context statements to link their important buildings to their histories.

We should *develop neighborhood "stewards"* who would have knowledge of their neighborhood and expertise to answer questions. Perhaps this could be connected to neighborhood associations.

Resources should be provided to neighborhood associations to help interpret and share their history.

We need to *recognize the historic value of "ordinary" buildings*, not just those of the wealthy and prominent (2).

Specific attention should be paid to exploring and publicizing *the history of the working class and minority populations*, whose resources are often given only lip service.

Interpretive signs/panels to explain historic sites/buildings are needed in all neighborhoods (2), including public kiosks/maps of *former trolley lines*.

Growth and Public Preservation Policy:

Density and increased business growth trump historic preservation in development reviews *(4)*.

The city's Bureau of Development Services *bends over backward for developers* at the expense of neighborhood concerns (3).

The City needs to make sure *different neighborhoods have a "quota" of how much new growth they can absorb*, instead of "sticking it" to poor or weak neighborhoods (2).

We should be *open to increased density in the inner neighborhoods*. New mixed-use buildings are good for the vitality of these areas.

Does the City *have* preservation goals? (3)

Land use and preservation issues need *better notification and communication* (3).

The City needs more *local economic incentives* for historic preservation (3).

The City seems attentive to preservation in neighborhoods like Northwest and Southwest Portland while *ignoring desirable buildings on the Eastside (2).*

The City needs to be pressured into changing its attitude - they *allow developers too much leeway, without design oversight* by surrounding neighbors. The *negative impact on our quality of life* should be one of the factors in the equation when deciding to allow new construction in residential areas (2).

More power (authority) is needed behind decisions of the Landmarks Commission's recommendations. *Historic preservation is a low priority* and the Landmarks Commission isn't taken seriously.

Historic preservation elements need to be *incorporated in land use reviews*.

Inter-bureau communication is needed to coordinate all activities that take place in historic and conservation districts; *historic streetscape "details" are being lost* during redevelopment work.

Financial *incentives* are needed for *adaptive re-use.*

The City is *disrespectful and dismissive* of our local historic preservation issues.

There needs to be recognition of *all* energy embodied within a building. *Older buildings should receive "embodied LEEDS points" for not being torn down.* "*Conservation*" should be promoted as at least *as "green" as new "building green."*

We need to work with *Portland Public Schools* to save and reuse *older school buildings*.

Consideration and inventory of *archaeological resources* is needed.

The transfer of *Floor Area Ratios (FAR) should be based on 3-4 block increment* rather than on a single block.

Encourage *business development* within *existing commercial zones*.

Enforce more *local say in demolition/plan review*; need *longer review/comment time*.

PDC should offer *low or no-interest loans for low or fixed income residents* so their houses can be maintained. Deferred maintenance can lead to tear-downs and these "holes" are often filled with poorly-designed multiplexes that will be the slum housing of the future (2). *Why not a local AmeriCorps-type program* to put young people to work doing basic maintenance with these loans, under the supervision of a restoration contractor (not the ones enamored with aluminum sliding windows and vinyl siding). They would earn money, learn useful skills and perhaps learn to appreciate older homes and materials. And they would develop some pride in and connection to their neighborhoods.

Design Guidelines:

Design guidelines for new construction are needed so that these *buildings fit in better* with a turn-of-the-century neighborhood (8)

More stringent *design review of additions* is needed, so they fit into existing neighborhoods.

Closely watch *height and density issues* in older neighborhoods so that we don't *lose light*.

Buildings should represent the time when they are built. Encouraging new ones that defer to historical ones would mean our culture is simply nostalgic; who would want that?

The small *commercial area* in our conservation district has a *unique character/style*. However, we keep getting *proposals for more modern structures* and it takes a lot of repeated effort to "reject" these. The city's Bureau of Development Services could provide *"generic" design guidelines for renovating older buildings*. There could be photos on line that show good examples of additions and renovations; people often make bad decisions because they don't know any better. If they have to go to BDS for a permit anyhow, that could be the place to get information *before* they begin planning and work.

We need a *publicly-accessible set of design guidelines/design review procedures* for historic buildings in different neighborhoods, so *neighborhoods can review* this information, not just building industry professionals.

Design standards are needed for historic *streetcar-era neighborhoods*.

Address neighborhood *Main Streets* with new *design guidelines* in the Portland Plan.

Historic Districts:

Designate my neighborhood a historic district and set some *development guidelines* (4).

The City is not helping with our historic district work. *We are paying all costs* of trying to write a historic district nomination for our work and relying on volunteers. There is no money for the Office of Neighborhood Involvement, either.

Reinstate local *Historic District councils* to increase "ownership" of the city's historic districts.

What do you consider the most important historic preservation related issues in Portland?

This open question elicited responses from people that reflect their particular views and/or the views of their neighborhood. Many people identified the same issue, which is indicated with the numbers of the same response, as shown in parentheses.

- New developments not being historically appropriate or fitting in well (21).
- Continue to recognize and preserve historic buildings (18).
- How to increase density without destroying historic character of existing neighborhoods (13).
- Stop closure/demolition of older school buildings (8).
- Preventing deterioration, demolition of older buildings (8).
- Update the Historic Resources Inventory (7).
- A moratorium on skinny houses is needed, along with development on smaller than standard lots (5).
- Lack of protection for older structures vs. redevelopment (5).
- Lack of a city review process for historic buildings before demolition (4).
- Preserving historic buildings is "green" (4).
- Greater protection (state land use planning Goal 5) of historic resources and districts (3).
- Financial incentives for historic preservation (3).
- Height limitations in Skidmore-Old Town Historic District are needed (2).
- Community-based history projects (2).
- Spread increased density into all neighborhoods; don't just dump it in poor, vulnerable neighborhoods (2).
- Dealing with design homogeneity, cookie cutter development, and gentrification.
- How to increase energy savings in old buildings but maintain historic integrity.
- Include historic preservation in the Portland Plan.
- Lack of understanding/appreciation of neighborhood history.
- Public apathy about historic preservation.
- Change state law that allows property owners to opt out of historic designation.
- Include archaeology in discussion of historic preservation.

The Bosco-Milligan Foundation will follow the distribution of this Historic Preservation Needs Assessment with an ongoing series of programs and workshops to address the identified preservation needs in Portland. A subsequent publication describing threatened buildings and preservation success stories, by neighborhood, will also be utilized to determine priorities for further technical assistance.

This project is assisted by a *Partners in the Field* challenge grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

© 2009 Bosco-Milligan Foundation