

City of Beaverton, Planning Division
 Attn: Lauren Russell, Planner
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 Beaverton, OR 97076

Received
 Planning Division
 08/29/2022

Re: Cedar Hills Apartments
 DR2022-0030/LD2022-0015

August 26, 2022

Dear City of Beaverton

Landmark signs need to be saved. Exceptions to the sign ordinance are needed to be preserved them for future generations. For every rule, there is an exception. Signs as landmarks, signs that promote "Place" vs. a commercial enterprise like a car dealership, restaurant, or store, are the exception.

These signs loom big on the urban landscape and are known and loved. These signs are part of our history. They are so well known by generations of residents. They have been moved, modified, etc. but their impact remains.



In a recent presentation by the developer of apartments proposed to replace the aging Cedar Hills Shopping Center, the developer told the City's Neighborhood Association that the Landmark *CEDAR HILLS* sign, currently located on the shopping center property, was not going to be preserved as part of their redevelopment of the site. They cited the City of Beaverton is requiring its removal due to it being a non-confirming sign under the city's sign code.

To this resident of Cedar Hills, the removal of the sign is a deal breaker for the redevelopment of the shopping center. I can even ignore the historical nature of the shopping center, constructed in the 1950's, having been designed by the famous Portland Architect, Pietro Belluschi, FAIA through his association with the architecture firm Skidmore, Owings and Merrill. But the sign is history – it is a landmark that has announced this as a place for over 70 years.

Yet the urban environment is full of "non-confirming" signs. Yet these signs are loved by the communities that the sign ordinances were designed to "protect". Consider the non-confirming sign at the West end of the Burnside Bridge in Old Town.



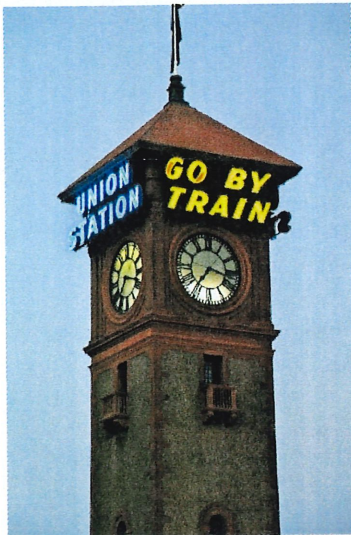
The White Stag sign, before it was the Portland, Oregon sign, was the old town Made in Oregon sign and before that, the White Stag, and originally it was for a sugar manufacture.

Considerable effort has been made by the developers, renovation preservationists and ironically, the City of Portland itself to protect, preserve and restore this non-confirming sign, treating it as the historic landmark that it is.

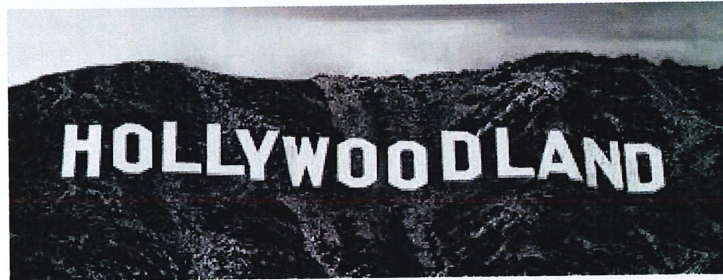
And who doesn't love the red nose added to the deer at Christmas time?

Consider signs that have been preserved as part of renovation and renewal. The Portland sign used to be the Paramount. Most Portlanders don't remember that sign, but they all know the Portland sign. They see it on TV, in print media and in tourism advertising promoting Portland. Non-conforming? Yes. Iconic? Yes.

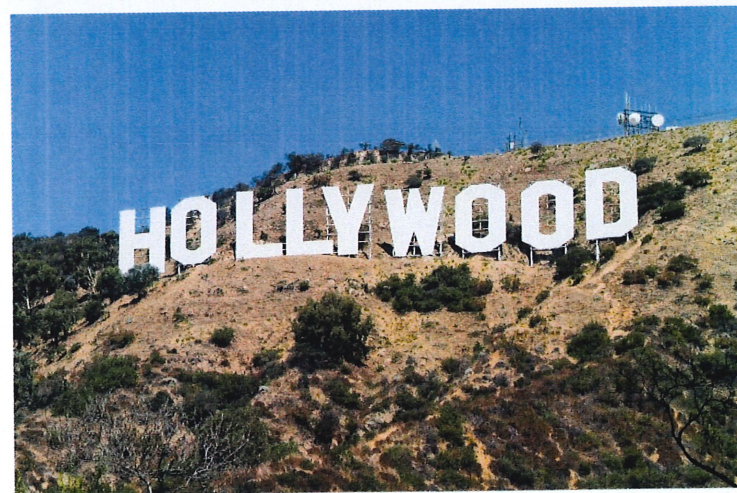
It promotes this place. It does not say "Performing Arts Center". It just says Portland, and everyone knows what that building is and its place in the urban fabric of the downtown.



You can imagine the uproar if the City of Portland had the union station sign removed as a non-conforming sign. Or that eyesore at the west end of the Burnside bridge. Or if the City required the Hollywood sign removed because the current sign code would never allow such a big sign to be such a blemish on the hills above LA.



The Hollywood sign used to be Hollywoodland, promoting a suburban housing community in the 1920's. With the removal of "land", this sign has become synonymous with and instantly recognized as the "place" where the movies are made.



Yet these signs remain, are preserved, and loved by the community as a landmark. A nod to the past. A statement about the history of this place. They give us a sense of community by contributing to our sense of place.

Yet the developers of the redevelopment of the Cedar Hills Shopping Center property are telling the community, that our landmark sign, CEDAR HILLS, which has stood since the 1950's can't be preserved because it does not meet the Beaverton sign code. We'd like to save it, they told the community at a public meeting for the project, but the City of Beaverton planners said it had to go. We have no say in the matter. Maybe we could take it apart and reuse some of the neon letters.

When asked at the meeting about relocating it, they said they had approached ODOT and that they wanted nothing to do with providing a location on public right-of-way for the purpose of relocating and preserving the sign. The City should ask for a letter from ODOT to confirm that statement.

If ODOT could see fit to preserve the sign and move it from its original location for the construction of Hwy 217 in the late 1960's, then the City of Beaverton should see it's historic value to Washington County, and the City of Beaverton, as a Historic landmark and require that the sign be preserved. This may require the relocation of the sign to publicly owned property (ODOT owns several parcels suitable for a new home for the sign, such as by the strip club north of Park Way). A transfer of ownership to THPR could be done to create a pocket park with the sign as a focal point and to preserve and protect it for future generations. Or it could be moved to the existing THPR park on SW Wilshire just east of the Wilshire exist ramp.

Preservation of Historic Landmarks

Since the City has recently annexed the site, it has likely not done the required assessment of historic and cultural resources required by Oregon Land Use Law, specifically Goal 5. The purpose of Goal 5 states "To protect natural resources and conserve scenic and **historic areas** (*emphasis added*) and open spaces". This state law requires local governments to adopt programs that will protect natural resources and conserve scenic, **historic** (*emphasis added*), and open space resources for present and future generations. These resources promote a healthy environment and natural landscape that contributes to Oregon's livability. It is recommended that the National Register of Historic Places and the recommendations of the State Advisory Committee on Historic Preservation should be utilized in designating historic sites. The City is obligated to consider the historic and cultural significance of this landmark sign and to take actions to preserve and protect this landmark.

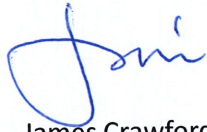
The City has the ability to preserve landmark structures. Per Chapter 90 – Definitions. It states "**Landmark.** Those buildings, structures, objects or sites that are fifty (50) years old or older that are significant or important because of historic, architectural, archeological, or cultural value as shall be designated by the Beaverton City Council. All designated Landmarks shall have a location, a physical description, photograph, and a discussion of the landmark's significance. Buildings, structures, objects, or sites that are less than 50 years old may be designated if they are exceptional in terms of historic, architectural, archeological or cultural value. Check, check, likely not, and check. Got three out of four.

Urban legend has it that in September of 1960, a young Senator from Massachusetts, John F. Kennedy, running for President of the United States, stopped here. While on a campaign swing through the Willamette Valley after a speech at the Oregon State Fair, he reportedly stopped and gave a speech outside of the Safeway Store at the Cedar Hills Shopping Center. His campaign stopped here because Senator Kennedy, seeing the Cedar Hills sign said this looks like a place, we should stop.

Preservation criteria. This sign is well over 50-years old meeting the City's landmark criteria. It was moved from its original location just south of Hwy 26 and has been at its current location for well over 50-years. It was likely designed by an internationally important architect, Pietro Belluschi. It has been a cultural and geographic landmark for generations. It meets the definition of "Landmark" and preserving it complies with the purpose stated in Chapter 40.35.05 of the development code. At the very minimum, before approval of the removal of the sign, a historic review should be completed, and a public hearing held regarding the fate of the sign.

Beaverton, don't be the City that does not value the past – once a landmark is removed, it is gone for all future generations and for all time. Require that it be preserved as a condition of approval for the redevelopment of the Cedar Hills Shopping Center property. If the developer can figure out how to preserve an 80-foot-tall cell tower just 4-feet from their building, they should be able to figure out how to preserve this historic sign. If not on this property, then elsewhere in the Cedar Hills community. Frankly, the City of Beaverton does not have enough historic stuff to lose this piece of history.

Sincerely,



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P.S.

Other examples of signs that promote "place".

