Lair Hill Historic Conservation District Design Guidelines

Bureau of Planning
City of Portland
October, 1980

LAIR HILL HISTORIC CONSERVATION DISTRICT DESIGN GUIDELINES

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Introduction

On August 7, 1977, the Portland City Council designated the Lair Hill neighborhood as the Lair Hill Historic Conservation District; thus it became the adopted policy of the city to encourage the conservation and maintenance of the historical and architectural integrity of this district. One result of the district designation was the establishment of the Lair Hill District Advisory Council to act as an advisory body to the Portland Historical Landmarks Commission. A primary responsibility of the Advisory Council is to recommend guidelines and criteria for development and/or preservation within the conservation district.

The following guidelines were generated by the Lair Hill District Advisory Council to provide the designer/developer with a basic tool for new development within the district. Existing buildings in the neighborhood were analyzed in an effort to identify the design elements that serve to define Lair Hill. By defining the parts that make up the whole, these guidelines should help convey to the designer/developer an understanding of the neighborhood, so that new buildings can be constructed that are compatible with existing structures.

Each section of the guidelines is divided into three parts:

1. CONTEXT-explanation of existing and historic elements.

2. GOALS-aims agreed upon by the neighborhood that will maintain the special historic qualities of Lair Hill in ways appropriate to current times.

3. GUIDELINES-specific elements to be incorporated into building design.

The reference symbols below identify either particular building types to which a goal or guideline will apply; or special qualities that helped to generate a goal or guideline.

single family residence

multi-family

non-residential

energy conservation

wildlife shelter

quality of life

Photo: Oregon Historical Society

The Big Picture

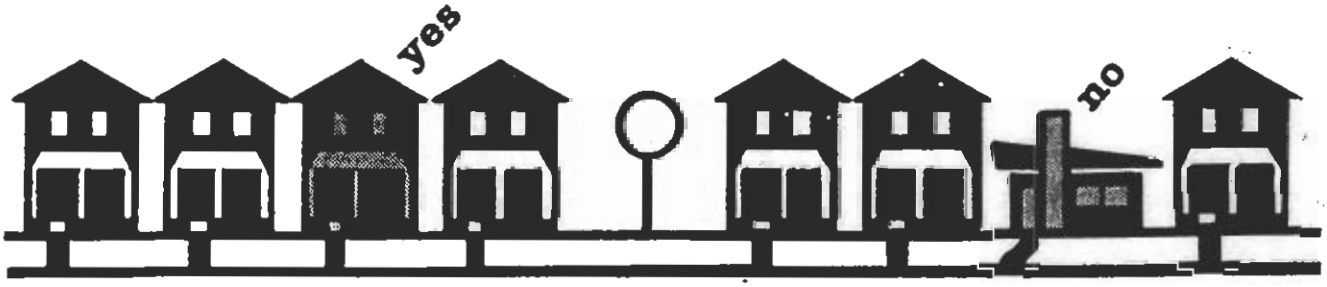
Context:

Historically, Lair Hill was a neighborhood of residences and small businesses. Many of the businesses, such as the numerous groceries on First Avenue, primarily served the surrounding neighborhood. Lair Hill provided for many of the daily needs of its residents with a library, stores, places of worship, and even a settlement house. Public transportation-first trolleys, then buses-was readily available. The private automobile was not needed as a primary source of transportation. Thus, the streets contained a great deal of pedestrian activity.

The Lair Hill streetscape is full of visual interest. The lively facades, porches, entryways, and even small storefronts are inviting to the passerby. The architecturally rich street facades, with their ornate detailing and celebration of entrances serve to provide the visual cohesiveness and quality of neighborliness characteristic to the district.

A great variety of architectural styles appeared as the neighborhood evolved over a period of time. Yet there remain enough elements in common to create a neighborhood that is visually continuous but that contains highly individualized areas.

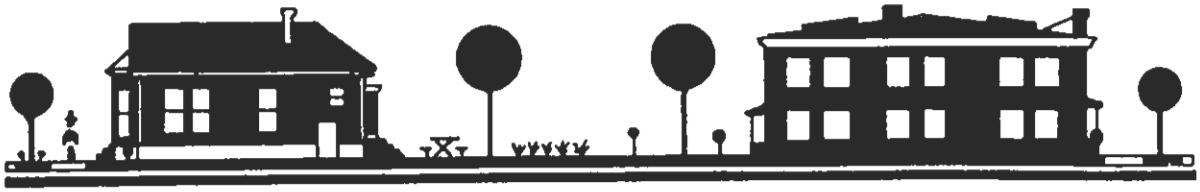
Today, the neighborhood is still primarily made up of small-scale residences and businesses. Buildings of worship, the settlement house and a neighborhood grocery still exist. But many of these buildings, and the newer office buildings, now serve people who do not live in the neighborhood. Yet, the streets still reflect the more liesurely pace of the first part of the century. Neighborhood residents have worked to limit the automobile through traffic. Many residents still walk to visit neighbors, shop or catch a bus. The intimate relationship between the passerby and the surrounding buildings still exists.



Goal:

New buildings should not only be visually compatible with the adjacent buildings, but they should work to enhance and encourage the pedestrian vitality of the streetscape.

I. SITE PLANNING



Context:

A How the building relates to the street

A dominant feature in Lair Hill is the small yard in front of each building. This yard creates a landscaped buffer between passerby and building occupant. The yard is narrow enough so that the passerby can still enjoy the details of the facade.

Some non-residential and multi-family buildings are sited directly up against the sidewalk, but in the overall context of the neighborhood, these are exceptions rather than the norm. Several of these building types do maintain the front yard setback.

B How the building relates to adjacent buildings

i. side yard

Unlike buildings in downtown Portland, or the row house vernacular of many cities, the buildings in Lair Hill, with one or two exceptions, have side yards. The side yard provides access to rear yards, and in a neighborhood of wooden buildings, provides a degree of fire protection.

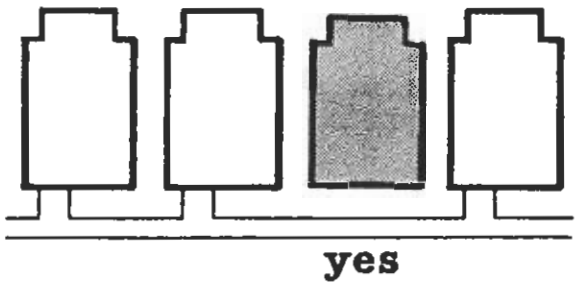
ii. rear yard

The interior space of the block provides a private outdoor living area for the residents of the adjacent buildings. Often, this space was used in common and not divided into small yards according to property lines.

Goal:

To maintain the existing character of building spaces and setbacks.

Buildings with similar setbacks create a strong visual element.



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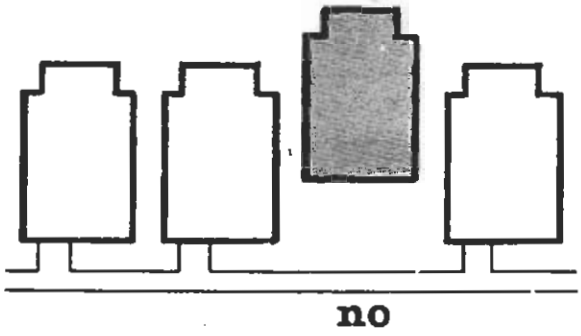


no

1.Guideline:

FRONT YARD: A distance equal to the average of the front setbacks of the immediately adjacent buildings. Where there are no adjacent buildings, the recommended setback is 8'.

SIDE YARD: Average of adjacent setbacks. If no adjacent buildings, the recommended setback is 5'.

REAR YARD: Average of adjacent setbacks. If no adjacent buildings, the recommended setback is 15'.

C Parking

Until recent times, parking has not been a major design factor in Lair Hill. Many of the buildings pre-date the automobile, so parking was on street. A small number of the residences have garages. A few of these are separate structures, but most of them are built into the structure of the residence.

Limited auto use is viable because of the neighborhood's close proximity to downtown Portland and its direct access to public transportation.

Goal:

To discourage the use of the private auto as the primary source of transportation

To avoid a landscape of cars at curbside and in surface parking lots. The pedestrian should not be surrounded by cars parked on the street and the building site.

2.Guideline:

1. It is strongly recommended that parking be in the building structure.

2. No ground floor street facade should be composed solely of parking or parking accesses. Ground floor facades must have pedestrian entrances and/or windows. (see guideline 6)

3. On site parking should be appropriately landscaped so as to screen the parking.

4. On site parking should not completely fill any front or rear yard.

5. No parcel of land should be converted solely for parking.

The photos on this page show existing parking garages.

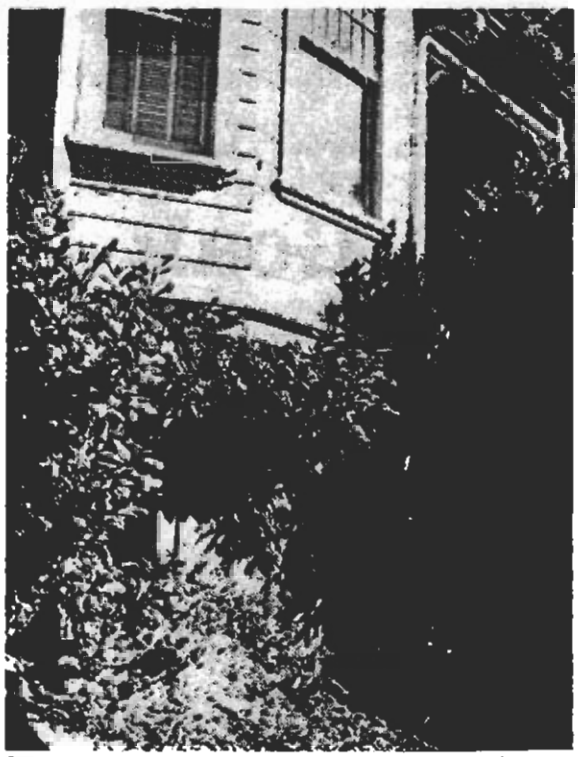
photo 1 : A new renovation. The deck above the garage helps to extend the front yard. Note the use of panelled doors that relate to older door styles.

photo 2 : A garage incorporated into the basement at the lowest grade point. The location of the garage on a secondary street helps to minimize pedestrian impact.

photo 3 : This building sits high above street level. The landscaping, adjacent stairs up to the porch and glass/ panel garage doors help to create a lively street facade.

1

2



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II. COMPONENTS

Context:

Building shape

i. height

Buildings in Lair Hill range in height from a single story to three stories. The maximum height was determined primarily by the limitations of wood frame and masonry bearing wall construction.

Goal:

To maintain the low building height that is an important characteristic of the neighborhood. It serves to enhance the pedestrian scale and helps to maximize sunlight on the street facades.

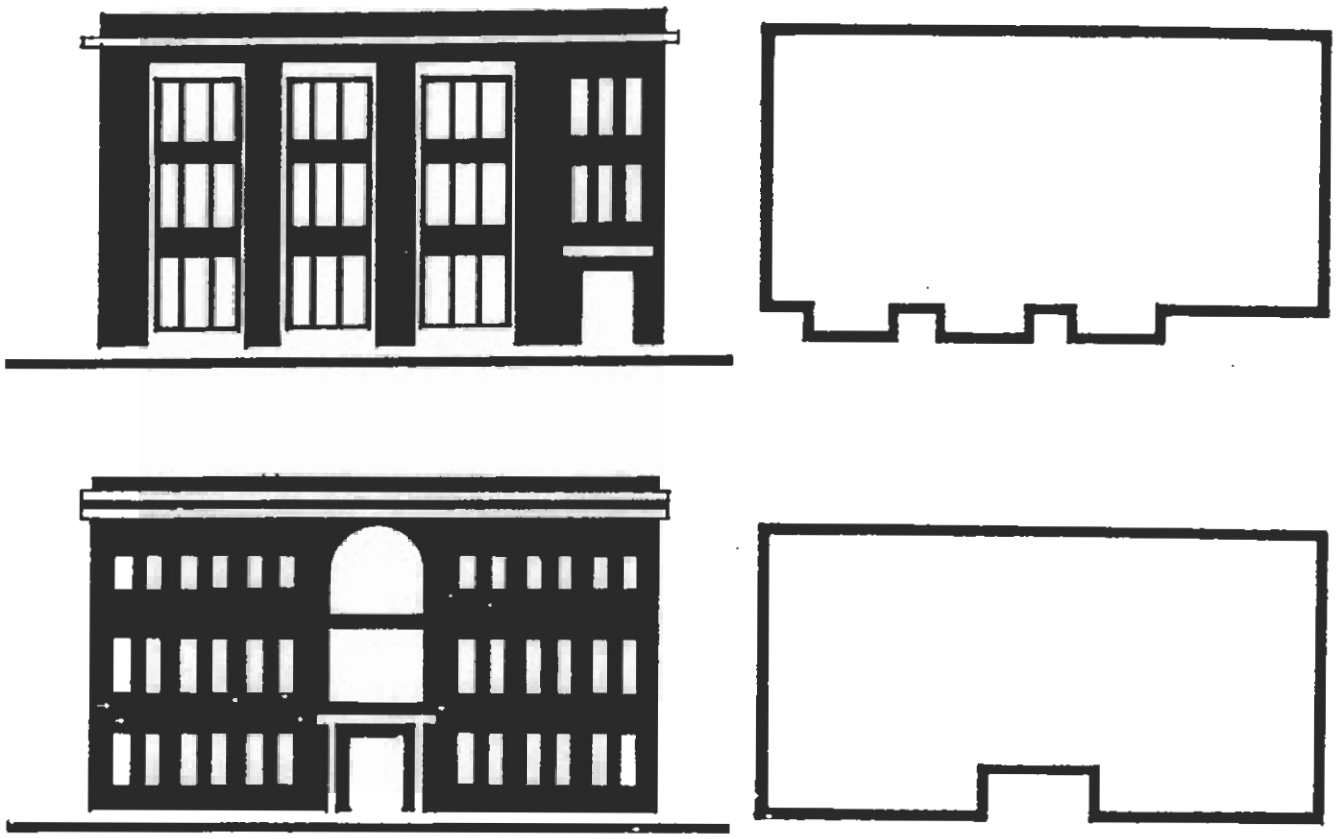
3.Guideline:

No building height should exceed three stories or forty-five feet.

Typical scale of neighborhood buildings.

ii. massing

The original 100 foot wide plots were generally subdivided into building lots 50, 33, or 25 feet wide. These subdivisions then dictated a relatively narrow street facade.



Goal:

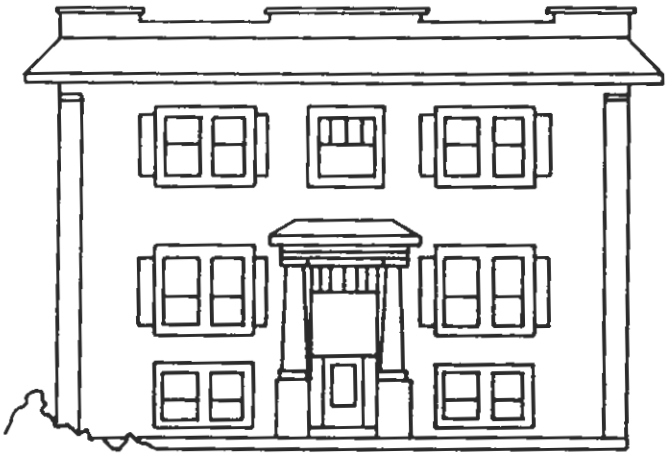
To avoid buildings with long, flat facades, as such facades are inconsistent with the broken facade pattern of numerous small buildings.

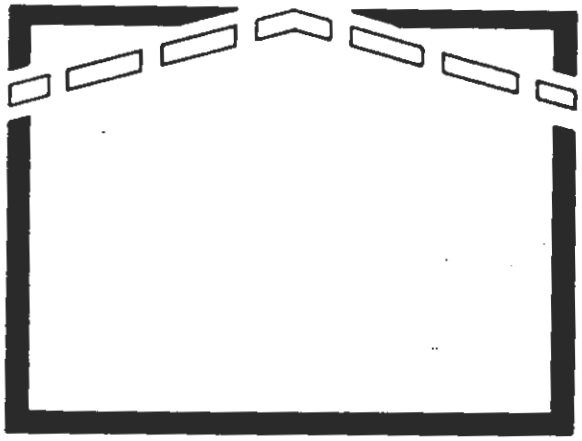
4.Guideline:

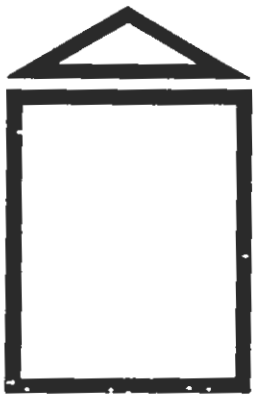
Buildings that are fifty feet or longer should be divided into modules of twenty-five feet, or less, in length. This modulation can be created by changes in the facade plane. (See "B Architectural Specifics".)

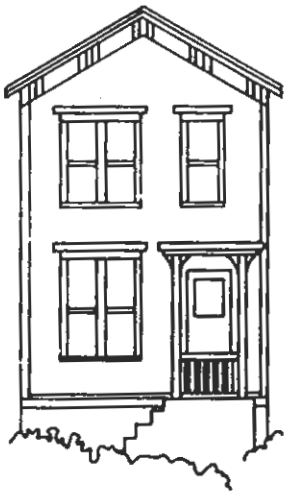
iii. roofscape

The predominant street facade shape is that of a rectangle capped with a triangle. The triangular portion is the roof structure. Roof pitches are generally steep, ranging from 6/12 to 12/12. In a single building, several roofs will intersect to form an elaborate system of ridges and valleys. Commercial and apartment buildings often present just a rectangle to the street. A false front, or parapet wall, conceals a flat or shallow pitched roof. In the case of a small building, this parapet serves to create the image of a larger, more imposing, structure. It also helps to differentiate the building from a single family residence









Goal:

To maintain a roof character of steeply pitched roofs with elaborate junctions or flat roofs with distinct edges.

5.Guideline:

1. Pitched roofs should have a pitch of at least 6/12.

2. Flat roofs should be surrounded by a parapet.

B Architectural specifics

The buildings in Lair Hill are rich with architectural detail. This richness does not derive from a random application of decoration, but from certain architectural components used in fairly specific ways.

Goal:

To encourage the design of new buildings to reflect existing architectural components in such a way as to complement the spirit of the existing detailing in the district.

i. entryways

The protected entryway is a major architectural part of Lair Hill. Most of the entries are in the form of a porch, that is, a relatively small mass added onto the basic building. Other entries are in the form of a recess. Either way, the entry serves visually to break up the mass of the building. Functionally, it provides a transition from exterior to interior. Frequently, the entryway is the dominant architectural feature on the main facade. On corner lots the entry frequently faces the north-south avenue.

Front doors are often notable and may contain colored glass panes, panels, or carvings.

6.Guideline:

1. All buildings should have a permanently protected entryway. (Awnings are not permanent protection.)

2. On corner lots the main entrance should be on the nearest major street.

3. All main entrances should face the street.

ii. windows

The most prevalent window type is a wooden sash, double hung window that is approximately thirty inches wide by as much as eighty-four inches high. These windows are sometimes placed together in groups of two or three. Because of the wide jambs and mullions (required for the sash weights) the windows still read as individual units. Many of the buildings were "modernized" during the 1930's through the 1950's. Tall ceilings were lowered and the windows reframed accordingly. Remodelling such as this resulted in awkward facades that should not be emulated.

Windows on most of the wooden buildings have a top and side trim that is approximately five and three quarter inches wide. Frequently, the top trim is more elaborate than the sides, creating a cornice which functions as a drip cap. Some form of articulation, such as arches or pilasters, around the windows is also found on most of the brick or stucco buildings.

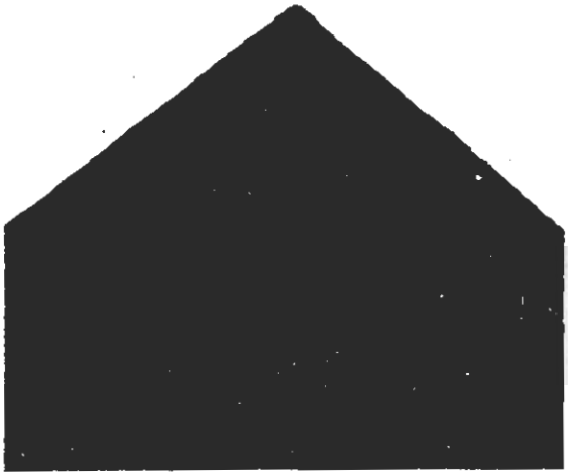
7. Guideline:

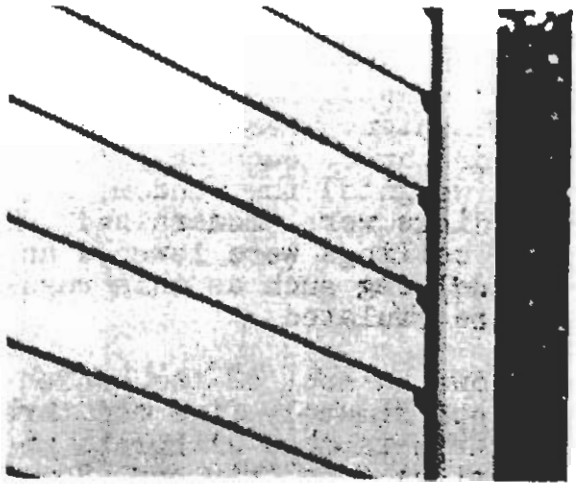
1. Wood sash is the preferred window material.

2. No pane of glass in any window unit should be larger than 30" wide by 84" high.

3. Windows on wood buildings should be surrounded by exterior trim on the top and sides that is 5½" minimum width.

4. Glass should be clear or stained.





iii. siding

Wood is the predominant form of siding material The siding is most often horizontal shiplap boards with either 7" or 5" exposed. Shingles are used to highlight special parts. Siding was always smooth finish. Brick is of a single color but laid in different patterns to articulate parts of a building such as the cornice line. Brick foundations were frequently stuccoed as protection against water.

iv. exterior finish

Buildings were painted not only for beauty but as a protection against rot and fungus. The original paints were oil based enamels and had such poisonous ingredients as arsenic and lead. The finish was of a semi-gloss type. Contrasting color served to articulate various trims and decorations. The Historical Landmarks staff can provide resources for selection of historical color schemes.

8.Guideline:

Horizontal wood siding, brick or stucco should be used for exterior finish. Vertical wood siding may be used in board and batten form. Shingles should only be used in conjunction with horizontal wood siding. The use of rough sawn finishes is discouraged.

9.Guideline:

1. Wood siding and shingles should be finished with a full bodied paint, preferably of a semi-gloss finish.

2. Staining of wood shakes/shingles used for roofing is acceptable. Otherwise staining is not a preferred finish.

v. other building components

Listed below are some of the more important components that help to create the textures on the buildings in the neighborhood. Many of them are decorative forms that were derived from functional uses.

The parts of a building that receive particular articulation are front doors, roof edges, gable ends, cornice lines and windows. This is consistent for nearly every building in the neighborhood.

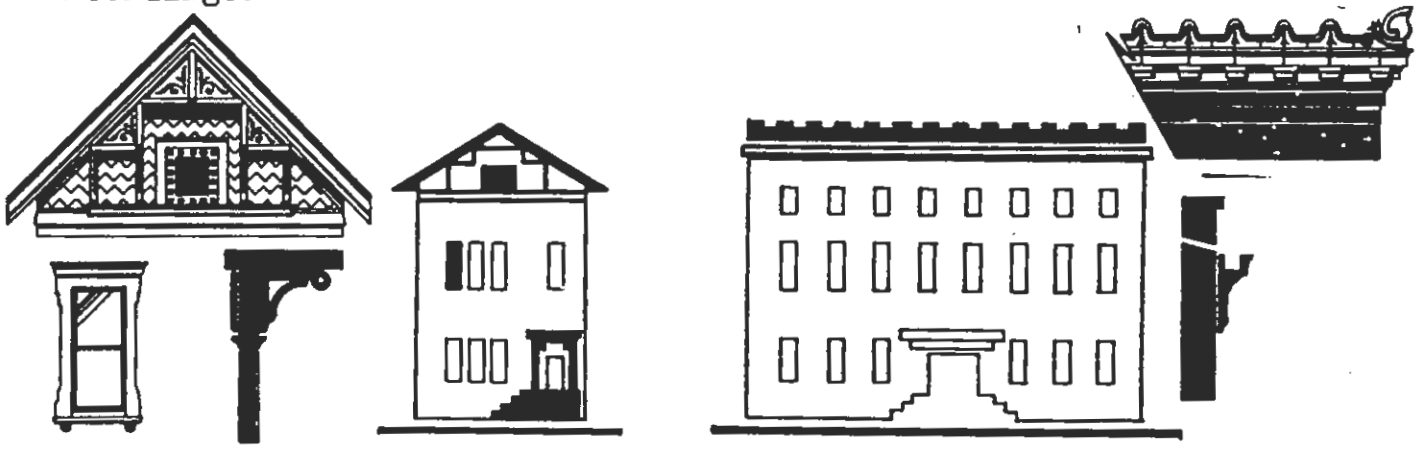
a. dormers
Dormers puncture the roof to gain useable living space and additional light.

b. bays
Bays are found in most of the residences in the neighborhood. When oriented to the street, they increase interior space and light. When used on the side of a house, they allow light to enter that might otherwise not.

c. bracketing
A simple porch support may turn into an elaborate bracket. Bracketing is also used along the roofline or at the bottom of a window.

d. cornice
The cornice that runs across the top of a non-residential building helps to articulate the facade and many times will house a gutter.

e. trim
Trim is used not only around windows and doors, but is also used to articulate parts of the building and on outside corners of wood buildings. Trim ranges from the simple 1x6 board to elaborately cut mouldings.



10. Guideline:

Where appropriate, new buildings should incorporate architectural detailing derived from the building components listed above.

III. LANDSCAPE

Context:

A Plantings

There were once a great many more flowering plants and trees in Lair Hill than exist today. Years of absentee ownership and nature herself have taken their toll of many of the older plantings. The appendix to the guidelines provides a list of native plants that would be appropriate for landscaping along with the old standards of roses, lilacs, etc.

yes

no

Goal:

To encourage the maximum use of open land for visual enjoyment and/or to fulfill more functional purposes such as shading, wildlife shelter or food production. Plantings should not hide, but enhance buildings.

ll.Guideline:

1. New buildings should be landscaped and the landscaping should include the parking strip.

2. No exposed plastic or bark mulch (except in rose beds or beds of other acid-loving plants) should be used as a permanent ground cover.

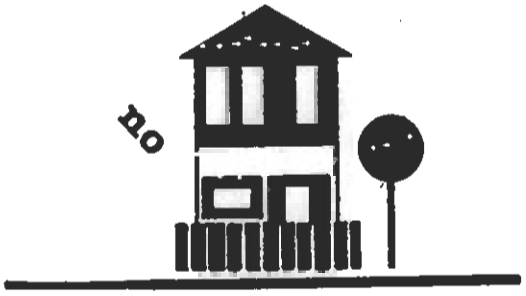
3. New ground cover planting should be in sufficient density to fill out the area planted within a season or two. (ex. Ivy should be spotted 12" to 18" apart or less.) Larger shrubs and smaller trees should infill no later than five years and sooner if possible.

4. Existing trees should be left in place if possible and appropriate.

Photo: Oregon Historical Society

B Fences

Wood was the most commonly used fencing material in the neighborhood. For the most part, fences were low, they defined front yards and kept the dog in, but did not act as total visual barriers.



12. Guideline:

1. Fences should be below 42" in height and of an open pattern.

2. Chain link fences should not be erected unless used as a trellis.

IV. CONCERNS

Context:

A Residential construction

The City Council adopted, on March 29, 1978, a housing policy for the City of Portland. One of its justifications, was that there was a housing shortage in the city.

In the last thirty years a large number of the residential structures in the neighborhood were demolished, greatly depleting the population density of the neighborhood. A good portion of the resulting vacant land was used for roads, thus depleting the stock of land that could be used for new construction of buildings.

Goal:

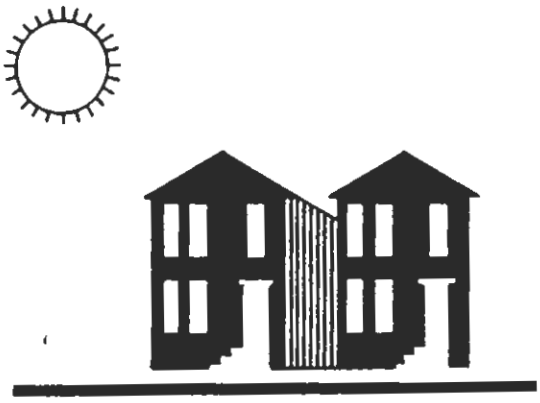
To encourage an increase in the residential density as this is essential for Lair Hill to continue its function as a neighborhood, not just a collection of historic buildings.

B Noise

It is important for developers of new buildings to realize that this is primarily a residential neighborhood; a place where people eat, sleep and play long after office workers have gone home.

Point of Concern:

Noisy equipment, such as air conditioning units, should be contained inside the structure or adequately muffled.



yes

no

C Energy Conservation

The orientation of the buildings was determined by the original 200' by 200' gridded street layout. Buildings were then built facing the street, no matter what the orientation. Of course, at that time, with the advent of the Industrial Revolution, more efficient technology became increasingly common. Mass production of materials allowed greater human comfort. In Lair Hill, these improvements often began with gas light and wood-fired central heating. After the turn of the century, electricity replaced gas as the major source of light and fossil fuels replaced wood as the major source of heat. Throughout the remainder of the century, there has been an almost constant evolution of remodelling in an attempt to increase comfort and to "cut down on the heating bill."

The City's Energy Conservation policy states that the consumption of nonrenewable resources for residential and business use shall be reduced by encouraging the application of renewable and alternative energy sources.

Goal:

The neighborhood recognizes the need to evolve towards energy systems of greater efficiency and less waste. It wishes to encourage energy conservation and the use of alternative/appropriate energy technologies that may deviate from historical/traditional forms.

Point of Concern:

1. The massing of a building should not unduly impinge upon an existing building's access to direct sunlight.

2. Natural light and ventilation should be maximized in new building construction.

Appendix

LARGE SHADE TREES

1. Oregon big leaf maple (Acer macrophyllum)
deciduous, short trunk, large spreading branches, good shade tree up to 90 feet tall.

2. Oregon white oak (Quercus garryana)
deciduous with broad rounded crown, up to 60 feet tall.

3. California black oak (Q. californica)
deciduous, large spreading crown, up to 80 feet tall, good shade tree, faster growing than white oak.

4. Tan oak (Lithocarpus densiflora)
not an oak, but bears acorns similar to oaks, deciduous, native to S.W. Oregon coast, large tree up to 135 feet tall.

5. Oregon ash (Fraxinus oregana)
deciduous, spreading crown when growing in open area, good shade tree up to 60 feet tall.

6. Red alder (Alnus rubra)
deciduous, rapid growing, branches somewhat brittle, probably marginal for city use.

7. Douglas fir (Pseudotsuga menziesii)
narrow leaf (needles) evergreen, very large tree up to 240 feet tall, limited use as shade tree.

8. Western hemlock (Tsuga heterophylla)
narrow leaf evergreen, very large tree up to 200+ feet tall, limited use as a shade tree.

9. Western yew (Taxus brevifolia)
narrow leaf evergreen, large tree up to 80 feet tall, use as accent plant.

10. Port Orford cedar (Chamaecyparis lawsoniana)
narrow leaf evergreen, large tree up to 180 feet tall, background tree, limited use.

11. Western red cedar (Thuja plicata)
narrow leaf evergreen, large tree up to 240 feet tall, limited use.

12. Grand fir (Abies grandis)
Narrow leaf evergreen, very large tree up to 240 feet tall, very limited use in parks.

13. Incense cedar (Lebocedrus decurrens)
evergreen, large tree up to 135 feet tall, very dense branching habit when grown in open sun.

ACCENT AND FLOWERING TREES

1. Madrone (Arbutus menziessi)
broad leaf evergreen, attractive red bark, can become large tree with short 3 to 4 foot diameter trunk, large spreading branches up to 100 feet tall.

2. Vine maple (Acer circinatum)
deciduous, small viney tree up to 20 feet tall, trunk may have twisted unusual growth forms, beautiful red fall foliage.

3. Chinquapin (Castanopsis Chrysophylla)
broad leaf evergreen, large tree up to 120 feet tall, nuts enclosed in spiny burs, many white blossoms on panicles, very odoriferous when in bloom.

4. Western Flowering dogwood (Cornus nuttallii)
deciduous tree up to 50 feet tall, large white blossoms and scarlet fruit.

LARGE SHRUBS OR SMALL TREES

1. Hazelbush (Corylus californica)
deciduous tall multistemmed shrub up to 18 feet tall, source of hazel nuts, good squirrel food plant.

2. Mountain ash (Sorbus sitchensis)
deciduous small tree or large shrub up to 20 feet tall, scarlet colored fruit, very showy in fall.

3. Serviceberry (Amelanchier florida)
large deciduous shrub up to 12 feet tall, white flowers, purple edible fruit.

4. Common evergreen huckleberry (Vaccinium ovatum)
evergreen broadleaf shrub, thick shiny green leaves, 3 to 8 feet tall.

5. Blue blossom (Ceanothus thynsiflorus)
broadleaf evergreen shrub or small tree, native SW Oregon to California in cold winters might winter kill; beautiful blue blossoms, up to 20 feet tall.

SHRUBS

1. Red flowering currant (Ribes sanguincum)
multi-slender stems, deciduous, 3-8 feet tall, very nice shrub.

2. Hardhack (Spirea douglasii)
erect shrub 3-6 feet tall, deciduous, bushy with reddish bark, flowers rose pink, pleasant fragrance.

3. Oceanspray (Holodiscus discolor)
shrub 3-6 feet tall, deciduous, creamy white flowers, in panicles.

4. Oregon Grape (Mahonia aquifolium)
evergreen, erect shrub 2-6 feet tall, bright green shiny leaves, showy creamy white flowers, blue grapelike edible fruit.

5. Snowberry (Symphoricarpus albus)
deciduous shrub 3-5 feet tall with white berries.

6. Manzanita (Arctostaphylos columbia)
evergreen shrub 2-9 feet tall, dark red or red-brown smooth polished bar. Stems attractive.

7. Rhododendron (Rhododendron macrophyluum)
evergreen shrub, 8-10 feet tall, with pink blossoms.

8. Common wild rose (Rosa nutkana)
deciduous shrub 2-5 feet tall, pink flowers with globose red fruit.

9. Redossier dogwood (Cornus stolonifera)
deciduous shrub, bright red young branches provide winter color, up to 8 feet tall.

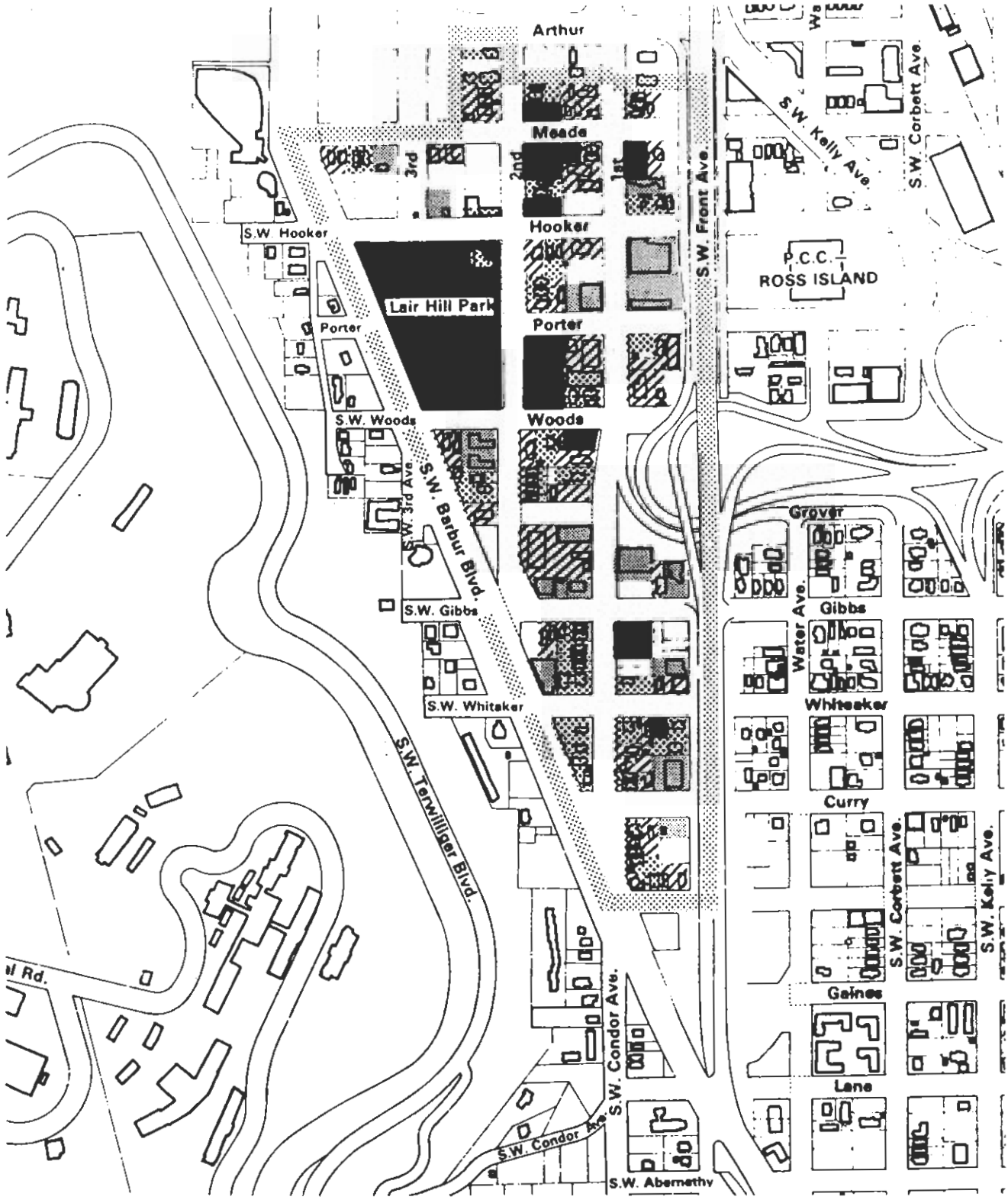
LOW GROWING SHRUBS-GROUND COVERS

1. Dwarf Oregon Grape (Mohonia repens)
evergreen dwarf shrubs with creeping root stocks, clusters of blue grapelike fruit, grows up to 18 inches tall, shade tolerant.

2. Kinnikinnic (Artostaphylos uva-ursi)
trailing prostrate stems, forms dense mats 3-6 inches tall, red or pink fruit, good low growing ground cover, broadleaf evergreen.

3. Salal (Gaultheria shallon)
evergreen broadleafed shrub that grows in dense thickets 1-5 feet tall, has creeping root stocks, good ground cover, shade tolerant.

4. Dwarf juniper (Juniper communis)
evergreen shrub, low prostrate forms make good ground cover or foundation plantings around building, native to Cascades.



Lair Hill

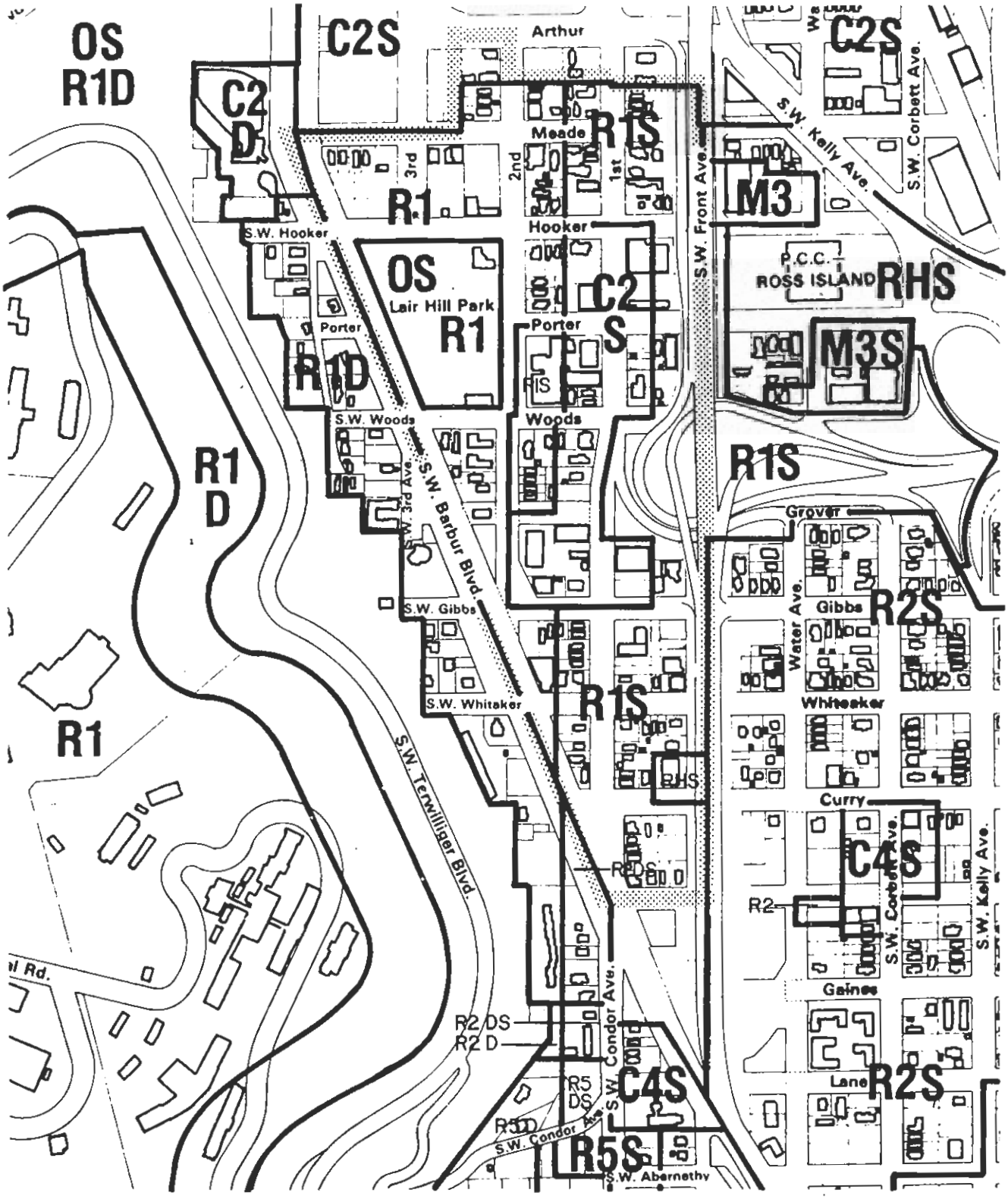
Conservation District

Portland Bureau of Planning
October, 1981.

N

400'

- Primary Historical Significance
- Secondary Historical Significance
- Buildings Compatible with District Character
- Buildings Non-Compatible with District Character



Lair Hill

Portland Bureau of Planning
October, 1981.

Zoning

Zoning pattern reflects zoning as per the Comprehensive Plan, effective January 1, 1980.

N

400'