

OPINION

theAstorian

editor@dailyastorian.com

Founded in 1873

KARI BORGEN
Publisher

DERRICK DePLEDGE
Editor

JEREMY FELDMAN
Circulation Manager

JOHN D. BRUIJN
Production Manager

CARL EARL
Systems Manager

GUEST COLUMN

Color makes for a vibrant downtown

Astoria’s downtown streetscapes are visibly brighter these days. The bold paint trend seemingly started on 11th Street, where parts of the Holmes Garage buildings became the saturated storefronts of Astoria Coffeehouse & Bistro, Cargo and Imogen Gallery. In downtown Astoria, beige and other neutral colors have lost favor over the past two decades. Dark shades and earth tones, with minimal contrast between body and trim, have become the new norm. However, vibrant hues are now spreading from the modern auto-centric buildings on 11th to the “high-style” historic architecture on Commercial Street.



RACHEL JENSEN

I am often startled when I see the paint colors chosen by building owners. My initial reaction is usually, at least in part, a product of personal association and nostalgia. My shock is quickly eclipsed by gratitude when I remember that the building’s owner is voluntarily investing in the maintenance of our community’s shared historic resources. Routinely painting a building is one of the most significant barriers to water intrusion — as paint fails, moisture creeps in. Adding new, fresh color to a building is a reversible way to awaken a sleepy storefront. As long as previously failing paint is gently removed between applications, colors can be changed repeatedly without substantial damage. When choosing colors for vacant buildings, owners try to predict what will attract and retain tenants. Businesses themselves often want the colors to reflect their products or services, and they aim to stop traffic, attract customers and differentiate themselves from the competition.

Colors chosen can affect the entire streetscape. They can complement or clash with neighboring buildings. These dynamics, including social pressure, can lead owners to make the safe and labor-saving decision of choosing a neutral, one color or two color paint scheme. Some of you will recall a presentation made by Michele Reeves of Civilis Consultants in 2013 as part of a downtown revitalization study contracted by Astoria Downtown Historic District Association. One useful tool Reeves used while gathering information about our community’s strengths and weaknesses involved word association. Although the term “historic” was often associated with Astoria’s character, when asked about desires for the future of Astoria, “colorful” and “vibrant” dominated as well. Reeves’s report stressed just how beige the entire downtown core had become and strongly recommended using three or four color paint schemes to help wake up the historic buildings and create visual interest. Historic buildings that contribute to excitement and vibrancy downtown



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

The colorful Odd Fellows Building in Astoria.

CHOOSING COLORS

Resources are available to help businesses and property owners choose colors based on historical information and people’s current needs to maintain and improve their historic buildings. For links to additional resources, visit lcp society.org

remain relevant to the community and less susceptible to demolition. To avoid a cacophony of colors and encourage a unified vision, some cities and neighborhood associations develop color guidance or even adopt restrictive paint ordinances. Of course, someone — usually a consulting designer — has to determine which colors are appropriate for an area. Several well-known color palettes, such as the pastel tints associated with Miami’s art deco areas, are not necessarily representative of authentic historic streetscapes. They have, however, helped to revitalize districts and promote preservation. Most of Astoria’s iconic downtown buildings were built in the 1920s, just after the Great Fire of 1922. This rebuilding period was eclectic in its architectural styles, and many of these buildings have since had dramatic facelifts. Some renovations have attained historical significance of their own, and additional periods of development have resulted in infill projects distinctly modern in design. Therefore, providing authentic, historical paint color guid-

ance for downtown Astoria would likely require consultation for each building individually. Scientific paint analysis would be necessary for those desiring to restore a building to its authentic original colors. Creatively chosen paint colors can highlight and minimize architectural details while not permanently destroying historical material. Nontraditional paint colors can help adapt a building without extreme structural changes. Regionally, we have seen a shift toward darker paint shades, charcoal, navy blue, olive, maroon and rust, with minimal contrast due to the addition of dark — often black — windows and doors. You can see examples of this trend at the Northwest Nash Building (Astoria Senior Center), the YMCA Building, the Maki Building (Vintage Hardware), the Fisher Building (Silver Salmon Grille), Lovell Auto Co. (Reach Break Brewing) and the Arcade Building (Fort George’s Lovell Showroom). Video Horizons recently relocated to the Duane Street side of the 1925 Woolworth/Piggly Wiggly Building and lived up the formerly beige building with some of the boldest colors in town. Bright blue and yellow recall the heyday of video rental chain stores, while bright orange coordinates with the neon Video Horizons sign moved from their previous location. Although people would not have used these bold colors in the 1920s, their current application does highlight architectural features that were barely visible during the building’s monochromatic past decade. Details in the orig-

inal brick veneer now stand out, a feature entirely obscured by large metal awnings on the building’s Commercial Street facade (Five Zero Trees). Another recent departure from traditional colors is the Odd Fellows Building (Astoria Arts and Movement Center) at 10th and Commercial, recently painted a slightly dusty purple with white raspberry, and lavender-gray trim. Although unusual for a Mediterranean inspired building, the new colors showcase the decorative details of architect Charles T. Diamond’s original design. In a Facebook post, co-owner Andrea Mazzarella expressed a desire not to have the building fade into the background, “It felt important to bring some color to our gray and beige corner of the world.” Additionally, she stated, purple is “the color that represents mystery, magic and creativity,” “symbolizes the feminine and feminism,” and “is historically associated with efforts to achieve gender equality.” A thoughtful color selection process can honor a building’s historic design while firmly asserting its new role in Astoria’s future. Whether you prefer light colors, muted earth tones or are on board with the bright new trends, paint is not permanent. Colors will continue to change as owners and tenants come and go. After all, a few of you will remember when the John Jacob Astor Hotel, Astoria’s tallest building, was still painted pink. Rachel Jensen is executive director of the Lower Columbia Preservation Society.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Blowing smoke

Lawyers weren’t just blowing smoke about a 2020 massive nationwide election fraud to steal President Donald Trump’s reelection in order to elect Joe Biden. Read the charges and evidence in the complaint just filed against Georgia officials filed in federal court in Georgia. Likewise, for the state of Michigan. Read the charges and evidence in the complaint just filed in the federal court in Michigan. Needless to say, the charges are about as serious as can be made for a democracy. If claims of such a massive election fraud are proved true, most folks will shake their heads at the shame of what the country has become. And what it will do to a major political party is anybody’s guess. No doubt such a massive nationwide fraud in the world’s greatest democracy will become the world’s crime of the century. DON HASKELL
Astoria

Did my vote count?

Did my vote count? If the 2020 election holds true, it will usher in a new era. What with Oregon leading the leftward lurch, Oregon’s future could prove quite interesting. Public beach access to the entire coastline, the Bottle Bill, vote by mail and now decriminalized big-time narcotics. Throw in a governor’s “power” to close businesses

whenever there’s a foul wind, and you have a state with more holes in it than a highway sign in Harney County. In Oregon politics sometimes you win, sometimes you lose, but lately you’ve been hosed. If my vote counted, I would vote for a change to the state motto from, “She flies with her own wings,” to the more appropriate, “That bird ain’t flying due to COVID-19 and/or Green New Deal restrictions.” I would also vote for the state capitol to be moved from Salem to Portland. With the way businesses are moving away from the Rose City, I’m sure office space can be leased on the cheap. Next, move the governor’s mansion to Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler’s vacated condominium (if available, so the governor can personally experience current policies produced by the state. I’m confident many Oregonians would vote for these changes, if they are sure their votes counted. Finally, I would vote to make the state prove my vote counted. Sure, you send your ballot in. It might even have been documented as “received.” But are you 100% sure it was “counted” correctly? If not, I’m flyin’ the bird. MATT JANES
Astoria

A somber year

The year is coming to a close. What a year it has been, with the virus and, of course, the election. The virus brings good



“You have to quarantine.”

KUPER

and bad news. The vaccines look really promising for 2021, and the election is almost over for a divided nation. The bad news is many, many people are still getting infected every day, and people are unnecessarily dying. I reflect on the year. It seems as if we lived in a past era of socialization and fun. All of a sudden everyone’s life has changed because of the virus. People have had to learn another lifestyle, of isolation. We have had to learn patience. Often we have not done well with the patience. As a licensed rational behavior (cognitive) therapist I believed in the facts of life that were presented — not superstition, or

fictional accounts of life. The disease is here. It is eventually going away by sticking together, sucking it up when we have to, and practicing good health procedures, such as vaccinations. For our sakes, let’s do this. We will lick it, but at what cost? Again, I would like to thank all the people involved in keeping us alive. I thank the health care workers, the security people, the store workers, the volunteers and the workers everywhere for keeping us safe. This is not politics. This is for young and old to live and have much better days. NORM HOOGE
Astoria