

Honorable Representative Kotek
HB 5005, HB 3526

The Port Orford Main Street Revitalization Association strongly urges the funding of HB 5005 relating to the lottery bond funding of HB 3526.

Port Orford is a small community on the Southern Oregon Coast with the distinction of being the oldest town on the Oregon coast. The community is suffering from the depressed south Oregon coast economy due to the collapse of the timber industry and the struggling, small commercial fishing fleet. The result is Port Orford has one of the highest rates of unemployment and economic decline within Oregon and minimal population growth. In the past five years, the City has seen many local businesses fail while a few new businesses have opened. The City government and services are severely underfunded.

Port Orford is blessed with some of the most outstanding natural resources on the Oregon coast with spectacular beaches, coastal headlands, ocean vistas and famous wild rivers. Tourism supports many local, small businesses such as restaurants and art galleries that continually fight to stay economically viable. One of the greatest resources within the community is a sense of volunteerism, pride and independence. The Port Orford library is a clear example of this citizen commitment which was constructed without taxpayer funds. More than 80% of children graduate from High School despite the fact more than half of children are eligible for a free lunch. Much of this success is due to volunteerism with programs including SMART, Art, and Aspire. Organizations and individuals give many scholarships to graduates.

Our volunteer transforming level Main Street Revitalization Association works tirelessly to turn Main Street around – a Main Street troubled with many vacant, derelict buildings and empty commercial lots. Although our organization works with the City of Port Orford, we formed our own 501c3 because the city has limited resources. Most of our projects have involved local donors and small grants from the Oregon Arts Commission, Coquille Tribal Community Foundation, and Curry County Cultural Coalition. These grants supported the creation and installation of art murals along the Main Street that capture the tourists interest, hide derelict buildings, and highlight the art community. The organization constructed artistic bicycle racks that serve the many cyclists on the scenic bike route, built decorative walls and planters along our sidewalks, and hold an annual town clean-up.

Our biggest challenge for the renewal and revitalization of our Main Street and downtown addressing derelict and vacant commercial buildings. The City of Port Orford and our Main Street Revitalization Association do not have adequate funds to address problem buildings. Several examples of buildings located in the central part of Main Street include:

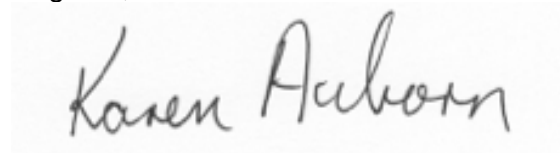
The Savoy Theater was a small movie theater built in 1937. It remained a theater until about 2 years ago with movies and special events. A fire damaged the inside of the building which has been gutted and cleaned up. The structure of the building is still in good shape. It is vacant and for sale. We would like to purchase and remodel the building for a performing arts center that we would transition to a separate organization. This could serve as a major social hub, catalyst for future downtown investment and a sense of pride for the community.

The nearby AuFranc Building housed a lawyer and a few other businesses. Although it was not built until 1978, it was never maintained and has partially collapsed resulting as

a major eyesore and economic blight within our downtown. Our Main Street Revitalization Association has camouflaged the building with murals that included building a fence on one side. We would like to obtain this property, demolish the building, and convert it into a pocket park in the center of town as a means to anchor local businesses with tourists and citizens.

The above brick and mortar projects are examples of grant applications that could really improve the appearance and economics of our Main Street.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen Auburn". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Karen Auburn
President, Port Orford Main Street Revitalization Association