



Portland General Electric Company

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City of Portland – Pre-Application Conference Request

Applicant: Portland General Electric Company
Project: Stephens Substation Building Demolition
Site: 1900 SE Water Avenue (R326733)
LU Action: Historic Landmark Demolition Review

Project Description

In 1985, the Stephens Substation Building and five other resources associated with Station L were nominated to the National Register of Historic Places as the “PGE Station L Group,” which was formally listed in the Register in December 1985 (NRIS #85003090). In 1986 PGE donated the Station L powerhouse and the buildings within the Station L Group located on 18.5 acres on the west side of Water Avenue to the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI). The Stephens Substation building, identified in the National Register documentation as resource L6 (Contributing), is the only historic structure within the PGE Station L Group located on the east side of Water Avenue and the only one remaining in PGE ownership. Generation at Station L ended in 1973 and the use of the Stephens Substation, an outdated indoor-type facility, was largely superseded by newer, outdoor, substation that remains active on the same parcel.

In 1986, when the National Register documentation was prepared, the Stephens Substation was largely vacant, save for the control room on the second floor, which continues to monitor the outdoor substation. Subsequently, the Stephens Substation building has been significantly hardened against vandalism (it was built within the secure Station L compound, prior to the extension of Water Avenue). This hardening required the removal of the original steel sash windows, with the openings in with concrete block and significantly reduced integrity. The interior retains some portion of abandoned electrical equipment, but the transformers have all been removed. The only operational element in the building is the modernized control panels on the upper floor, which still serve the active substation.

With its limited function, poor location for modern system needs, and existing PCB contamination, PGE has determined the most appropriate course of action is the demolition of the Stephens Substation building, subsequent to appropriate abatement, and to incorporate its footprint into its remaining substation property. The future of the Stephens Substation as a whole, surrounded by other, non-industrial, uses including OMSI and the Oregon Rail Heritage Center, is not clear but in no scenario does the Stephens Substation building have any likely proposed future use by PGE. The cost/difficulty and structural implications of abatement are believed to preclude any logical reuse of the structure for any other purpose.