

Guidelines for the Development of Historic Contexts in Wyoming

I. INTRODUCTION

A Historic Context identifies patterns or trends in history or prehistory by which a specific occurrence, property or site is understood and its meaning, and ultimately its significance, within history or prehistory is made clear.

Develop a Context Statement that will identify the concept or theme, time period and geographical limits of the historic context

1. The *theme* consists of a trend or development or a series of related trends or developments that occurred in the past. The historic context should describe one or more features of the prehistoric or historic development of an area, and identify patterns or trends that the historic and cultural resources represent.
2. The *geographical limits* of a theme define the physical boundaries of the historic context. These boundaries should be directly related to the theme, since its trends and developments occurred in specific areas and locations.
3. Prehistoric and historic developments passed through cycles of initial formation, growth, stability, decline, and abandonment. The beginning and end of one of these cycles should be used to mark the *chronological boundaries* of the theme.

II. CONTEXT METHODS

1. Discuss Methodology Used to Collect Information: Identify Sources (i.e., general literature/histories; social and environmental impact statements; county and State land use plans; architectural and folklife studies and oral histories; ethnographic research; State historic inventories and registers; technical reports prepared for Section 106 or other assessments of historic properties; photographs; and personal interviews with individuals and organizations.)

2. Define historic contexts using existing information, concepts, theories, models and descriptions. These should be used as the basis for defining historic contexts.

3. Identify biases in primary and secondary sources.

III. HISTORY OF PREVIOUS INVESTIGATIONS

1. Provide a summary of previous investigations if applicable.

2. Assess the information to identify biases in historic perspective, methodological approach, or area of coverage. Analyze the quality and reliability of the investigations.

3. Identify the location of collections of artifacts or materials from previous investigations. Discuss how these collections contribute to, or may contribute to, an understanding of the property type.

IV. OVERVIEW AND SYNTHESIS

Analyze the information collected and develop a written narrative that provides a detailed synthesis of the data. The narrative should cover the history of the area from the chosen perspective or theme and identify important patterns, events, persons or cultural values. In the process of identifying the important patterns, one should consider:

1. Cultural Chronology

2. Trends in area settlement and development and subsistence, if relevant

3. Population dynamics

4. Aesthetic and artistic values embodied in architecture, construction technology or craftsmanship

5. Research values or problems relevant to the historic context

6. Intangible cultural values of ethnic groups, including Native American peoples.

V. DEFINE KNOWN AND EXPECTED PROPERTY TYPES

A property type is a grouping of individual properties based on shared physical or associative characteristics. Property types link the ideas incorporated in the theoretical historic context with the actual properties that illustrate those ideas.

Property types defined for each historic context should be directly related to the conceptual basis of the historic context.

1. Identify property types: The narrative should discuss the kinds of properties known or expected within the geographical limits of the context and group them into those property types most useful in representing important historic trends.
2. Characterize the common features and material culture associated with each of the property types.
3. Characterize the locational patterns of property types: Generalizations about where particular types of properties are found or likely to be found will serve as a guide to identification and treatment.
4. Characterize the current condition of the property types: The expected condition of the property types should be evaluated to assist in the development of identification, evaluation and treatment strategies, and help to define physical integrity thresholds for various property types. The following should be assessed for each of the property types:
 - a) Inherent characteristics of a property type that either contribute to, or detract from, its physical preservation.
 - b) Aspects of the social and natural environment that may affect the preservation or visibility of the property type.
 - c) Estimate the condition of property types based on professional knowledge of existing properties.
5. Discuss the period of significance of the property type. The period of significance is the length of time when a property type was associated with important events, activities, or persons, or attained the characteristics which make it significant. Period of significance usually begins with the date when significant activities or events began giving the property type its historic significance. For prehistoric property types, the period of significance is the

broad span of time which is most likely to provide information; it is often the period associated with a particular cultural group (*National Register Bulletin #16A, How to Complete the National Register Registration Form*).

VI. IMPACTS AND THREATS TO THE RESOURCE

Some properties and/or property types in the historic context may be threatened by deterioration, land development patterns, contemporary use patterns, or public perceptions of their value, and such properties/property types should be given priority consideration. Property types include archaeological resources, ethnographic resources, historic structures, and cultural landscapes.

1. Discuss current land ownership that may threaten specific resources or the property types.
2. Discuss current land uses that may threaten specific resources or the property types.
3. Discuss public perception of the resource value.

VII. INFORMATION NEEDS

Identify data gaps and information needs. Statements regarding the information needed should be as specific as possible, focusing on the information needed, the historic context and property types it applies to, and why the information is needed to perform identification, evaluation, or treatment activities.

VIII. SIGNIFICANCE AND NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association (*National Register Bulletin 15, How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*).

1. Evaluate the property(ies) using the four National Register criteria:

- a. Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of history;
 - b. Associated with the lives of persons significant in our past;
 - c. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represents the work of a master, or that possesses high artistic values, or that represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction;
 - d. Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.
2. Examine the qualities of integrity and suggest ways each should be considered in relationship to the property types. A property need not possess all aspects of integrity in order to be considered eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.
 3. Evaluate comparative significance of historic and cultural resources based on those that can fill in data gaps and answer research questions. Provide recommendations as to thresholds for determining which resources merit expenditure of time and money for protection.

IX. FUTURE RESEARCH STRATEGIES

1. Identify Key Research Domains
2. Formulate Research Questions Based on Data Gaps
3. Discuss Future Research Strategies

X. GOALS, STRATEGIES AND PRIORITIES FOR MANAGEMENT

A goal is a statement of preferred activity, generally stated in terms of property types. Preservation goals can deal with a variety of historic and cultural resource needs, including identification, registration, and treatment, as well as addressing information needs, research, and interpretation.

Setting priorities for the goals is based on an examination of a number of factors, such as the conditions of individual resources; social, economic, political, and environmental conditions and trends affecting the resources; costs and technical considerations associated with resource identification, protection, and research; and the extent to which such work has already been carried out on resources associated with the historic context.

Establish goals and priorities for identifying, evaluating, registering, and treating historic properties with shared characteristics.

XI. REFERENCES CITED

XII. APPENDICES (as appropriate)

* The Wyoming Guidelines are based on the standards and guidelines outlined in the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Preservation Planning*. Please refer to the Secretary's *Standards* for additional information.