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HISTORIC CONTEXTS

INTRODUCTION

Historic contexts are themes that characterize the pre-history or history of a subject and place it in perspective. Such themes can embrace a wide variety of events, eras, patterns of development, notable individuals, architectural designs, and other fields of human endeavor. Historic contexts can focus on the local, statewide, or the national scene, and combinations of them. An examination of historic contexts aids in the identification and evaluation of property types, which call attention to them and possess significance for that reason.

Significance within the National Register of Historic Places program (the program widely used across the nation and in Ames for the identification and evaluation of historic resources) derives from the following criteria:

- A. Association with events, activities, or patterns
- B. Association with important persons
- C. Distinctive physical characteristics of design, construction, or form
- D. Potential to yield important information.

Criterion A deals with broad themes of history (such as industry, education, transportation, or community planning); with significant events associated with them; and with eras of development, such as the Progressive era in the Midwest. Criterion B deals with the lives of individuals with local, state, or national importance and their contributions to their communities. Criterion C deals chiefly with architecture and landscape architecture and those responsible for its shaping. Criterion D deals with buried deposits of materials whose study can provide information of importance. This criterion is frequently used for the study of prehistoric Native American cultures and the remains of historic properties.

Coupled with historic integrity (the survival of those physical elements of a property, which convey its significance), historic contexts and historic significance provide the framework to determine whether a property is National Register eligible.

HISTORIC CONTEXTS IN AMES

Over the last 20 years, a series of cultural resources surveys have studied the history of Ames and identified significant historic contexts within it. The first of these studies, completed in 1992, intensively surveyed Downtown Ames and surveyed in reconnaissance fashion the rest of the city's corporate limits as they existed in 1943, corresponding with the National Register's 50-year rule at the time. (Page 1992)

In addition to developing certain historic contexts for this development, this report also identified the following four eras of development that shaped it.

PATTERNS OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Founding and First Growth (1864-1891)
The Progressive Era in Ames (1891-1918)
Boom Time for Ames (1918-1941)
Ames at War and Peace (1941 and Beyond)

Referring to this report will flesh out the reasons for this periodization.

Subsequent historic preservation studies in Ames have generally employed these eras of development to orient a specific resource within the broader context of the city's history.

The same 1992 report also identified and developed a number of historic contexts. They, and additional survey work, have outlined a wide range of themes. These historic contexts include the following:

Commerce and the Development of Ames

Identified N.R. Criteria	A and C
Survey Source	<i>Historical and Architectural Resources of Ames, Iowa</i> ; Vol. I. (Page 1992)
Notes	Intensive survey of Downtown Ames with two sub-contexts: The Development of Commerce in Downtown Ames Commercial Building Design in Ames

Ames, Iowa: A Laboratory for Education

Identified N.R. Criteria	A and C
Survey Source	<i>Historical and Architectural Resources of Ames, Iowa</i> ; Vol. II. (Page 1992)
Notes	Reconnaissance survey, including the college, university, and community schools

Transportation and the Development of Ames

Identified N.R. Criteria	A and C
Survey Source	<i>Historical and Architectural Resources of Ames, Iowa</i> ; Vol. II. (Page 1992)
Notes	Reconnaissance survey, including the railroads, "Dinky," interurban, and automobile and their effects

Civics: Government and Public Participation Improve the Community

Identified N.R. Criteria	A and C
Survey Source	<i>Historical and Architectural Resources of Ames, Iowa</i> ; Vol. II. (Page 1992)
Notes	Reconnaissance survey, including brief discussion of potential Civic Corridor Historic District

The Notables of Ames: Academic and Commercial Elites

Identified N.R. Criteria	B
Survey Source	<i>Historical and Architectural Resources of Ames, Iowa</i> ; Vol. II. (Page 1992)
Notes	Biographical sketches representative of individuals who lead significant careers

Housing the Town and Gown: The Variety of Architecture

Identified N.R. Criteria	C
Survey Source	<i>Historical and Architectural Resources of Ames, Iowa</i> ; Vol. II. (Page 1992)
Notes	Reconnaissance survey of Ames with eight sub-contexts: Architects: Interpreters of Design The Contractor-Builders of Ames Community in Nature Suburban Growth in Ames Style, Function, Materials Ames Applies Science and Technology Housing the Faith: The Architecture of Religion Green Hills for Thy Throne: The Collegiate Architecture of Ames Addresses for Greek Letters: Fraternity and Sorority Architecture

Dream of Arcadia: Designed Historic Landscapes in Ames

Identified N.R. Criteria	C
Survey Source	<i>Historical and Architectural Resources of Ames, Iowa</i> ; Vol. II. (Page 1992)
Notes	Includes publicly and privately owned property

The National Park Service has approved a Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPD) entitled *A Home for Science and Technology: Ames, Iowa, 1864-1941*. (Page 2003a) This document recast the above historic contexts and established them as recognized working tools for the further study and evaluation of historic resources in Ames. A National Register of Historic Places nomination of the Old Town Historic District was submitted to the National Park Service at the same time as this MPD and as one property type under it. The Old Town Historic District was listed on the National Register on January 2, 2004. As a format, the MPD is intended to serve as an umbrella under which individual properties and historic districts can be shown to possess significance and, hence, National Register listed in an efficient fashion without the need for exhaustive justification each time.

Since that time, the following reconnaissance and intensive surveys have expanded these historic contexts.

Fourth Ward, Ames, Iowa

Identified N.R. Criteria	A, B, C
Survey Source	<i>Fourth Ward, Ames, Iowa.</i> (Page 2007)
Notes	Reconnaissance survey of West Ames with ten sub-contexts: Splendid Isolation Fourth Ward Emerges and Booms Fourth Ward Flourishes West Gate South Side Community Lifeways Transportation Greek Letters at Iowa State Architecture and Landscape Architecture

College Heights, Ames, Iowa

Identified N.R. Criteria	A, B, C
Survey Source	<i>College Heights, Ames, Iowa.</i> (Page 2009)
Notes	Intensive survey of West Ames with four sub-contexts: 80 Acres of Land—The Shaping & Acquisition of College Heights Improvements Fill the Plat Garden Suburb Architecture

The reader wishing more information about any of these historic contexts can find it in the reports identified. All of these materials are available for reference at the City of Ames Planning and Housing Department, Ames Public Library, and State Historical Society of Iowa.

These historic contexts only begin to categorize subjects within the history of Ames. It is expected that as the study of this subject progresses, other historic contexts will be identified, developed, refined, and employed to identify, evaluate, and preserve the community's historic properties.