



June 15, 2019

Rapid City Historic Preservation Commission

Draft Updated Historic Context Report

“Our History, Our Future: An Updated Historic Context Report for the Rapid City Historic Preservation Commission (2019)”

Overview

The Rapid City Historic Preservation Commission (RCHPC) has engaged Vantage Point Historical Services, Inc. (VPHS) to assist in updating its Historic Context Report and Comprehensive Plan. Following preliminary research, two community outreach sessions, and consultation with a CRM specialist at Ethnoscience, Inc., we developed this draft of the proposed updates to the RCHPC’s Historic Context Report. It fulfills a key deliverable for Phase I of this project.

Please keep in mind that this is a rough working document. We hope the updated Historic Context Report will build upon existing frameworks by expanding the lens through which the RCHPC understands the history of Rapid City. Accordingly, this document describes two broad categories of historic sites and spaces: 1) existing entries to the National Register of Historic Places and/or places that meet the national register’s eligibility criteria; and 2) places that, while either ineligible for national register status or unlikely to be submitted for registration, contribute to a sense of place and the broader, historical and cultural character of Rapid City including landscape elements, parts of the built environment not traditionally considered “historic,” places of cultural significance, community assets like cultural institutions and archival/object collections, and more. Documenting these historical assets will enhance the RCHPC’s understanding of the many ways that residents and visitors understand Rapid City’s history and empower the commission to become a catalyst in the process of helping people find meaning in the past.

Acknowledgement of Grant Funding

This program receives Federal Financial assistance from the National Park Service. Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the American With Disabilities Act of 1990, and South Dakota law SDCL 20-13, the State of South Dakota and U. S. Department of the Interior prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, sex, disability, ancestry or national origin. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility as described above, or if you desire further information, please write to: South Dakota Division of Human Rights, State Capital, Pierre, SD 57501, or the Office of Equal Opportunity, National Park Service, 201 I Street NW, Washington, D. C. 20240.

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[TBD: Figures will be included in final Historic Context Report]

Section A. Executive Summary

[TBD: The executive summary will be included in the final Historic Context Report.]

Section B. Introduction and Contemporary Community Profile

Introduction and Project Overview

In 1975, the City of Rapid City created the Rapid City Historic Preservation Commission (RCHPC), tasking it with identifying and managing the community's historic resources in concert with appropriate state and federal guidelines, standards, and laws. The RCHPC commissioned the city's first Historic Context Planning Document, which was completed and released in 1989. Amended to reflect successive updates to the RCHPC's Comprehensive Plan or evolutions in the statewide historical contexts produced by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the Context Planning Document has remained substantially unchanged for thirty years.

Given the growth of Rapid City, changes in the economy and character of the community, and the evolution of the city's built environment over the last three decades, as well as the need to address future planning concerns, the RCHPC undertook a major revision of the Historic Context Planning Document in 2019. This report is not intended as a stand-alone asset. Rather, it has been developed to be used in concert with the RCHPC's updated, 2019 Comprehensive Plan. Working together, these two documents build upon previous plans to help the RCHPC identify and preserve historic properties, promote the value of history and historic preservation to the Rapid City community, and integrate its work with broader municipal goals outlined in Rapid City's Comprehensive Plan (2014), Downtown Area Master Plan (2016), and Cultural Resources Plan (2016).

This report is designed to comply with state and federal rules pertaining to historic preservation. It also seeks to supplement existing frameworks and help the RCHPC define a broader, more inclusive approach to the preservation and interpretation of historic places and properties in Rapid City. To achieve this goal, this document relies upon the existing, formal definitions of historic properties provided by the National Parks Service. (For an overview of these definitions, see the RCHPC's 2019 Comprehensive Plan). But it also draws on new approaches to historic preservation and heritage planning to identify and assess landscapes, waterscapes, and other pieces of Rapid City's cultural mosaic that—although not necessarily eligible for historic preservation as traditionally practiced—contribute substantially to the community's history and culture.¹

¹ See for example "Pursuing a Historic Urban Landscape Approach to Heritage in Edmonton: Evolving Report," City of Edmonton, Alberta, CA, June 14, 2018; "New Life for Historic Cities: The Historic Urban Landscape Approach Explained," UNESCO, 2011.

About Rapid City

Environmental Profile

Rapid City sits on the eastern edge of the Black Hills, which are known to area Lakotas as *He Sapa* or *Paha Sapa*. Centrally located in Pennington County, where Interstate 90 encounters the Black Hills from the eastern plains, Rapid City is a convenient gateway for visitors hoping to explore the limestone canyons of the Northern Hills or the granite spires of the Southern Hills. For this reason, Rapid City was long known as the “Gate City,” although it has recently been rebranded as the “Star of the West” or the “City of Presidents.”

The Black Hills are a geological aberration. They consist of a granite core that rose and cracked through the limestone surface during the Precambrian period some 2.5 billion years ago. This uplift built a small mountain range out of the vast prairies of the Northern Plains. A ring of limestone surrounds this central, granite uplift, and a mix of limestones, sandstones, and shales extend outward until the edge of the Black Hills meets the prairie. Rapid City straddles this boundary where a ring of limestone and reddish clay encircle the Black Hills. According to Lakota oral traditions, this ring served as the track upon which animals participated in the “Great Race” that gave shape to *He Sapa*. Beyond the racetrack, the Black Hills are surrounded by hundreds of miles of semiarid open prairie in every direction.

[Geological Map of the Black Hills TBD]

This geological history gives the Black Hills unique climatological and short-term weather patterns. Rapid City sits at 44.0805 degrees north latitude/103.2310 degrees west longitude. Most of the town is between 3,200 and 3,500 feet above sea level. Rapid City residents experience all four seasons, which are punctuated by sudden and dramatic changes. Cold, windy winters oscillate between deep cold and snow, and warm, sunny days within a short period. Spring often lasts until late April or early June, with heavy snow possible into late May or beyond. Summers are often hot and dry but punctuated by regular mid-afternoon thunderstorms. Autumn can begin as early as mid-September and remain for months. In some years, snow falls well before the end of October.

[Table with average temperatures and precipitation TBD]

Rapid City is spread out over approximately 55 square miles. This landscape includes hilly, rugged terrain as well as rolling hills and flat, open prairies. There are no large, natural lakes in or near the city; all major Black Hills lakes are manmade, while a number of runoff and spring-fed streams flow through or near town. Rapid Creek (*Mniłusa* in Lakota) passes through the center of town and feeds water to Rapid City from the Pactola Reservoir, a large, manmade lake located approximately 20 miles west of town. The creek bisects Rapid City along an east-west axis, while a pair of hogback ridges bisect the city along a north-

south axis. The area between the vertex of these ridges, where the creek passes through, is known as “the Gap.” For generations residents and visitors have traveled between the east and west sides of town through the Gap. Today, three thoroughfares: West Main Street, St. Joseph Street, and Omaha Street, as well as the bike trail traverse this historic passageway between the hills.

[Map and images of Rapid City TBD]

The landscapes and waterscapes in and around Rapid City are crucial to the history and culture of the community. Evergreen trees like ponderosa pines and spruces, as well as large deciduous trees like cottonwoods and tall prairie grasses, join sandstone and limestone cliffs and Rapid Creek to create the natural aesthetic of Rapid City. All of these elements played integral parts in the lives of early Native peoples and non-Native settlers alike. Over generations, this landscape has also been transformed to manage the flow of water through Rapid Creek, create Canyon Lake, and provide for the construction of homes, factories, office buildings, schools, stores, and other structures. It has also been changed by the introduction of non-native plants and animals, as well as the elimination of some species, including predators. Over many years, these qualities of nature and culture have combined to inspire the area’s architecture and landscape, contributing to the overall aesthetic of Rapid City while reinforcing human connections to land and place.

Contemporary Community Profile

As of 2018, just over 75,000 people lived inside the city limits of Rapid City. This makes it the second largest city in South Dakota by a considerable margin. (The largest city in the state, Sioux Falls, has about 181,000 residents, while the third largest city, Aberdeen, has just over 28,000).² Rapid City is also the largest city in the broader region including western South Dakota, eastern Wyoming, southeast Montana, and northeastern Nebraska.

Yet a 2018 housing study conducted by the Black Hills Knowledge Network suggests that, a more realistic count of Rapid City’s population sits around 95,000 people. This expanded number includes about 20,000 people who live within a broader housing market area that includes the residents of Rapid Valley, Box Elder, Ellsworth Air Force Base, and those in nearby rural neighborhoods outside Rapid City’s limits—many of whom work in or visit Rapid City on a regular basis, and could therefore be considered members of the community for the purposes of historical, cultural, and heritage planning purposes.³

² <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/SD>

³ BHKN Housing Study, 10-12. Meanwhile, the U.S. Census Bureau considers the Rapid City Metropolitan Statistical Area to include all of Pennington, Meade, and Custer Counties. Altogether, these areas now have close to 140,000 residents. But much of this area is very rural, including small ranching towns like Union Center, which sits some 65 miles northeast of Rapid City in a very remote area.

Using the BHKCN's estimate of about 94,245 people in 2016, the following statistics offer a snapshot of contemporary Rapid City. Roughly 85 percent of the population identifies as white, 15 percent as Native American, and 7 percent as Latino, African American, or as part of another group. (Because BHKCN respondents could select more than one racial group with which they identified, this total is more than 100 percent.) A study by the University of South Dakota, however, suggests that, given the frequency with which Native people travel between Rapid City and area reservations, the actual percentage of Native people in Rapid City could be as high as 26 percent on a given day.⁴ Most of the population is concentrated in the city's urban core, with lower density in the rural areas outside town. Meanwhile, Rapid City was home to 22,989 families who lived in 36,806 households in 2016.⁵

Overall, the population of the Rapid City metropolitan area is rapidly aging as a result of declining birthrates in the 1990s, the natural aging of the resident population, and an influx of retirees. Between 2000 and 2017, the percentage of the population over the age of 65 rose from 11.5 percent to 17.5 percent.⁶ This growth rate outpaced the Sioux Falls metropolitan area and the state of South Dakota and reflected one of the fastest shifts of any metropolitan area in the country.⁷

The Rapid City economy centers around the tourism and service industries, retail sales, agriculture, professional services, healthcare, and Ellsworth Air Force Base. Over the last two decades, the community has sustained a very modest level of economic growth. Between 2002 and 2016, the total gross domestic product of the Rapid City Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) grew on an inflation-adjusted basis from \$5.2 billion to \$5.6 billion, or less than 8 percent.⁸ This growth lagged the average for most metropolitan areas in the Northern Plains and Rocky Mountain regions, as well as the nation as a whole. Many factors explain this slow rate of growth, including geographic isolation, a historic reliance on low wage industries like retail and wholesale trade and tourism, and a relative lack of manufacturing.

Since the end of the Great Recession in 2010 median household incomes in Rapid City have decreased on an inflation-adjusted basis from \$50,242 to \$48,895 in 2017.⁹ This decline took place even as median incomes grew by 7.8 percent across South Dakota and by 4.6 percent nationally during the same period.¹⁰ Statistics for real personal income show that

⁴ <https://www.southdakotadashboard.org/11010-researcher-estimates-rapid-city-native-american-population-at-25>; Braunstein, Richard, and Schantz, Tobias. Rapid City Police Department and the Native Community in Rapid City: Examining Policing Trends, Community Opinions and Best Practices, 88. Agency Report for the Rapid City Police Department, 2015.

⁵ BHKCN Housing Study, 10–15; RC 2014 Comprehensive Plan, 15.

⁶ US Census data provided by the South Dakota Dashboard. Note, this increase means that the actual population of individuals 65 years and older has nearly doubled.

⁷ Joel Kotkin, "America's Senior Moment: The Most Rapidly Aging Cities," *Forbes*, February 16, 2016.

⁸ US Bureau of Economic Analysis. Data provided by the South Dakota Dashboard.

⁹ <https://www.southdakotadashboard.org/incomes/median-income>

¹⁰ BHKCN Housing Study, 18.

residents of the Rapid City MSA saw significant growth in per capita personal income from 2013 to 2015, with a rise from \$44,897 to \$49,195 in 2015, but this growth stalled over the next two years as incomes increased only modestly to \$49,604 in 2017.¹¹ According to the BHKN, “16.8 percent of the market area population lived below the poverty line.” This figure was higher than the statewide poverty rate (10.3 percent) and was higher than the totals for the surrounding area.¹² The poverty rate, moreover, was disproportionately high for Native Americans, 43.3 percent of whom lived beneath the poverty line compared to 13.2 percent for whites.¹³

While incomes and gross domestic product have grown slowly, property owners in Rapid City have enjoyed a significant enhancement of their collective wealth since the Great Recession. Since 2012, the value of all taxable property in the Rapid City Area School District, for example, has increased 31.6 percent, from \$5.7 billion to \$7.5 billion.¹⁴ This increase reflects a number of factors, including a general rise in home and commercial real estate values across the country, new local investment in residential and commercial construction, and growing demand for housing and commercial space.

History is an important factor in understanding all of these social and economic conditions including the conquest and forced relocation of Native communities in the 19th century, the emergence of the city as an important retail and wholesale trading center for an extended agricultural and mining region, the development of the tourism industry in the Black Hills in the early part of the 20th century, and the opening of the Rapid City Air Base (Later Ellsworth) during World War II. These components of the city’s economic history will undoubtedly be important in the future. Building off of them will depend, in part, on a knowledge of the past.

[Tables showing population (over time) and socioeconomic data for Rapid City TBD]

While many communities in Western South Dakota have experienced slow growth or population decline as a result of agricultural consolidation, the population of Rapid City has grown by an average of about one percent per year. To accommodate this growth, since the release of the 1989 Historic Context Planning Document, the community has steadily pursued upgrades and expansions to pedestrian, bicycle, and public transportation routes and airport, railroad, and trucking facilities. The Rapid City Area School District, the second largest district in the state, includes 15 elementary schools, 5 middle schools, and 3 high schools. Many families, however, choose other options for educating their children. The

¹¹<https://apps.bea.gov/iTable/iTable.cfm?acrdn=8&isuri=1&reqid=70&step=1#acrdn=8&isuri=1&reqid=70&step=1>

¹² BHKN Housing Study, 15.

¹³ BHKN Housing Study, 16.

¹⁴ These are nominal figures. Adjusted for inflation, the increase in value is equal to 20.6 percent. Rapid City Area Schools, Board of Education Preliminary Budget Presentation, May 13, 2019. For inflation adjustment, see Minneapolis Federal Reserve Bank “What is a dollar worth?” calculator.

number of students in the district who are being homeschooled, for example, has more than doubled, from 333 in 2010 to 693 in 2018.¹⁵ In addition, the community is home to various private, religiously-based elementary, middle, and high school alternatives.¹⁶ City residents can receive post-secondary education at the South Dakota School of Mines & Technology, Black Hills State University-Rapid City, Western Dakota Technical Institute, Oglala Lakota College, and through nursing and extension programs offered by the University of South Dakota and South Dakota State University. In addition, some residents pursue degrees and certifications through a host of online programs offered by institutions throughout the world. Rapid City also has a Career Learning Center and three public libraries.¹⁷

Overall, the Rapid City market area's education attainment levels were slightly lower than the South Dakota average and markedly behind trends for the Sioux Falls metropolitan area. In the BHKN's Rapid City market area in 2016, 5 percent of residents had attended high school but never obtained a high school diploma or GED; 29 percent had a high school diploma or GED; 26 percent attended but did not complete college; 11 percent earned an associate's degree; 18 percent held a bachelor's degree, and 8 percent held a graduate or professional degree.¹⁸

The city also offers a variety of parks and amenities. As of 2014, the community had 32 parks comprising 735.3 acres; 23 special use areas spread over 416 acres including golf courses, soccer fields, a polo grounds, three sports and recreation complexes, and a museum; 21 greenways or natural areas covering 236 acres including dozens of miles of hiking and biking trails (another, 150-acre trail system in the Skyline Wilderness Area was developed beginning in 2014). Perhaps most significantly, Rapid City undertook a downtown revitalization program during the 2000s and 2010s, installing a multi-use entertainment and shopping plaza known as "Main Street Square" and promoting renovations and adaptive reuse of bars, restaurants, and stores throughout the downtown area.¹⁹

[Maps and images showing parks, amenities, and historic districts TBD]

Rapid City has grown steadily over the last thirty years. To accommodate future growth, the community has laid plans for further investment in infrastructure to enhance the quality of life for all community members through education, opportunity, and inclusivity. A robust and thoughtful plan for identifying and promoting the community's historic and cultural assets can help Rapid City achieve these goals.

¹⁵ South Dakota Department of Education. Data aggregated by South Dakota Kids Count. <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/9138-school-district-home-school-enrollment?loc=43&loct=10#detailed/10/11033-11182/false/37,871,870,573,869,36,868,867,133/any/18151>

¹⁶ RC 2014 Comprehensive Plan, "Plan Rapid City," A-8.

¹⁷ RC 2014 Comprehensive Plan, "Plan Rapid City," A-9.

¹⁸ BHKN Housing Study, 14.

¹⁹ RC 2014 Comprehensive Plan, "Plan Rapid City," A-17–A-25; "Skyline Wilderness Area, Rapid City, SD," VisitRapidCity.com.

Section C. Brief Overview of Rapid City's History

Early Indigenous Presence: ~ to 1875

The area now known as Rapid City has been home to Native Americans for at least 12,000 years. Lakota oral traditions place the creation of the *Oceti Sakowin* (“People of the Seven Council Fires,” often called the “Great Sioux Nation”) at Wind Cave (*Wasun Nija*) in the southern Black Hills somewhere in the deep past. Archaeological evidence, meanwhile, shows that the Black Hills region—including portions of central Rapid City—were commonly-used meeting and passing places for a variety of Native groups over the course of many centuries. By the early 19th century, these included members of Ponca, Cheyenne, Lakota, Arapaho, Crow, and other tribes, while members of many others likely visited the area as part of extensive Indigenous trade networks.

Empowered by strong horse cultures characterized by raiding and hunting, Lakotas became the dominant group in and around the Black Hills around 1750. In 1851 and 1868, the U.S. government and Native leaders negotiated treaties preserving tribal rights to land across the Northern Plains. The 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty deemed all of what is now western South Dakota as the “Great Sioux Reservation.”

Hay Camp: 1876 to 1918

Rumors of rich gold deposits in the Black Hills had circulated among non-Native trappers and traders since at least the 1830s. When a U.S. army expedition discovered gold near French Creek in the southern hills in 1874, the word spread quickly. By late 1875, ambitious gold miners were flocking to the Black Hills where they established boomtowns like Deadwood in direct violation of the 1868 treaty. Unable to find gold, a group of non-Natives established Rapid City in 1876. Originally known as Hay Camp, the town sat at the vertex of Rapid Creek and the two hogback ridges that divide Rapid City, in a spot that had been used by untold generations of Native travelers.

Due to its location and the easy availability of water and grasses, Hay Camp quickly grew into a prominent stopover for travelers taking eastern stagecoaches to the Black Hills. Local entrepreneurs turned it into a supply station for ox teams and weary travelers. Following tension and violence between the U.S. military and area Lakotas who sought to defend their treaty lands from white encroachment, the U.S. government enacted the so-called “Manypenny Agreement” in 1877, which formally removed the Black Hills from the 1868 treaty area. Shortly thereafter, officials in Dakota Territory organized Pennington County and named Rapid City as its seat.

The sister mining towns of Lead/Deadwood remained the most populous and prosperous communities in the area over the next several decades, while Rapid City grew in fits and starts. During the 1890s, for example, the city's population declined from 2,128 to

1,342. The establishment of the Dakota School of Mines (South Dakota School of Mines & Technology) in 1885 and the arrival of the city's first railroad the next year set the stage for future growth. Meanwhile, a series of decisions by the federal government reduced the Great Sioux Reservation, pushed Native peoples onto much smaller reservations and individual allotments, and opened up the West River territory to white homesteaders.

Over the next several decades, as immigrants flowed into western South Dakota, Rapid City's importance as a retail and whole trading center supporting this agricultural and mining hinterland continued to grow. By 1910, the city's population had increased to 3,854. Most of these residents were native-born Americans. Only a small percentage were foreign-born. Protestants of various denominations accounted for the largest block of Christians, but there were more Catholics than any other single denomination. Significantly, there were very few Native residents of Rapid City during these early years, primarily because of federal regulations requiring that Native Americans remain on reservations unless they received the express permission of reservation superintendents. Even with these rules in place, however, some Native families did travel to Rapid City, usually to visit or live near their children, many of whom were taken to the Rapid City Indian School, which opened in 1898.

Perhaps the most significant development in the city's economic history began in the 1890s, when the newly created Black Hills National Forest started to become a tourist destination. In the first years of the 20th century, Rapid City continued to grow due to its geographical position, both in terms of its status as an access point for visitors entering the Black Hills and for its ability to ship minerals, lumber, and other raw materials to broader markets.

Depression and War: 1918 to 1945

Rapid City's population increased significantly in the decade of the 1910s, as various agricultural crises led some West River homesteaders to abandon their claims and seek employment in the city. For the first time, the city's population grew while the population of Pennington County declined. This population growth was fueled by the steady expansion of the Black Hills tourism economy, which received significant support from state and federal investments in infrastructure. New state and national parks and monuments like Wind Cave National Park (1903); Jewel Cave National Monument (1908); Custer State Park (1912); Badlands National Park (1939); and Mount Rushmore National Memorial (dedicated 1927, completed 1941) offered a variety of destinations for tourists. Meanwhile, the National Forest Service developed recreation areas, and a host of entrepreneurs opened businesses to provide meals, lodging and entertainment to visitors. President Coolidge's decision to move his summer White House to Custer State Park in 1927 helped publicize the region's attractions.

Rapid City overtook Lead/Deadwood as the largest city in the region by the 1930 census. As the Great Depression ravaged the regional agricultural economy, farmers and

ranchers once again moved to town looking for work. Even in town, however, economic conditions were difficult. Nearly three quarters of the population in the late 1920s did not own their own home. Many subsisted by working in the tourism industry during the summer, which was fueled by Depression-era state and federal investments in parks (like Dinosaur Park), roads (like Iron Mountain Road), utilities and infrastructure (like highways, rural electrification, and a state cement plant opened in Rapid City in 1924). Federal relief programs during the Depression helped provide jobs through the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Works Projects Administration, which hired artists and writers (who produced promotional materials like the *WPA Guide to South Dakota*).

As the United States geared up for World War II, the Rapid City Army Air Base opened in 1942, bringing a lasting, federal boon to the population and economy of Rapid City. The base also brought the city's first significant population of African Americans as part of the Quartermaster Corps.

During the war and afterwards, Rapid City's economy expanded. As a burgeoning destination and regional hub, the community continued to be a central shipping point for minerals, raw materials, industrial, and meatpacking industries. It also offered banks, hospitals, department stores, and auto dealerships that defined early-20th century life. The community continued to be home to a predominately white and native population, the majority of whom had been born in either South Dakota or neighboring states. The Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 (which made all Native Americans U.S. citizens and removed off-reservation travel restrictions) and wartime industry combined to reintroduce Native peoples—primarily Lakotas from nearby reservations—to town. Most Rapid City businesses and non-Native neighborhoods filled the downtown and the conventional, grid-style street system that surrounded it. Meanwhile, local Native Americans lived at the community's periphery in a series of small, makeshift camps along Rapid Creek or in other sectors of town.

Expanding Rapid City: 1945 to 1972

Like many communities across the United States, Rapid City enjoyed the post-war economic boom. After closing briefly immediately after World War II, the Rapid City Army Air Base (which was renamed Ellsworth Air Force Base 1953) became a major training base and bomber wing for the U.S. Air Force. The base was a key headquarters for the Strategic Air Command during the Cold War. With its eyes toward growth, Rapid City developed its first comprehensive plan in 1949. Housing was a primary concern, since the reopening of the base promised to bring high demand. In response, the city underwent a rapid expansion, packing neighborhoods in the south, north, and west sides of town with single-family, ranch-style homes and multi-family apartment buildings.

Through the 1950s and 1960s, the community continued to focus on growth. By the mid-1960s, the city had commissioned new urban design plans and outlined a strategy for

redeveloping the downtown corridor to better accommodate traffic patterns and encourage Black Hills visitors to stop in town and spend some time and money at local businesses. Although the community lacked the funds to immediately execute these plans, it took initial steps at downtown redevelopment and planning in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The development and expansion of the Rapid City economy often did not reach the community's Native American population. Although the tourism economy had long marketed and sold Native history, art, and culture, often without engaging Native entrepreneurs in the process, opportunities for Native people to receive training and education or access capital needed to launch and sustain businesses were limited. Meanwhile, several urban development and beautification initiatives displaced members of the Native community, relocating many of them to substandard housing developments far from the downtown corridor.

Flood and Rebuilding: 1972 to 2000

A devastating flood in June 1972 altered the course of Rapid City's history. Torrential rains flooded Rapid Creek, rupturing the dam at Canyon Lake on the west side of town. The resulting deluge wiped out most of the homes and businesses along the banks of the creek, killing 238 people and displacing many more. Although often remembered for the immense tragedy it inflicted upon the community, the flood proved a critical turning point for the city. Flush with federal disaster relief funding, the city was able to invest in rezoning and rebuilding much of what had been lost to the floodwaters.

Over the course of the 1970s and 1980s, Rapid City saw the creation of a new Rapid City Public Library and a fine arts center; the completion of Interstate 90 and the redesign of the downtown corridor; the consolidation of two hospitals into one major regional healthcare center; the development of a downtown civic center to host trade shows, concerts, and other events; expansions to Rapid City Regional Airport; the construction of a new downtown high school; the implementation of a greenway plan that replaced the buildings along Rapid Creek with miles of bike paths, golf courses, and parks; and the opening of a major shopping mall on the north side of Interstate 90.

Race relations continued to present deep challenges to the Rapid City community. In the early 1970s, Rapid City was one of several towns that became the setting for dramatic showdowns between Native American activists and non-Native law enforcement officers. These confrontations culminated in the standoff at Wounded Knee in early 1973. Violence and contention continued throughout the 1970s, straining relations between Native and non-Native people across West River. By the early 1990s, efforts to open a museum that emphasized Native history, investment in downtown installations by Native artists, and the opening of businesses like the Prairie Edge Trading Post, which sold a variety of goods made by Native artists and entrepreneurs, signaled a growing awareness of the important role that Native people have played in Black Hills history and the local tourism economy.

Rapid City's economy and population continued a slow, steady rise throughout this era, anchored in traditional key sectors including retail and wholesale trade and tourism. Professional services and health care became increasingly important as continued depopulation in the surrounding hinterland made Rapid City a hub for regional banking, accounting, law, and other businesses. Construction rose and fell with the economy. Meanwhile, a brief boom in light manufacturing in the 1970s fell victim to increasing competitive pressures from globalization. Spending by the federal government continued to provide vital fuel for the region's economy.

New Millennium to B-21: 2000 to 2029

As it had at the dawn of the preceding century, Rapid City entered the 21st century facing new opportunities for growth. New companies sought to lay fiberoptic cables and expand broadband internet to Rapid City and the Black Hills community. Tourism and the accompanying service, retail, and hospitality industries remained the centerpiece of the community's economy. Institutions like the South Dakota School of Mines & Technology, Regional Health, and Ellsworth Air Force Base have remained key employers. The regional utility, Black Hills Corporation grew dramatically through a period of great uncertainty in the energy industry, expanding into eight states but choosing to build its new headquarters in Rapid City in 2017.

Rapid City, meanwhile, navigated two major crises in the first decade of the 21st century. First, in early 2005, Ellsworth Air Force Base appeared on a Department of Defense list released by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC). Tasked with evaluating Cold War-era military installations and recommending them for closure, the BRAC could have shut down Ellsworth, dealing a significant blow to the economies of Rapid City and the surrounding region. Ellsworth remained open however, following an intense lobbying effort by South Dakota's elected officials and community boosters. A few years later, the Great Recession threw the global economy into chaos. Although the financial crisis brought years of uncertainty, the consistency of Rapid City's core industries meant that, overall, the crisis left a relatively modest footprint on the Rapid City economy.

In the years following the Great Recession, a wave of investment fostered increased development of retail, hotels, restaurants, and car dealerships along I-90. With significant philanthropic contributions and municipal investment, the construction of Main Street Square helped to revitalize downtown, and voters supported an expansion and rehabilitation of the civic center, which had been built in the 1970s. Finally, in early 2019, the U.S. Air Force announced that sometime in the mid-2020s, Ellsworth Air Force Base would become a training facility and bomber wing for a fleet of state-of-the-art B-21 Raiders, a nuclear stealth bomber.

Section D. Framework for Assessing Value to Sense of Place

Seeking to complement the broader goals outlined in the RCHPC's 2019 Comprehensive Plan, this report builds upon existing frameworks of historic preservation practice that can inform the RCHPC's efforts to use Rapid City's historical and cultural resources to improve quality of life, cultivate a culture of inclusivity, and promote economic development in Rapid City. The method utilized in the surveys outlined below (which will occur during Phase II of this project) draws upon recent, innovative strategies within the historical and heritage preservation and planning communities.

Primary among them is the strategy known as Historic Urban Landscapes (HUL). Adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2011, HUL moves beyond “conventional” approaches to preservation that emphasize the built environment. Rather, HUL “considers cultural diversity and creativity as key assets for human, social, and economic development.”²⁰ A key tenet of HUL's approach centers on the idea that cities are living, changing, and dynamic places. As UNESCO writes, “there is not a single ‘historic’ city in the world that retains its ‘original’ character: the concept is a moving target, destined to change with society itself. To preserve the urban historic landscape, strategic and dynamic alliances need to be built between various actors in the urban scene, especially between public authorities who manage the city and developers and entrepreneurs operating within the city.”²¹ To achieve these goals, HUL suggests developing preservation plans and strategies that focus on the tangible and intangible elements of a community's history, including environmental elements, resources, and the landscape itself. HUL's approach is based on continued engagement with community members. It promotes critical dialogue and learning about the community's past, present, and future.²²

Adapting these principles to the RCHPC's surveying and planning processes will strengthen the commission's ability to meet its mandate and integrate its work with broader Rapid City goals pertaining to inclusivity, quality of life, and economic development. Accordingly, this report includes a survey of various historical resources and assets that exist across Rapid City. Rather than focusing solely upon properties and structures that fit eligibility definitions set forth by the state and national registers of historic places, it will include references to structures and spaces—both built and natural—that contribute to the “sense of place” in Rapid City.

Rapid City's sense of place, of course, will mean different things to different people. In two community workshops conducted in the spring of 2019, attendees viewed, ranked, and discussed fifty different sites and structures in Rapid City. For some, Rapid City's

²⁰ “New Life for Historic Cities: The Historic Urban Landscape Approach Explained,” UNESCO 2011, 9.

²¹ “New Life for Historic Cities: The Historic Urban Landscape Approach Explained,” UNESCO 2011, 24.

²² “Pursuing a Historic Urban Landscape Approach to Heritage in Edmonton: Evolving Report,” City of Edmonton, Alberta, CA, June 14, 2018, 10.

cultural and historical landscape was clearly defined by the natural environment. Many Native Americans, for example, understand, preserve, and tell their histories in relation to significant landscapes, waterscapes, and skylscapes.²³ Similarly, many members of the Rapid City community—both Native and non-Native—care deeply about conservation and outdoor recreation. For those who hunt, fish, hike, kayak, and mountain bike, the physical landscape captures the essence of life in this community.

During the community workshops, people found their sense of place and memory was ignited by associations with a variety of locations including Fitzgerald Stadium, the entry wall at Sioux San, the gazebo in Canyon Lake Park, a view of Rapid Creek, signage at Baken Park. While some images evoked common associations with community; others were personal. HUL works to build community by preserving those spaces and places that evoke personal and shared memories.

D.1—Eligible Properties and Structures

As outlined in the RCHPC's 2019 Comprehensive Plan, the National Register of Historic Places provides clear requirements for determining a property's eligibility for listing and state and federal protections.

[Additional content TBD: During Phase II of this project, VPHS will update this section to include a survey of structures and properties that are either already listed on the state or national registers or are eligible for listing.]

D.2—Soon-to-Be Eligible Properties and Structures

As noted above, the Black Hills Flood of 1972 was a critical event in Rapid City's history. As the community nears the 50th anniversary of that event, it will also approach the 50-year threshold for national register eligibility for many properties associated with that event and the redevelopment and recovery that followed. To better enable the RCHPC to take a forward-looking approach to its work, this report will identify structures that will become eligible for state and national register nominations in the next 10 years.

[Additional content TBD: During Phase II of this project, VPHS will update this section to include a survey of properties that will become eligible for state and national register nominations over the next decade.]

²³ Craig Howe, "Keep Your Thoughts Above the Trees: Ideas on Developing and Presenting Tribal Histories," in *Clearing a Path: Theorizing the Past in Native American Studies*, ed. Nancy Shoemaker (New York: Routledge, 2002), 161.

D.3—Non-Eligible Resources that Shape Sense of Place

The categories above refer to the kinds of historical resources that are customarily surveyed and preserved by historic preservation commissions. This report, however, proposes to add this third category, which promotes an awareness of resources—natural and built, historic and cultural, constructed and collected—that contribute to Rapid City’s sense of place. The goal of identifying these resources is not to have the RCHPC protect or preserve them using state and federal mechanisms like the state or national registers of historic places. Rather, it is to enable the RCHPC to understand these resources in a broad sense and to recognize or commemorate them in other ways. By recognizing a diversity of spaces and their meanings to various elements of the Rapid City community, the RCHPC is better equipped to make its mission complement the broader goals of the City of Rapid City.

Built Environment (ineligible physical constructions)

Some ineligible elements of the built environment that still contribute to the sense of place in Rapid City could include buildings or structures that have been rebuilt or otherwise lost their historical integrity, historic signage, long-recognized pieces of Rapid City’s infrastructure, or reoccurring patterns in the constructed landscape of the city.

[Additional content TBD: During the revision and strategic planning process, VPHS will work with the RCHPC to define this type of resource and solicit feedback on what should be included. Examples include the McGillicuddy House, the radio towers along Skyline Drive and Cowboy/M Hill, the limestone retaining walls on Skyline Drive, the sign at Baken Park, or the gazebo at Canyon Lake.]

Landscape, Waterscape, and Skyscape Elements

Given Rapid City’s deep Indigenous history and strong outdoor culture, the natural environment comprises a key piece of the sense of place that defines the community. For example, the cottonwood trees along Rapid Creek may remind many Rapid Citians of the 1972 flood. Similarly, many community members value the clear night skies and limited light pollution that enhance the Rapid City environment.

[Additional content TBD: During the revision and strategic planning process, VPHS will work with the RCHPC to define this type of resource and solicit feedback on what should be included. Examples include stands of ponderosa pines, the cottonwood trees in parks and along Rapid City, open meadows or prairies, sandstone or shale cliffs, Rapid Creek or the night sky themselves. These elements could be surveyed and their significance to Rapid City stakeholders understood.]

Traditional Cultural Properties

Some historical and cultural resources are not associated with a specific place or feature but speak to more generalized patterns or aspects of community history. For example, plants and herbs of significance to Native peoples—like sage or sweetgrass—grow throughout Rapid City. Other spaces or features speak to underrepresented narratives of the community’s history.

[Additional content TBD: During the revision and strategic planning process, VPHS will work with the RCHPC to define this type of resource and solicit feedback on what should be included. Examples could include lists of medicinal plants and herbs relevant to Native American cultures and traditions; spaces or features relevant to oral traditions; the greenway where the Oshkosh Camp once sat, which no longer bears remnants of its historical use but stands out in the memories of many Native community members; or early burial grounds or those containing the remains of children who died at the Rapid City Indian School.]

Community Cultural Elements

Finally, some historic resources are not spaces or places at all. Instead, they are organizations, institutions, and archival and artifact collections that capture and tell the story of Rapid City’s history. As the RCHPC develops plans for assessing historical assets across the community or building collaborative partnerships with cultural, educational, and historical institutions, it could use surveys of these existing assets to promote their use and understand their applicability to broader commission and city goals.

[Additional content TBD: During the revision and strategic planning process, VPHS will work with the RCHPC to define this type of resource and solicit feedback on what should be included. Examples could include museum and archival collections at local institutions; public art like the artwork and sculptures in Founder’s Park, Halley Park, Art Alley, or Main Street Square; cultural ephemera belonging to personal or community organizations’ collections, auto clubs, motorcycle clubs, sportsmen’s clubs, service organizations, or sports leagues; educational and cultural institutions like the South Dakota School of Mines & Technology, Western Dakota Technical Institute, Black Hills State University-Rapid City, the Journey Museum and Learning Center, the Minnilusa Historical Association, the South Dakota Archaeology Research Center, the Dahl Arts Center, or the Rapid City Public Library; or legacy or iconic commercial sites like the Hotel Alex Johnson, Prairie Edge, Who’s Hobby, the South Dakota Stock Grower’s Association, Black Hills Bagels, or Baken Park.]

Section E. Surveys and Typologies of Place

[Additional content TBD: These sections will be completed during Phase II of the update project. They will offer a brief narrative overview of Rapid City's history, broken up by broad chronological categories. Each section will describe the growth and evolution of Rapid City as a lived cultural and historic landscape, noting the major social and economic developments and additions that occurred at watershed moments. The document will then list the eligible and contributing historic properties in each section, followed by a list of non-eligible but still important places and resources. Both subsections will include a list of "representative types" or broad categories that represent new and characteristic elements in Rapid City's built or natural environment.

For example, Section E4. "Expanding Rapid City: 1945 to 1972," might include references to midcentury schools and ranch-style homes that proliferated across Rapid City after World War II, as well as images of Robbinsdale, South Canyon, and Pinedale Elementary Schools and the surrounding neighborhoods.

The later sections will deal with the recent past and near future, thereby enabling the RCHPC to begin making plans to deal with newly or soon-to-be eligible historic properties while preparing for the anticipated growth believed to accompany the expansion of Ellsworth Air Force Base in the 2020s.

Section E.1. Early Indigenous Presence: ~ to 1875

E.1.a—Survey of Eligible Properties

E.1.b—Survey of Soon-to-Be-Eligible Properties

E.1.c—Representative Types of Non-Eligible Resources that Shape Sense of Place

[This section to include a survey of archaeological sites and studies within the Rapid City area. Buechler 1989 suggests that, at the time of his writing, Rapid City's early archaeological record was poorly understood but that opportunities for study existed. Section TBD]

Section E.2. Hay Camp: 1876 to 1918

E.2.a—Survey of Eligible Properties

E.2.b—Survey of Soon-to-Be-Eligible Properties

E.2.c—Representative Types of Non-Eligible Resources that Shape Sense of Place

Section E.3. Depression and War: 1918 to 1945

E.3.a—Survey of Eligible Properties

E.3.b—Survey of Soon-to-Be-Eligible Properties

E.3.c—Representative Types of Non-Eligible Resources that Shape Sense of Place

Section E.4. Expanding Rapid City: 1945 to 1972

E.4.a—Survey of Eligible Properties

E.4.b—Survey of Soon-to-Be-Eligible Properties

E.4.c—Representative Types of Non-Eligible Resources that Shape Sense of Place

Section E.5. Flood and Rebuilding: 1972 to 2001

E.5.a—Survey of Eligible Properties

E.5.b—Survey of Soon-to-Be-Eligible Properties

E.5.c—Representative Types of Non-Eligible Resources that Shape Sense of Place

Section E.6. New Millennium to B-21: 2001 to 2029

E.6.a—Survey of Eligible Properties

E.6.b—Representative Types of Non-Eligible Resources that Shape Sense of Place]

Appendices

[TBD: All appendices will be included in final Historic Context Report]

Bibliography

Glossary

Recent Surveys

Existing National and State Registry Properties