

July 3, 2020

Rapid City Historic Preservation Commission

End Report: Phase II Community Outreach Event

Journey Museum & Learning Center/RCHPC Virtual Outreach Webinar

Rapid City - Our History, Our Future:

A Conversation About Historic Preservation, Phase II Update

On June 3, 2020, Vantage Point Historical Services, Inc. (VPHS) conducted a virtual community outreach session in support of the ongoing historic context and comprehensive plan update project currently underway with the Rapid City Historic Preservation Commission (RCHPC). The event was hosted by the Journey Museum & Learning Center (JMLC), utilizing the institution's Zoom Webinar account. RCHPC Commissioner Brittaney Neiles moderated the event. VPHS historians Dr. Eric Abrahamson and Dr. Eric Zimmer gave a Power Point presentation that reviewed the project's goals, updated the community on the Phase II progress, offered a road map of work to be conducted during Phase III (including sample "representative types" to be surveyed), and took questions and comments from community participants.

During the Q & A session, two participants expressed an interest in using GIS, 3D imaging, or related technology to help map topics or preserve those that are disappearing from the landscape. Although these avenues have not been explored to date, VPHS and the RCHPC will explore these avenues as we continue to plan for Phase III and future projects.

Another community member emphasized the need to document spaces of importance to Rapid City's Native American community, including the Sioux San campus, the Osh Kosh Camp, the Sioux Addition, and suggested that the RCHPC should reach out to spiritual leaders and THPOs who may have knowledge about significant spaces the location of which may be noted. In a followup conversation with this community member, VPHS asked for, but did not receive, the names of any particular leaders or information about any additional culturally or spiritually significant locations. Another Native community member thanked the RCHPC's efforts to be inclusive throughout this project. VPHS and the RCHPC closed the presentation by sharing a City staff member's email address and shared a link to an account at freesuggestionbox.com, an anonymous feedback app. To date, VPHS has not received any additional comments or feedback.

According to the JMLC, 35 people registered for and attended the event. After the video was posted to Facebook, it reached 455 people, 171 of whom saw the post (this is not the same as "viewing" the video in its entirety) and 19 "engaged" with the video by liking, commenting, sharing, or clicking on the file. On Twitter, the webinar made 110 user impressions, and it reached 100 people on Instagram. All told, the presentation reached as many as 700 people.

Rapid City Historic Preservation Commission

Phase II: Thematic Framework for Cultural Resource Inventory

“Our History, Our Future: An Updated Historic Context Document for the Rapid City Historic Preservation Commission (2020)”

Project Overview

In 2019, the Rapid City Historic Preservation Commission (RCHPC) engaged Vantage Point Historical Services, Inc. (VPHS) to update its Comprehensive Plan and Historic Context Document. Across the country, historic preservation commissions use these documents to organize information about historical and cultural resources into a narrative that identifies themes and property types to help communities make decisions about how to use, learn from, and preserve local history.

Phase I of this project included a planning retreat that resulted in draft updates to the RCHPC’s mission statement and strategic plan, its Comprehensive Plan and Historic Context Document, including a chronological “Overview of Rapid City’s History” that identified important eras in the city’s past. The Commission also held two community outreach sessions to engage a diverse set of Rapid City’s residents and solicit their feedback.

Phase II includes the development of this thematic framework, which builds on the chronological narrative in the Historic Context Document. The framework describes Rapid City’s environmental setting and illuminates three major themes and various subthemes that give meaning and structure to the history of the community. Public feedback on these themes was provided in a workshop in June, 2020. In this phase, the project team also identified representative property types (sites and structures) closely associated with the themes and subthemes in the framework and created various maps associated with the themes and the representative property types.

Phase III, to be completed this fall and in the spring of 2021, will include a Cultural Resource Inventory of Rapid City based on the documentation developed in Phase I and Phase II. The Cultural Resource Inventory will build on existing planning documents created for the RCHPC, the SD State Historic Preservation Office, and the SD Archaeological Research Center by offering a holistic approach to understanding historic and cultural assets across Rapid City. By noting significant viewsheds, landscape elements, archaeological sites, geologic formations, and other natural resources, as well as elements of the built environment, the Cultural Resource Inventory will help tell a more complete story about Rapid City's history. It will acknowledge defining features that may or may not be eligible for formal preservation but nonetheless contribute to Rapid City's sense of place—and ultimately, to the process of making and remaking the community's identity. In this phase, the project team will also conduct public workshops to engage residents in a conversation related to sites and structures that have significant meaning to the community. At the end of Phase III, the Comprehensive Plan, Historic Context Report, and Cultural Resource Inventory will be finalized for use by the RCHPC as it serves the community in coming years.

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.



"The attempt to derive meaning from landscapes possesses overwhelming virtue. It keeps us constantly alert to the world around us, demanding that we pay attention not just to some of the things around us but to all of them—the whole visible world in all of its rich, glorious, messy, confusing, ugly, and beautiful complexity."

—Peirce Fee Lewis, Geographer

Environmental Setting

The natural world has played a fundamental role in shaping the major themes of Rapid City's history. For millennia, the natural resources and allure of the Black Hills have drawn people to the region to hunt, explore, pray, recreate, and live in and around what is now Rapid City. The community sits where the open prairie meets rocky hills and thick forests. Throughout its history, people have shaped their lives in response to the opportunities and limitations presented by these surroundings.

The physical geography (or physiography) of Rapid City—which includes its geography, geology, and landscape—shaped its defining viewsheds and led to its role as a passing place for many generations of people. With a relatively temperate climatic punctuated by erratic weather patterns, Rapid City and the surrounding Black Hills offer a respite from the extremes of other parts of the Northern Plains. Fresh water, plants, minerals, and game animals brought people to the area and the surrounding bluffs offered shelter to its first inhabitants. Desirable and valuable, these attributes set the stage for deep conflicts over control of land, water, and resources. Later, the city's centrality within a vast, resource-rich and agricultural region and the availability of timber, mining, and quarry operations provided a means of subsistence for the area's residents and shaped Rapid City's economy. The remoteness of Rapid City and the Black Hills from major American cities and global trading centers, along with the area's stunning beauty, have drawn visitors from around the world and shaped the character of the community.



Climate

Rapid City has a relatively moderate and semiarid climate. Situated at an intermediate altitude and flanked by the central Black Hills, the city is more protected from the winds that blow off the northwestern prairies than towns in the Northern Hills. Rapid City experiences hot, dry summers interrupted by sudden, violent afternoon storms and winters that range from deep cold to warm sunny days.

This unpredictability has brought several major weather events. A 1907 flood destroyed the first dam at Canyon Lake and slowed plans for residential developments along the creek. Rebuilt by the federal Works Progress Administration in the 1930s, the dam enabled the creation of a large recreation area and made the area a popular site for residences. Some four decades later, the devastating flood of 1972 broke the dam and killed 238 people. Water and debris ripped through the heart of the city, destroying many cars, homes, and businesses in its path. Between these floods, a historic blizzard left 14-foot drifts in downtown Rapid City in 1949. The snow buried automobiles and train cars, bringing local commerce to a halt for weeks. Officials blasted away the most stubborn drifts with dynamite.¹ In 2013, Winter Storm Atlas left residents stuck indoors without power for hours or days, and the storm killed thousands of livestock.

These severe weather events have affected community dynamics for generations. Individuals, families, and social groups expect to be tested by the winters. Severe weather events inevitably lead to neighbors helping neighbors. News stories about heroic rescues and sacrifice during these crises reinforce values of altruism and persistence. Severe weather events like the 1972 flood led residents and city planners to reshape the pattern of development as the community rebuilt the Canyon Lake Dam for a third time, banned most construction in the flood plain, and preserved a wide swath of land as a greenway for recreation.

Landscape Physiography and the Built Environment

The intrinsic beauty of the Black Hills landscape, combined with the availability of resources in the region have attracted people for millennia. An island of forests, streams, and stone in a sea of dry,

¹ John Webb, *RB-36 Days at Rapid City, or Rapid City Freestyle: The People, the Airplanes, and the Times at Rapid City/Ellsworth Air Force Base, 1949 through 1957* (Rapid City, SD: Silver Wings Aviation, n.d.), 12.



open prairie, the unique rock formations and thick forests—along with their attachment to oral traditions and ceremonies—rendered the place sacred to Native Americans. Similarly, generations of immigrants and tourists have been attracted to the region by the power of the landscape.

The Black Hills formed when a large, oblong section of igneous rock lifted through the earth's mantle some 65 million years ago, breaking through the limestone crust to expose the large, stone center of the Hills. In and around this central ring, forests thick with ponderosa pines, blue spruce, and cedar trees cropped up. They intersperse in meadows with prairie grasses and shrubs, and are home to an array of animals including deer, elk, beavers, squirrels, raccoons, skunks, rabbits, and more. Bison, grizzly bears, wolves, mountain lions, and coyote once inhabited the vast prairies surrounding the Black Hills, although most of the large predators and most of the bison were killed off or pushed out as Euro-Americans settled in the region.

Rapid City's built environment includes a variety of structure types laid out and shaped by environmental factors. The topography of the Black Hills and challenging soil conditions informed the locations of subdivisions and increased building costs.² As the town grew, neighborhoods, schools, and businesses spread to both sides of the Gap. This urban pattern was imbued with social and cultural meaning. Developments established close to scenic forests and hillsides—whether along the base of Skyline Drive near West Boulevard or on the west side of the city—have tended to be more desirable and home to more affluent members of the community. Working and middle-class families, meanwhile, filled the more modest neighborhoods in the central, south, and northern parts of town closer to prairie and the city's modest industrial centers and rail lines.

Construction and development in and around Rapid City has exacted a toll on the regional environment. Silt and seepage from roads and residential developments, along with the leaching of mining chemicals and byproducts, have impacted the water quality, sometimes with effects on area wildlife, over the last 150 years.³ Meanwhile, historical photos and forest surveys demonstrate that, in their natural state, the Black Hills' forests were considerably less dense than they became in the 20th century, when overgrowth resulted from fire suppression techniques. Increased forest density

² Jared McEntaffer, Callie Tysdal, and Rochelle Zens, "Rapid City Housing Affordability Study," Final Report Prepared for the John T. Vucurevich Foundation, June 26, 2018, 4.

³ See for example South Dakota State Department of Health, Division of Sanitary Engineering, "Water Pollution Investigation: Rapid Creek, Dec. 1963, Pactola Reservoir to Cheyenne River" (Pierre: 1964), v; Bart Pfankuch, "Studies Reveal Health Hazards in Big Sioux River, Rapid Creek," *Argus Leader* August 29, 2018, accessed April 21, 2020, <https://www.argusleader.com/story/news/2018/08/29/studies-reveal-health-hazards-big-sioux-river-rapid-creek-south-dakota-waterways/1134418002/>.

has reduced groundwater flow and made the area susceptible to species like the mountain pine beetle, which has killed around 430,000 acres of trees since the mid-1990s.⁴ Increasingly, the landscape reflects human efforts to manage the landscape to improve water quality, prevent wildfires, and control wildlife and insect populations in ways that are conducive to human activities.

Water

Fed by runoff from winter snows, spring rains, and smaller tributaries like Castle Creek, Rapid Creek originates in limestone springs west of Rapid City. It flows east along a narrow bed that travels through the middle of town and connects to the Cheyenne River. Native peoples lived along its banks into the 20th century, first in winter camps and later in informal communities. Settlers harnessed the water's industrial power, using it to mine for gold, create electricity, water livestock, and float logs to factories for processing.⁵ The state of South Dakota established the Cleghorn Springs fish hatchery in 1928, using it to grow and harvest fish that are released into lakes and streams throughout the Black Hills.⁶

Recognizing the beauty of creekside property, early developers planted towering poplar and cottonwood trees along its banks and established Canyon Lake in the 1890s, then Memorial Pond after the flood in the 1970s.⁷ The trees remained long after greenways and bike paths replaced neighborhoods and cabins.

The banks of Rapid Creek have been home to both the most and least wealthy members of town. Before the 1972 flood, the picturesque area near Canyon Lake was a desirable location for residential homes and vacation cabins. A few miles downstream, however, communities of less affluent—and primarily, Native American or working-class non-Native—people lived in temporary homes along the creek between Sioux San and Founder's Rock. After the flood, many wealthier

⁴ "Mountain Pine Beetle," Black Hills National Forest, USDA Forest Service, accessed January 21, 2020, <https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/blackhills/landmanagement/?cid=stelpdb5113978>; R. Keith Stewart and Carol A. Thilenius, "Black Hills Lakes and Streams: Stream and Lake Inventory and Classification in the Black Hills of South Dakota, 1964" Department of Game, Fish and Parks Lake and Stream Classification Report (1964), 50–52.

⁵ See David F. Strain, *Black Hills Haycamp: Images and Perspectives of Early Rapid City* (Rapid City, SD: Fenske Printing, 1989); Eric John Abrahamson and Eric Steven Zimmer, *Expanding the Energy Horizon: A History of Black Hills Corporation Since 1883* (Rapid City, SD: Black Hills Corporation, 2018), 34–35; Martha Linde, *Sawmills of the Black Hills* (Rapid City, SD: Fenske Printing/Jessie Y. Sundstrom, 1984), 57–59.

⁶ "Cleghorn Springs State Fish Hatchery," South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks, accessed February 8, 2020, <https://gfp.sd.gov/cleghorn/>.

⁷ Strain, *Black Hills Haycamp*, 210–12.



households moved up onto ridges overlooking scenic vistas or set back into the forest. The creation of parks and greenways along the creek displaced many of the less affluent families to other parts of town that were, in some cases, far from basic services like water, sanitation, and electricity.

Viewsheds

The development of Rapid City outward from its downtown corridor, along with efforts to highlight the natural beauty that surrounds the city, has led to the creation and maintenance of several viewsheds recognizable to long-time residents and visitors alike. Each of them is notable for the scenic vantage point it provides as well as the meaning it communicates about Rapid City's history and character.

From Dinosaur or Hangman's Hill, the pullouts along Skyline Drive, or across the Gap on M Hill or Cowboy Hill, one can look up at a dark, starry sky free from the intense light pollution of major cities. For more than a century, local residents have picnicked and hiked in these hills. Looking down upon the city, one sees its central core and the urban sprawl that has continued north past the interstate, east to Ellsworth Air Force Base, south to the Monument Health building complex, or west towards the American Legion baseball fields and up the roads that have snaked their way towards Sheridan Lake and Pactola Reservoir over the course of 150 years. Similarly, the views up and down Mount Rushmore Road from atop Highway 16 or the Omaha Street I-90 exit reveal the many businesses along the central corridor into the heart of the city.

Looking upon Dinosaur Hill from any direction reminds many locals of family play days, school field trips to the learn about geology and paleontology, or countless visits to the dinosaur statues to show off one of Rapid City's most iconic parks and give out-of-town guests a sense for the city's layout. Views from the hogback ridges and of the radio towers above Rapid City might evoke a sense of relief, since the sight of the Black Hills horizon and the red, blinking towers mean the long drive from Denver, Gillette, Pierre, or Sioux Falls is almost over. Finally, the panoramic views of the city, the Black Hills, the Badlands, and the eastern prairies from Skyline Drive, Dinosaur Hill, or atop Highway 16 emphasize the vast openness of the West River landscape. They remind Rapid Citians of the great distance between their community and the next major urban center, a fact that reminds them of the generations of people who worked and struggled to build the community they call home.



Potential Sample Property Types and Associated Features:

- Skyline Wilderness Area
- The Gap
- Sandstone walls along Skyline Drive/
- Radio Towers along Skyline Drive/M Hill
- Hanson Larson Memorial Park
- Sandstone wall at Sioux San
- Canyon Lake
- Memorial Pond
- Rapid Creek greenway
- Cottonwood trees along Rapid Creek, especially near Osh Kosh Camp and Canyon Lake
- Viewsheds looking east from Skyline towards the plains/Badlands
- Viewshed of Turnac Tower and Hotel Alex Johnson
- Low-light pollution in urban corridor
- Rocks along base of M Hill/Cowboy Hill (Founder's Rock and early Indigenous campsite)

Themes

The three major themes that emerge most clearly when reviewing the history of Rapid City are: Community, Government, and Economy. All are inherently interrelated and manifest in different ways over time. Each provides a lens through which cultural and historic resources can be identified and understood. The themes below do not offer a comprehensive history of Rapid City. But they illustrate the broad development of the community and highlight the complex and diverse experiences of differing groups of people. Using these themes as an interpretive framework, the RCHPC can understand the long arc of Rapid City history and recognize the ways in which the past contributes to the community's sense of place and identity.

Community

Throughout the city's history, Rapid Citians have expressed an appreciation for their town and fellow residents, which they demonstrated through active participation in civic organizations, faith communities, service clubs, fraternal organizations, sports teams, and arts and cultural groups. Race, ethnicity, and faith have also contributed to a sense of group identity expressed in various traditions and celebrations. Yet Rapid City's history has also been shaped by deep divisions between people that have given rise to ongoing conflicts. For nearly 150 years, people have gathered in meeting halls, churches, inipi circles, and various cultural facilities. At times, they celebrated. At other times, they framed strategies for activism or opposition to political leadership or one another. In more relaxed moments, community members competed on the gridiron, baseball diamonds, softball and soccer fields, and other sports facilities across Rapid City. They planted gardens and gathered for picnics. Residents used these places to connect with one another and strengthen social bonds that are critical to democratic government and free enterprise.

Family Bonds and Worship

The earliest groups of people to camp along Rapid Creek may have been on their way to pray at sacred sites like *Hinhan Kaga*, which is known today as Black Elk Peak, or heading into the solitude for *hanblecheyapi* (crying for a vision).⁸ Although federal laws confined Native peoples to reservations between the 1870s and 1920s, Native families made their way to Rapid City where they established camps along the creek, sought wage work, and attempted to remain close to children who had been brought to the Rapid City Indian School. Still today, meeting centers, public sweat lodges, and parks host *inipi* (sweat/purification), *hunkapi* (making of relatives), and naming ceremonies, as well as graduation celebrations and weddings. *Wanagi wicagluha* (keeping of the spirit/mourning) ceremonies take place in homes, churches, and private spaces. For Native peoples whose families integrated Catholic or other Christian religious traditions, many of the religious organizations in the community are important community spaces that solidify familial and cultural ties.

The first generations of Euro-Americans to settle in South Dakota were either immigrants who came directly from Western European countries like Germany, the Netherlands, Ireland, Denmark, or Norway or migrants whose families made their way over multiple generations from Europe to Midwestern states like Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin, or Minnesota and then moved farther west. Many came in pursuit of land made available under the amended Homestead Act and cleared for settlement between the 1870s and the early 1900s. As they moved, families brought traditions and cultural practices from their home countries or other states, which informed everything from culinary styles to religious preferences, patterns of land ownership, architectural designs, and more.⁹

The earliest organized Euro-American church services in Rapid City date back to 1877, when area Methodists held open prayer meetings. In the spring of 1878, a non-denominational group of locals arranged a series of morning “preaching services,” afternoon Sunday school classes, and evening temperance meetings. By 1880, Jewish residents celebrated the High Holidays. Between

⁸ Eric Steven Zimmer, “Statement on the Renaming of Harney Peak,” Center for American Indian Research and Native Studies, April 29, 2015, 5–7. On the Lakota ceremonies mentioned here, see Joseph Epes Brown, *The Sacred Pipe: Black Elk’s Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953).

⁹ Eric John Abrahamson and Eric Steven Zimmer, “Life in ‘Next Year Country’: History and Identity in Western South Dakota,” Research Report Prepared for Regional Health, May 2017, 11–12; Herbert S. Schell and John E. Miller, ed. *History of South Dakota*, Revised Fourth Edition (Pierre, SD: South Dakota State Historical Society Press, 2004), 168.



1881 and 1887, congregations of Roman Catholics, Congregationalists, Methodists, Episcopalians, Lutherans, and Presbyterians had all organized in town.¹⁰ Over the next century, many of these groups would continue building faith communities large and small across the city. The earliest churches were close to downtown. As the city expanded, particularly after World War II, new congregations were planted in the neighborhoods. The proliferation of new churches with streamlined, mid-century designs reflected the surge of religious sentiment generally in the United States in the 1950s.¹¹ Some congregations boasted thousands of members and built large, ornate churches throughout the city. These include the Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help on the south end of 5th Street or the Trinity Lutheran Church and Emmanuel Episcopal Church downtown. Meanwhile, other, smaller faith communities held meetings in rented commercial space, schools, or store fronts. Rapid City's small Jewish community, for example, met in the attics or basements of other churches or public meeting halls for decades, and Faith Temple Church of God repurposed the historic home of the Congregational Church to house its congregation, which included many African Americans.¹² At the end of the twentieth century, a new group of nondenominational Christian praise churches emerged, several of them housed in large open structures that eschewed traditional religious architecture.

These developments reflect both the growing diversity of religious affiliations in Rapid City and the continuing search for a sense of spiritual comradery and community among local residents. Regardless of denomination, size, or grandeur, all of the religious facilities in the community have been gathering points for coming-of-age celebrations, weddings, baptisms, funerals, and daily or weekly moments of reflection and connection for many of Rapid City's residents.

Potential Sample Property Types and Associated Features:

- Emmanuel Episcopal Church
- First Church of Christ Scientist
- Westminster Presbyterian
- St. Isaac Jogues

¹⁰ "One Hundred Years Trinity Lutheran Church: 1914-2013" (Rapid City, SD: Trinity Lutheran Church, 2013), 4–5.

¹¹ Robert Putnam and David E. Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 82-90.

¹² <http://faithtemplerc.com/aboutus.html>



- Calvary Lutheran Church

Community Organizations

Fraternal organizations, civic associations, and women's clubs thrived in the early- and mid-20th century. The *Rapid City Journal* reported daily on their activities for decades. These organizations flourished with the support of funds contributed by members and by entrepreneurs who had built the city's most successful businesses.

In the first half-century or so of Rapid City's history, many of the most prominent buildings erected downtown reflected the associational quality of life in this era, including the Elks Club and the Masonic Hall. Shortly after Rapid City's founding, its residents organized social groups like the "Rapid City Lyceum," a debate club founded in 1879 for attendees to pass cold winter nights discussing the issues of the day and promoting dialogue between residents.¹³ As the town grew, locals continued these traditions, developing a wide range of civic, social, and fraternal organizations, many of which were chapters of national service clubs. They built headquarters or used spaces across the community. Groups included the Freemasons, Ladies of the Order of the Eastern Star, the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), The Retired Enlisted Organization (TREA), Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), American Red Cross, Salvation Army, International Cosmopolitan Club, Lion's Club, Elks Club, Rotary Club, Kiwanis Club, the Boy Scouts of America, the Girl Scouts of America, the Boys Club, and more.¹⁴ Although these organizations had different stories, membership requirements, and areas of focus, all represented a common interest in civic engagement, service, and charity, and a long tradition of personal investment in the health and vitality of the community.

Similarly, Rapid City's Native residents organized a number of clubs and organizations throughout Rapid City's history. The women of the Winona Club spent decades advocating for the rights and resources Native people were often denied. Founded in 1929, the group met in the homes of its members and at the St. Matthew's Episcopal Church on north Haines Avenue.¹⁵ The Sioux

¹³ AERC Volume 8, "Culture," January 18, 1879.

¹⁴ Pechan and Groethe, *Remembering Rapid City*, 4.

¹⁵ See for example "Quarter Century of Good Deeds Rounded Out By Winona Club," *Rapid City Journal*, May 1, 1955; "Mrs. Miller Entertains at First Winona Club Meeting of Year," *Rapid City Journal*, September 9, 1950; "Club Roundup," *Rapid City Journal*, September 11, 1973.

Addition Civic Organization managed homes and advocated on behalf of neighborhood residents in the Sioux Addition and Lakota Homes neighborhoods beginning in the 1950s. Later organizations like the American Indian Movement demanded awareness and resolutions to longstanding issues related to the oppression of and discrimination against Native Americans, staging several tense and historic meetings in the Mother Butler Center and other buildings in Rapid City. In more recent years, a number of Native-led nonprofit organizations and community discussion groups have sought to promote dialogue and healing around deeply-held racial tensions in and around Rapid City.

After World War II, economic and social changes began to transform the quality of civic life in Rapid City. Increases in mobility, the rise of two-income households, the privatization of entertainment by radio and, later, television, the loss of local ownership in many industries, and other social and economic factors led to the decline of many service clubs, fraternal organizations, and civic groups. In some cases, the increased role of government was reflected in the expansion of existing facilities and the creation of new venues like the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center and various neighborhood community centers as public gathering places. With the coming of the digital age, a growing factor in patterns of civic engagement shifted away from buildings and landscapes to the virtual environments of social media and the internet. Nevertheless, spaces for people to gather, from Main Street Square to the Central States Fairground continue to contribute to a shared identity.

Potential Sample Property Types and Associated Features:

- Independent Order of Odd Fellows building
- Moose Lodge
- St. Matthews Episcopal Church / Winona Club
- YMCA
- Art Alley

Recreation & Culture

Outdoor recreation has been important to the collective activities of the Rapid City community for generations, and residents' affinity for the natural environment is reflected in aesthetics and community activities. In Rapid City, this appreciation for the landscape and its components is manifested in building styles and aesthetic preferences. Generations of locals have built their homes and gathering places from local materials and frequently emulated the designs they see in nature. Rough-cut sedimentary stones make up the foundations of many houses and retaining walls throughout the city. Granite rocks and thick logs give shape to park shelters and fireplaces and serve as accents on homes and buildings. Quartz, limestone, and slate pave floors, driveways, and walking paths. Tallgrass, sage, cedar, and juniper decorate buildings and yards across town. Many of the city's oldest buildings were built from limestone blocks quarried outside Rapid City or Custer. These elements evoke a strong sense of history and connection to place that permeates Rapid City.

Residents of all backgrounds have good reason to value the landscape. For many Rapid Cityans, spirituality, agricultural traditions, conservation ethics, and enjoyment of outdoor recreation are rooted in the mountain and prairie landscapes. Although the building styles through the community often reflect national or international design trends, many locals customize their homes by building or decorating with local materials and western motifs. Many midcentury homes, for example, evidence the clean lines and color palettes of 1950s or 1960s architecture, but they are constructed of local limestone or adorned with rough-cut ranch fences. Restaurants, hotel lobbies, business conference rooms, and public art spaces contain photographs of bison, elk, pheasants, and other wildlife, as well as scenic landscapes from throughout the region. This gives them a distinctively local flavor emblematic of local pride in place.

This sense of outdoor recreation has deep roots in the Rapid City community. To experience an element of urbanity on the frontier, women organized the Current Events, Fortnightly, and Tourist Clubs. The Crouch Line took Sunday afternoon picnickers to Hisega and other towns further in the Black Hills. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Rapid City held pony and wheelbarrow races downtown and had a city hose team and baseball league.¹⁶ Baseball and softball continued to gain popularity, with games held on the North Park diamond and on a diamond on the

¹⁶ See David F. Strain, *Black Hills Hay Camp: Images and Perspectives of Early Rapid City* (Rapid City, SD: Dakota West Books, 1989).

grounds of the National Guard's Camp Rapid by midcentury. The community added youth complexes at Harney Little League, Canyon Lake Little League, two American Legion stadiums posts, and the Star of the West complex, which includes baseball, soccer, and football fields, between the 1950s and 1990s.

Other facilities support a variety of activities and interests. The city's first library, which was built with a Carnegie family donation in 1915, expanded into its current facility in 1972. Buildings like the Alfalfa Palace at the fairgrounds were home to 4-H activities popular among agricultural families from across the region. The city added the Dahl Fine Arts Center, the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center, and the band shell at Memorial Park in the 1970s, which continue to host art shows and exhibits, trade shows, concerts, rodeos, sporting events, theatrical performances, the Lakota Nation Invitational basketball tournament, the annual Black Hills Powwow, and more. In the 1990s, the City of Rapid City consolidated four historic collections at a new facility called the Journey Museum & Learning Center. Meanwhile, privately owned facilities like the historic Elks Theater host annual events like the Black Hills Film Festival.

The history of this wide array of activities and organizations is reflected in buildings, parks, and recreational fields all across the Rapid City landscape. The spaces and structures connected to this element of community memory illustrate the rich diversity of Rapid Citians' interests and willingness to organize events and activities to enhance the quality of life throughout the community.

Potential Sample Property Types and Associated Features:

- Elks Theater
- Canyon Lake Park
- Sioux Park (Fitzgerald) Stadium, Pete Lien Memorial Field
- Meadowood Lanes
- Rushmore Plaza Civic Center
- Hansen Larsen Memorial Park

Race Relations

Although much of Rapid City's history can be described in terms of the coalescing of people around shared values, faiths, and interests, deep divisions and ongoing conflicts have also shaped the community from its very beginning. Many Indigenous peoples occupied the Black Hills over many generations. This included paleoindians and contributors to archeological culture groups, as well as more recent bands of Cheyennes, Arapahoes, Kiowas, Omahas, Arikaras, and more. The region, however, was primarily controlled by Lakotas in the 18th century, and the Black Hills sit squarely within the boundaries of the "Great Sioux Reservation" created by the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty. Tensions between Native and non-Native peoples have remained high since before Rapid City's founding. They are anchored in the violation of the Fort Laramie treaty by non-Native settlers; the often violent and forcible imposition of Western governance, social norms, and religion; and continued efforts to break up tribal land and push Native peoples to assimilate into non-Native society.¹⁷

These processes continued into the 20th century across the United States and the Black Hills but played out in specific ways in Rapid City. In 1898, for example, the federal government built the Rapid City Indian School, a boarding school on the western outskirts of town. For years, the facility served as the primary place for providing assimilatory, western-style education in keeping with broader policies that aimed to stamp out Indigenous languages, cultures, and spirituality. Like most federal boarding schools of the era, the facility sat on a large, 1,200-acre parcel of land capable of sustaining its staff and students. In 1933, the school was converted into a Civilian Conservation Corps camp, and then into a TB sanitarium before it became an Indian Health Service (IHS) hospital in the 1950s. The facility underwent these transitions as Rapid City grew, and in 1948, city leaders helped negotiate a special congressional law that transferred most of the boarding school property—which belonged to the Department of the Interior—to several entities.

Under the terms of this 1948 law, the city, school board, the South Dakota National Guard, and many area churches all received land. Despite being eligible for, and specifically named in the 1948 act, "needy Indians"—the term of art used to describe disadvantaged members of the Native American community at the time—received none of this property. Instead, local officials

¹⁷ See Jeffrey Ostler, *The Lakotas and the Black Hills: The Struggle for Sacred Ground* (New York: Viking, 2010).



orchestrated the removal of Native residents from small communities in the city to an underdeveloped and under-resource prairie north of town called the “Sioux Addition.”¹⁸ This story reflects one example of the broader processes that have created enormous challenges for members of the Rapid City Native community. Recent scholarship, for example, has begun to unearth evidence that Native peoples were systematically cut out from the economic benefits of the local tourism economy over the course of the 20th century and that many Native residents received inequitable recovery assistance in the fallout from the 1972 flood.¹⁹

Although the difficult relationship between Native and non-Native people has been the primary locus of racial strife in Rapid City, other minority groups have faced discrimination. In the years just prior to World War II, for example, members of Rapid City’s small Jewish population reported a surge in anti-Semitism.²⁰ A few years later, the expansion of Ellsworth Air Force Base in the 1950s and 1960s brought a wave of African American servicemen and their families to Rapid City. Many of these families experienced discrimination in housing and at local hotels and restaurants, prompting attention from the national media and the state civil rights commission and forcing the community to confront issues of social inclusion and exclusion.²¹

Potential Sample Property Types and Associated Features:

- Rapid City Indian School/Sioux San
- Site of Osh Kosh Camp; other Native campsites along the creek
- Sioux Addition/Lakota Homes
- Mother Butler Center
- Hunkayapi statue (601 Main Street)

¹⁸ See Scott Riney, *The Rapid City Indian School: 1898–1933* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999); Heather Dawn Thompson, Kibbe Conti, Scott Riney, and Karin Eagle, “An Inconvenient Truth: The History Behind the Sioux San (Rapid City Indian Boarding School) Lands & West Rapid City,” *Rapid City Journal*, May 1, 2017.

¹⁹ Nick Estes, *Our History Is the Future: Standing Rock Versus the Dakota Access Pipeline and the Long History of Indigenous Resistance* (New York: Verso, 2019), 187–190; Steven Hausman, “Inventing Indian Country: Race and Environment in the Black Hills, 1851–1981,” (PhD diss., Temple University, 2019); Elaine Marie Nelson, “Dreams and Dust in the Black Hills: Race, Place, and National Identity in America’s Land of Promise,” (Ph.D. diss, University of New Mexico, 2011).

²⁰ Howard Shaff and Audrey K. Shaff, *Paving the Way: The Life of Morris E. Adelstein* (Keystone, SD: Parmelia Publishing, 2005), 150–55.

²¹ South Dakota Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights “Report on Rapid City” (March 1963): 45–47.

Government

The earliest inhabitants of what is now Rapid City organized themselves within complex networks shaped by bonds of kinship and tribal affiliation. When the first Euro-American settlers established Hay Camp in 1876, what became Rapid City was within tribal treaty land. They quickly imposed a legal framework and system of government that relied on notions of citizenship, private property, and administration that were starkly different from the systems of tribal governance they replaced. Within a year, Rapid City became a part of Pennington County in Dakota Territory, which was divided into North Dakota and South Dakota in 1889. Under federal, territorial, and then state laws, the government's role in managing civil society and regulating commerce became an important factor in the day-to-day life of the community. But to build a town in such an isolated place required neighborliness, civic cooperation, democratic decision making, and a sense of shared responsibility as well as the formal rules of law.

Throughout Rapid City's history, residents have capitalized on state and federal funding to support agriculture, forestry, highways, military bases, public parks and memorials and balanced the economic benefits of government support with entrepreneurial instincts and a prominent vein of libertarian conservatism that permeates the local culture. The legacies of the community's political and governmental history are evident in Rapid City's built environment.

City & County

Over the course of history, Rapid Citians have experimented with a series of governmental arrangements, transitioning from an aldermanic form of government, to an elected commissioner system, to a city manager system. Then, in 1957, the City returned to the aldermanic system and has continued to operate in this fashion for more than sixty years, although recent discussions about adopting "home rule" are underway.²²

²² "Types of City Governments and Home Rule (Rapid City)," Black Hills Knowledge Network, accessed February 7, 2020), <https://www.blackhillsknowledge network.org/issue-hub/types-of-city-governments-and-home-rule.html#.XjycrmhKi70>.



During its nearly 150-year history, the City of Rapid City has developed and managed a variety of public buildings to house important municipal functions ranging from transportation to sanitation to recreation. In 1903, the first City Hall, a small, utilitarian office, was completed in the heart of downtown.²³ After Rapid City became the seat of Pennington County in 1878, the commissioners met in downtown office buildings. Fire later destroyed a series of early courthouses. Then in 1922, the Pennington County Courthouse became the permanent home of county government.

Early on, law enforcement became an important function of county government, and the sheriff administered the jail. During the city's frontier days, however, the rule of law was often contested. In 1877, for example, two men and a boy were arrested for stealing horses. Before they could be tried, however, vigilantes broke into the jail and hanged the men and the boy from a prominent tree near "Hangman's Rock" in what is today's Dinosaur Park.²⁴ Gradually, the threat of incarceration served as an important element for keeping the peace and protecting the local citizenry. It also continued a pattern of social control of Native Americans that began in the 19th century with conflicts between the U.S. Army and tribes and extended into the 20th with the reservation system, boarding schools, and law enforcement. With the backing of sheriff's deputies, Native Americans were barred from various public establishments.²⁵

For Euro-Americans, the city's governance structures and the growth and centralization of county offices demonstrated the Rapid City community's enduring commitment to finding ways to manage local affairs and promote a high quality of life throughout the city and the region. A conservative ethos anchored in social and religious traditions of the majority population ensured, however, that investments in public infrastructure and the expansion of public services would often be contested, especially when citizens were asked to pay more in taxes to fund these initiatives. This economizing instinct has often been reflected in the character and scope of public buildings past and present including the Rapid City Municipal Auditorium, the Carnegie Library, the courthouse complex, the City School Administration Building (CSAC), the Rapid City Regional Airport, local

²³ Rapid City Historic Preservation Commission, "City Hall," Pictures Rapid City's Past, accessed February 8, 2020, <https://www.picturercpast.com/item/6-city-hall.html>.

²⁴ "Two Legal Hangings in 18 Years," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 19, 1894, 11.

²⁵ "Municipal Parks," City of Rapid City, accessed February 8, 2020, <https://www.rcgov.org/departments/parks-recreation/parks-division/municipal-parks/municipal-parks-322.html>; "Jail History," Pennington County, South Dakota, accessed February 8, 2020, https://www.pennco.org/index.asp?SEC=BB76F889-2C7A-4D0E-85C8-BD2639C13E60&Type=B_BASIC.

fire stations, the wastewater treatment plant, and the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center. These facilities are joined by community institutions born of public/private partnerships like the Rapid City Public Library, the Dahl Fine Arts Center, and the Journey Museum & Learning Center.²⁶ Taken together, these structures represent the bedrock of local governance and symbolize long-held values of local control and citizen-led decision making and stewardship.

The citizens of Rapid City have debated and forged agreements over how to govern themselves for nearly 150 years. The landscape and built environment of the community reflects many of the unresolved tensions in the community's perspective on the role of government, but general patterns emerge. Some structures, particularly county buildings, have appropriated elements of classicism that provide subtle references to the republican ideals of ancient Greece and Rome. A few, like the campus of the Journey Museum & Learning Center or the Mother Butler Center, reference the Native history of the region. But more often, government buildings—from the City and School Administrative Center (CSAC) to the Civic Center—are generally utilitarian in design and function, reflecting the community's recognition of the need for public services, but its financially conservative desire to restrain both budgets and any ostentatious celebration of the power of public agencies.

Potential Sample Property Types and Associated Features:

- Original City Hall
- Hangman's Hill
- Pennington County Courthouse
- Central States Fairgrounds
- CSAC

Education

²⁶ Kayla Gahagan, "Crowded School District Administration Seeks an Exit from CSAC," *Rapid City Journal*, May 5, 2009, accessed February 8, 2020, https://rapidcityjournal.com/news/local/top-stories/crowded-school-district-administration-seeks-an-exit-from-csac/article_7e348570-940d-5fe3-9005-d49139b9d3ad.html.

Immigrants from other parts of the United States as well as foreign born residents who came primarily from Northern European countries placed a high value on literacy and education. The first schoolhouse opened downtown in 1876, and the first public high school was built seven years later, but these buildings did not last.²⁷ As late as 1915, most residents of Rapid City and Pennington County had only a common school education. Just over one in ten had completed high school. In the entire county only 158 people had a college degree.²⁸ But as part of a nationwide movement to provide universal public education, the people of Rapid City erected more permanent and imposing schools including James Garfield Elementary (1910), Rapid City High School (1923) and Wilson Elementary (1929).²⁹ North, South, and West middle schools all opened prior to 1960, many elementary schools were built during the housing boom of the 1950s and 1960s, and Stevens High School and Central High School were constructed in 1969 and 1977, respectively.³⁰ Schools are associated with formative moments in the lives of many area residents, bringing back adolescent excitement and anxiety, evoking the excitement of crosstown sports rivalries, and reminding proud grandparents of their grandchildren's winter programs. They are anchors of community memory whose walls contain stories about the formative years and family and social histories of many Rapid Citians.

Potential Sample Property Types and Associated Features:

- Garfield Elementary (now Garfield Green)
- National Business College building
- Pinedale Elementary
- Central High School
- East Middle School

²⁷ "Timeline," *Rapid City Journal*, July 4, 2020, accessed February 7, 2020, https://rapidcityjournal.com/timeline/article_19cd2236-87df-11df-95fe-001cc4c03286.html.

²⁸ State of South Dakota, *Third Census* (1915), Table XIII "Showing Extent of Education, Eighteen Years and Over, By County, 1915," 48-49.

²⁹ "Wilson Elementary," Rapid City Area Schools, accessed February 7, 2020, <https://public.rcas.org/el/wilson/Pages/Default.aspx>.

³⁰ "Rapid City Area Schools Embarks on Ambitious Plan to Modernize Facilities," KOTA News, April 4, 2019, accessed February 8, 2020, <https://www.kotatv.com/content/news/Rapid-City-Area-Schools-embarks-on-ambitious-plan-to-modernize-facilities-508272781.html>; "Old Rapid City High School Named to National Register of Historic Places," *Rapid City Journal*, August 27, 2010, accessed February 8, 2020, https://rapidcityjournal.com/news/old-rapid-city-high-school-named-to-national-register-of/article_312ff222-b21f-11df-a126-001cc4c03286.html; "Timeline."

State and Federal Government

As the largest West River community, Rapid City has long served as a central hub for state and federal government offices and resources, and government dollars flowing into the community have been important to the economy, especially after the construction of the Rapid City Air Base during World War II. In Rapid City and the Black Hills region, government's role as a significant landowner has also affected the ways in which people think about the landscape and the concept of public resources. Buildings, including various Forest Service and USDA offices, as well as field offices for the state's Congressional delegation, provide a physical connection to state and federal government.

Government-sponsored conservation management and outdoor recreation facilities are a central element in Rapid City's story. Several US Forest Service offices in Rapid City have been the administrative home of conservation management, wildfire prevention, and timber and water management work related to the vast Black Hills National Forest, most recently the new Mystic Ranger District office opened atop Highway 16 in 2006. The South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks Department also has offices in Rapid City, and in 2008, acquired more than 30 acres on the west side, which it uses as an educational outdoor recreation campus. For many residents, jobs and resources provided by these offices have helped define the local outdoor culture and shape environmental ethics.

Meanwhile, the various local, state, and federal government offices in Rapid City have also provided steady employment. In 1980, for example, 7,140 Rapid Citians held government jobs—the third highest after agriculture (which included workers in outlying farming and ranching communities) and retail trade.³¹ In 2016, Government, including federal civilian, military, and state and local agencies, contributed \$1.1 billion, or almost 17 percent, to the total GDP of the metropolitan area.³²

Because of the nation-to-nation relationship between tribes and the federal government, Rapid City remains an administrative home to several federal offices that serve Native American residents of Rapid City, surrounding communities, and area reservations. Many, for example, travel

³¹ City of Rapid City, "This is Rapid City 1980," 4–5.

³² US Bureau of Economic Analysis, MAGDP2 Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by metropolitan area, Rapid City.



to Rapid City for care at the Sioux San IHS Hospital facilities. Others come to Rapid City to study in state colleges and technical schools, or at the extension campus of Oglala Lakota College, a tribal college that is funded in part by federal support. Meanwhile, the primarily Native neighborhood called “Lakota Homes” was created with the support of a federal housing program in the 1960s.

Likewise, the presence of a federal courthouse in Rapid City evidences the city’s role in the complex legal relationship between Native people and tribes and the federal government. Issues related to treaty rights and sovereignty have been debated and adjudicated in the city. Within the walls of the courthouse, the lives of many Native people have been affected by changing interpretations of their individual rights and responsibilities under the law. The original court was in Rapid City’s first Federal Building at the corner of St. Joseph Street and Mount Rushmore road downtown, which first opened in 1911. Federal offices moved to the new Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse on ninth street in Rapid City in 1973 (later named for Judge Andrew W. Bogue). The facility serves as an important reminder of these relationships.

Rapid City’s relative geographic isolation, far from the more populous eastern side of the state and the urban centers of the nation has also affected the city’s perspective on state and federal government and politics. The city has welcomed the visits of a number of US presidents over the years and the summer stay of President Calvin Coolidge. Presidential candidates have also traveled to the Black Hills as part of their national campaigns. But at other times, the city’s citizens have been frustrated by their lack of ability to shape state and federal policies in line with the community’s interests.

State and federal investments in higher education have played an important role in the city. The South Dakota School of Mines & Technology has been an anchor institution for more than a century. More recently, extension campuses for medical programs at South Dakota State University and the University of South Dakota continue the long legacy of nursing education that traces back to St. John’s McNamara Hospital buildings on 11th Street, which opened in 1928.³³ For generations of young people—and for decades, primarily women—these places represented critical moments in their personal and professional development. The training and values imbued there have resonated throughout the local and regional healthcare systems.

³³ Eric Steven Zimmer, *The Question Is “Why?”: Stanford M. Adelstein, A Jewish Life in South Dakota* (Rapid City, SD: Vantage Point Press, 2019), 139.

Other resources represent changing attitudes toward the role of government in the economy. In the 1920s, the state of South Dakota constructed and operated its own cement plant, which played an important role in the region's economic development. Municipal, state, and federal programs and regulation shaped the creation of various electric, gas, and telephone utilities.

Potential Sample Property Types and Associated Features:

- Dinosaur Park
- Andrew Bogue Federal Building
- Outdoor Campus West

Military

Rapid City's economy receives strong direct and indirect support from state and federal military facilities and civilian personnel. As early as 1878, locals asked the U.S. Marshall of Dakota Territory, the leading law enforcement officer, to station soldiers near the nascent town for protection. Indeed, Rapid City competed with towns like Deadwood for military resources, in part out of an awareness that large contingents of military personnel offered a boon to merchants.³⁴ From the 1870s to the 1940s, the military presence in the Black Hills was largely consolidated at the veteran's hospitals in Hot Springs and Ft. Meade near Sturgis. During this era, Rapid City benefitted primarily from individuals traveling to and from these facilities.

With the creation of Ellsworth Air Force Base (originally the Rapid City Air Base) in 1942, government defense spending became a major factor in Rapid City's economy. These bases brought a permanent military presence—and a concomitant surge of middle and high-wage jobs—to the community. After closing temporarily after World War II, Ellsworth reopened as the Cold War began, eventually becoming a headquarters for several generations of bomber fleets and Minuteman Missile stations. Similarly, the South Dakota National Guard occupies two large acreages in western Rapid City. The Guard began using this property before World War I, but took possession as part of the reapportionment of Rapid City Indian School property in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

³⁴ *Annals of Early Rapid City (AERC)*, Volume 14, "Indians and Militia," October 14, 1878; *Black Hills Daily Times*, May 24, 1878; *AERC*, volume 14, "Indians and Militia," May 15, 1880.

Although the number of military and civilian personnel at Ellsworth fluctuated according to budget allocations over the years, the base has remained a substantial contributor to the local economy. In the 1980s and 1990s, for example, Ellsworth provided around 700 civilian and 6,600 active duty military jobs.³⁵

These investments have contributed more than jobs and facilities to the Rapid City community. Service assignments brought men and women of diverse background to the region. Ellsworth Air Force Base, for example, became home to a large congregation of Jewish families in the 1950s and 1960s—an era that was, perhaps, the high point of Jewish presence in Rapid City. And the military has left a lasting impression on local culture. Many servicemen and women return to the Black Hills in retirement, while others stay to raise their families. Rapid City has a strong culture that supports veterans and honors military service.

Military service has defined the lives and careers of many area residents. Perhaps the largest federal investment in the Rapid City area, Ellsworth Air Force Base, lies outside city limits, but its creation led to the development of military housing developments as well as military-related social and service organizations like the VFW and TREA halls to the community. These relationships also reflected the historically important relationship between the Black Hills and the Veterans Administration.

Potential Sample Property Types and Associated Features:

- Camp Rapid / National Guard Training Facility
- Quonset Hut / Vic's Motors
- Base housing additions near Minnesota Street

³⁵ City of Rapid City, “This is Rapid City 1980,” 5; City of Rapid City, “This is Rapid City 1990,” 4–7.

Economy

Thousands of square miles of thick forests, open ranchland, and resource-rich landscapes radiate from Rapid City making it the central trading point for a vast hinterland. For generations, people have been coming to Rapid City to exchange goods, purchase items shipped from faraway cities, and send their own goods to market. The city has also served as a gathering point for the exchange of information and knowledge ranging from the news of the day, to scientific research on mining and agriculture, to expert advice from lawyers, doctors, engineers, and other professionals.

After cycles of boom and bust in its earliest decades, Rapid City's economy settled into a pattern of slow and steady growth beginning in the 1920s. Relatively stable sources of federal funding for major institutions like Rapid City Air Base (now Ellsworth) and the National Parks and National Forests in the Black Hills have provided a solid base for the economy, along with state funding for major institutions like the South Dakota School of Mines & Technology. The cash flows from these anchor institutions have helped fuel an economy focused primarily on trade, services, and tourism with a small, but significant, manufacturing sector that shifted over the years from agricultural and mineral processing to building supplies and machine parts. Rapid City thus strikes a balance between being an isolated community far from the growing urban centers of the Midwest and Intermountain Plains and being an important economic, cultural, professional, and intellectual hub in the heart of a vast, rural region.

A Historic Passing Place

Transience has long been a part of Rapid City's history. As they traveled through the Black Hills, untold generations of Indigenous peoples camped along the rocky bluffs in "the Gap," where Rapid Creek passes through the Black Hills and meets the grasslands.³⁶ The site offered protection from the elements and access to water. For the same reason, Rapid City's first non-Native settlers chose that spot to set Hay Camp and plan what became downtown Rapid City.

Later, wagon trains, railroads, highways, and airports connected the Rapid City community to the outside world, and the community became known as the "Gate City" given its central location

³⁶ Linea Sundstrom & Wini Michael, "Archaeological Investigations in the Gap at Founders Park, Rapid City, South Dakota: A Report Prepared for the City of Rapid City, South Dakota, March 2009, 2, 7.

and its utility as an access point to the Black Hills. For generations, members of the military, students at the South Dakota School of Mines & Technology, the National Business College, and area vocational schools temporarily lived in Rapid City while they completed service assignments or earned an education. Dormitories, apartments, rentals, and truck stops have been part of the community's architectural and lived history. Meanwhile, the community's location on I-90, far from any other metropolitan area, has continued its function as a key place for exchanging goods, ideas, and culture.

As a geographically isolated crossroads with a strong tourism economy, Rapid City has long reflected a social combination of deeply rooted families and communities living alongside sojourners here for seasonal employment, military service at the base, or the pursuit of a college degree. At times, multi-generational residents and sojourners have moved in very different social environments.

Subsistence and Transportation

The earliest residents of what is now Rapid City used the area's access to water and timber to protect themselves from the elements. They also relied on the ample natural resources—game and fish, medicinal plants, edible flora, and stones for tools and trade—to build strong economies that balanced subsistence with participation in vast regional and continent-wide trade networks. First, Native peoples used dogs to move, hunt, and trade; later, horses enabled them to travel faster and further to hunt, procure, and exchange goods and ideas. In this way, they blended subsistence hunting, gathering, and agriculture with travel and transportation, thereby establishing the framework for the transportation industry that would later make significant contributions to the local economy.

Euro-American settlers came hoping to find gold but stayed to meet the demands of miners and other new arrivals who needed smelting services and lumber and desired beef, agricultural products, dry goods, and other trade items. The city's service industries—which included clerks, barbers, bankers, attorneys, washerwomen, butchers, and more—developed as the city grew.³⁷ Between 1900 and 1905, the leading occupations among men in Rapid City were farmer, railway

³⁷ Brenna Maloney, "Rapid City Downtown Area Survey," April 12, 2017, 16–18; Linde, *Sawmills of Black Hills*, 58–59. South Dakota State Census, 1905.



employee, miner, and stockmen—in that order. A strong sense of entrepreneurialism and a business culture defined by personal relationships and social networks took root during this period.

To allow mineral and agricultural producers to ship their goods to market, people needed access to the Black Hills. Accordingly, transportation emerged as a key pillar of the local economy. In the early days, Rapid City was a watering and supply hub for the many stagecoaches that connected Northern Hills boomtowns to communities like Pierre or Cheyenne, Wyoming, and residents established stables and corrals near downtown in the late 1870s.³⁸ The first rail line, known as the Fremont, Elkhorn, & Missouri Valley Railroad, was completed in Rapid City in June 1886, and the first train rolled in to a major welcome celebration that Independence Day.³⁹ Work on the line continued and connected Rapid City to Deadwood in 1890.⁴⁰ In subsequent years, the city would add a number of rail lines, including the Crouch Line that connected Rapid City to the central Black Hills, taking passengers all the way to Mystic by 1906. The next year, the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad and the Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad reached Rapid City, offering passenger service between Rapid City and Chicago until 1960.⁴¹

Together, these developments brought commerce to Rapid City. Locals built grand homes and buildings and department stores made of brick and stone. Between the 1870s and the 1910s, however, the city's fortunes and population ebbed and flowed in response to fluctuations in the surrounding agricultural economy. Meanwhile, the cities of Lead and Deadwood experienced growth and prosperity fueled by the success of the Homestake Mine, the local Slime Plant, and all the industry related to extracting, preparing, and shipping gold and other minerals to market. In the 1920s, however, Rapid City's position as a transportation hub led to its expansion. The first airline in South Dakota, Rapid Air Lines, Inc., began operations in the city in 1926.⁴² By 1925, the city ranked sixth among the state's urban communities with 7,465 people, and for the first time, the city accounted for a slim majority of Pennington County's residents. As the tourism industry developed around new parks and monuments like Mount Rushmore, Rapid City solidified its position as the

³⁸ Maloney, "Rapid City Downtown Area Survey," 18.

³⁹ David Seidel, *Fremont, Elkhorn, and Missouri Valley R.R. Co.* (Columbus, NE: Harbor Mist Publications, 1988), 22.

⁴⁰ Seidel, *Fremont, Elkhorn, and Missouri Valley*, 23.

⁴¹ Bev Pechan and Bill Groethe, *Remembering Rapid City: A Nostalgic Look at the 1920s through the 1970s* (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 2002), 21; Mark Hufstetler and Michael Bedeau, "South Dakota's Railroads: An Historic Context" (South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office, July 1998, Revised December 2007), 18.

⁴² Robert Wright, *Little Business on the Prairie* (Sioux Falls: Center for Western Studies, 2015), 65.

locus of economic activity in the Black Hills. It overtook Lead and Deadwood as the largest community in the region by 1930.

From the 1920s to the 1950s, major state and federal investments in road transportation expanded the network of highways that connected Rapid City to surrounding states and cities and the more rugged parts of the Black Hills. Much of this construction depended on limestone quarried within Rapid City by the Black Hills Marble Quarry company, which was sold to Pete Lien in 1944; the state-owned cement plant down the road; and the Hills Materials Company, which provided construction materials for the Northwestern Engineering Company that built many of the new routes that snaked their way into the Black Hills.⁴³ By the 1960s and 1970s, plans were underway to expand and replace Highway 16, the major artery between Rapid City and Sioux Falls, with I-90, which also connected to surrounding states.⁴⁴ As these routes developed, service stations like the Windmill Truck Stop, built around 1970, became landmarks to area residents. Meanwhile, by the 1980s, Rapid City was home to several major shipping companies, like Salt Creek Freightways, All American Transportation, Inc., and Barber Transportation—the latter of which was one of the city’s largest employers at that time.⁴⁵

The resource and transportation industries complemented one another and led to the creation of rail yards and large storage facilities. Among them were the grain elevator at the Aby’s Feed & Seed complex, which was built in 1911; the silo of the Tri-State Milling Company (known to many as the “Hubbard Mill”) across Omaha Street from Aby’s, which dates to 1938; and the former Milwaukee Freight House between 6th and 7th Streets.⁴⁶ Commerce demanded the construction of large industrial buildings like metal pull-barns, which served as warehouses for farm equipment and highway freight companies. These structures reflect the relationship between the geographic isolation and resource richness of the Black Hills, as well as the entrepreneurial spirit of some in the Rapid City community.

⁴³ J.D. Ames, “Lien family has built an empire on \$100 and some rock,” *Rapid City Journal*, December 29, 1980, 11; Zimmer, *Question is “Why?”*, 112–116.

⁴⁴ Bernie Hunhoff, “Old Highway 16,” *South Dakota Magazine*, accessed February 12, 2020, <https://www.southdakotamagazine.com/old-highway-16>.

⁴⁵ City of Rapid City, “This is Rapid City 1980,” 4–6.

⁴⁶ Pechan and Groethe, *Remembering Rapid City History*, 21; Scott Feldman, “New Store Opens in Aby’s Feed & Seed in Rapid City,” *Rapid City Journal*, December 4, 2014, accessed February 12, 2020, https://rapidcityjournal.com/business/local/new-store-opens-in-aby-s-feed-seed-in-rapid/article_b958487b-5d04-5fd9-8ef6-95f3541f0927.html; SHPO Case Report: Aby’s Feed & Seed, accessed February 12, 2020, <http://archive.rcgov.org/hpc20150904/15CM008/Case%20Report.pdf>; SD preservation railroads, 42.

Over the last several decades, continuing consolidation in agricultural processing has had a major impact on Rapid City as producers increasingly bypassed the community to send their livestock or crops to other parts of the country. By the time fire destroyed the Federal Beef processing plant in 2002, Pennington County ranked as the least agriculturally dependent county in the entire state, and land underneath the plant was rezoned to make way for professional office buildings, apartments, and homes in what became known as Founders' Park.⁴⁷ That same year, 2002, the Homestake Mine in Lead closed after 125 years of operation, significantly reducing mining's stake in the regional economy. A few years later, a private donor, the US Department of Energy, and the state of South Dakota committed funds to open the Sanford Underground Research Facility, a physics laboratory that has brought several major projects to the area. As the economy has evolved, transportation's contribution to the region's gross domestic product has declined compared to other sectors.⁴⁸ Today, resources and transportation—once bedrocks of the local business culture—make limited contributions to a broader, more diverse Rapid City economy.

Potential Sample Property Types and Associated Features:

- Rapid Creek
- Milwaukee Freight House
- Tri-State Milling Company (Hubbard Mill)
- Windmill Truck Stop
- Rapid City Regional Airport

Retail and Tourism

Trade, services and tourism have long accounted for the vast majority of private sector jobs in Rapid City. As of 2016, all other economic sectors combined (wholesale trade; transportation; mining; manufacturing; finance, insurance and real estate; construction; and agriculture, forestry, and fishing)

⁴⁷ Jim Holland, "Federal Beef burning," *Rapid City Journal*, January 31, 2002, 1.

⁴⁸ In 2017, transportation and warehousing accounted for \$160.1 million in a \$6.881 billion metropolitan area economy, or about 2.3 percent. US Bureau of Economic Analysis, MAGDP2 Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by metropolitan area, Rapid City.



accounted for about one-fourth of the total sales garnered by the combined retail and services sectors, each of which relies on the local hospitality, dining, entertainment, retail shopping, and professional services industries.⁴⁹ Tourism makes a major contribution to this retail sector.

Although the search for gold sparked the initial, non-Native settlement of Rapid City, trade quickly emerged as the focal point of the city's economy. With Euro-American migration to the West River area in the first decade of the 20th century, the population of the city swelled to 3,854. At the same time, the work life of the people of Pennington County began to change. The number of men self-identifying as miners declined from 216 to 100 between 1905 and 1915. The number of blacksmiths dropped from 32 to 16. Meanwhile, the population of teachers more than doubled (to 130), as did the number of barbers (12 to 25). There were 91 merchants in 1915, along with 13 lawyers and 22 physicians. With these changes underway, the largest numbers of workers in the county identified themselves as farmers, stockmen or housewives.

Although Rapid City continued to grow in the 1920s, its economy faced many of the same challenges as most other Midwestern agricultural communities. Farmers and stockgrowers suffered as commodities prices plummeted. Bank foreclosures rose in the rural Midwest. The pattern of exodus from the countryside and the growth of cities and towns continued. This migration contributed to Rapid City's emergence as the largest community in the Black Hills by 1930.

Between 1915 and 1930, Rapid City shifted definitively towards a service-based, urban employment model. More bookkeepers, barbers, lawyers, physicians, auto livery employees, merchants, salespeople, contractors, carpenters, real estate agents, and insurance agents came to town during this period. Many of these industries were male-dominated, and as professionals and tradesmen moved in, many were accompanied by partners who identified their occupation as "housewife." More and more women, however, found work as stenographers, teachers, telephone operators, nurses, dressmakers, bookkeepers, bankers and even as cigar makers, while, fewer women were working as domestic servants. Overall, employment in the city was growing to meet the needs of an urban population and to service the agricultural and mineral economies of the hinterland.

With the advent of the automobile and the construction of the first highways across the state and through the Black Hills, tourism added to the trading economy previously focused on

⁴⁹ "2016 Rapid City Gross Sales (By Sector)," Black Hills Knowledge Network, accessed February 13, 2020, <https://www.blackhillsknowledge network.org/community-profiles/cities-of-the-black-hills/rapid-city/rapid-city-work-economy.html#.XkV9r2hKi70>.



agricultural and natural resources exploitation. In the 19th century, tourists had come to the region by rail to visit Hot Springs and Deadwood. In the early 20th century, local boosters marketed the Black Hills as a national tourist destination, pushed for the creation of state and national parks and monuments, and exercised their influence in politics and business to ensure that everything from zoning ordinances to highway plans empowered local entrepreneurs to create the attractions, restaurants, and hotels that would entertain and support visitors. In 1927, these boosters help convince President Calvin Coolidge to escape the heat and humidity of Washington, D.C. and spend the summer in the Black Hills. Coolidge's presence and his endorsement of the construction of Mount Rushmore helped accelerate the growth of the tourism economy. The construction of the Hotel Alex Johnson in 1927 reflected the growing importance of this industry and identified downtown as a hub for visitors. Over the next several decades, as highways improved and more Americans purchased automobiles, a host of entrepreneurs launched roadside attractions aimed at the tourists headed to Mount Rushmore. Tourism sites like Sitting Bull Crystal Cave offered the Native community opportunities to earn extra cash while preserving songs and ceremonies through public performances. Nonetheless, Native people were offered few other opportunities to reap the benefits of a tourism economy that used Indigenous arts, culture, and history to attract visitors from faraway locations.⁵⁰

In this era, locals used federal Depression relief funds to restore Canyon Lake Park and build the iconic statues at Dinosaur Park. With the United States' entry into World War II in 1941, gas rationing and war mobilization depressed the tourist economy. In 1946, the community launched the event that came to be known as the Central States Fair on donated ranch land on the east side of town.⁵¹ After the war, as the national economy boomed, new waves of visitors came to the Black Hills including many middle-class families traveling on limited budgets. Their preference for value over luxury fit well with the generally down-home culture of Rapid City.

Over the decades, a library, arts center, public museums, and a civic center brought events and programming to town, attracting new kinds of visitors and giving traditional tourists more reasons to extend their stay in the city. In 1969, with financial support from banker Art Dahl, the

⁵⁰ Eric Steven Zimmer, "Historical and Cultural Significance Report: Sitting Bull Crystal Caverns," February 2016, 7–13. See also Nelson, "Dreams and Dust in the Black Hills."

⁵¹ Bart Pfankuch, "Central States Fair Looks Back While Moving Forward This Year," *Rapid City Journal*, August 15, 2015, accessed February 13, 2020, https://rapidcityjournal.com/news/local/central-states-fair-looks-back-while-moving-forward-this-year/article_83811402-20fc-53cc-b73c-f9bb06b6d8a5.html.

Stavekirke or “Chapel in the Hills” was constructed near Canyon Lake as a tourist destination and prayer space, as well as an ode to the Norwegian Lutheran influence in Rapid City. In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, Rapid City placed bronze statues on downtown street corners. The first of these represented regional Native American history, and later manifestations included statues of each US president.

Like many cities across the country, Rapid City’s physical development was powerfully affected by the arrival of the interstate. In the 1970s, the downtown area added tall office complexes like the Turnac Tower and the Black Hills Corporation headquarters to its skyline and the prominent tower of Monument Health (Rapid City Regional Hospital) stood at the south edge of the city. Meanwhile, the construction of the Rushmore Mall, which opened in 1978, began to siphon retail businesses from the downtown corridor. Over the next 40 years, the I-90 corridor became a major focus for new hospitality, retail, and industrial developments.

The development of the Rushmore Mall and associated retail along the interstate reflected the increasing dominance of national chain stores in the local retail market, a pattern that traced its roots back to the late 1920s. Although local franchisees often did very well, profits in many other cases were siphoned out of the community to headquarters cities, limiting the pool of capital to invest in entrepreneurship.

Meanwhile, numerous efforts to revitalize downtown met with limited success between the 1970s and the 2000s. When business owner and philanthropist Ray Hillenbrand and the City of Rapid City committed millions of dollars to the construction and programming of Main Street Square, foot traffic associated with programs at the Square surged. In combination with decades of historic preservation planning in the downtown area, the venue brought a new vitality to the heart of Rapid City.

Potential Sample Property Types and Associated Features:

- Duhamel Building
- Garden Cottages Motel
- Hotel Alex Johnson
- Lazy U Motel
- Rushmore Mall

Healthcare

Medical care and related services are another key pillar of the Rapid City economy. For much of the city's early history, charitable organizations associated with Christian denominations or, in the case of veterans and Native Americans, the government, operated the community's hospitals. Early physicians worked out of their homes or private offices. Around 1911, a surgeon and his nurse founded Methodist Deaconess Hospital. Operating out of the nurse's house from about 1911, it relocated to a prominent brick building a few blocks off West Boulevard in 1923.⁵² A group of Benedictine nuns moved to Rapid City from Sturgis in 1928 and opened a 75-bed facility and nursing program at St. John's McNamara Hospital on 11th Street.⁵³ Another large facility called Bennett-Clarkson Memorial Hospital opened on the West Side of Rapid City in 1954.⁵⁴ Along with the Indian Health Services facility at Sioux San, clinics at Ellsworth Air Force Base, and the VA hospitals in Hot Springs and Sturgis, St. Johns and Bennett Clarkson were the primary care centers for most Rapid Citians.

Nationally, the expansion of private insurance programs after World War II transformed the health care system in the United States and contributed to increasing professionalization and secularization. With federal funding, community hospitals grew in size, featuring specialties and subspecialties supported by private and government insurance payments.⁵⁵ In Rapid City, competitive pressures collided with market demand for new facilities and new programs. In 1973, Bennett-Clarkson and St. Johns McNamara consolidated into Rapid City Regional Hospital, which operated out of both of the former hospital buildings for several years.

Over the next several years, Rapid City Regional planned and built a large new hospital complex on the south side of town. Opened in 1979, the facility became the headquarters for "Regional Health," a hospital network that consolidated various community health clinics between the 1980s and 2010s and became the primary medical network for the West River region.⁵⁶

⁵² George W. Kingsbury, *History of Dakota Territory, Volume 5* (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Company 1915), 26; <https://historysouthdakota.wordpress.com/2018/07/20/places-of-care-and-science-hospital-buildings-in-south-dakota/#more-4631>.

⁵³ Zimmer, *Question is "Why?"* 139.

⁵⁴ <https://historysouthdakota.wordpress.com/2018/07/20/places-of-care-and-science-hospital-buildings-in-south-dakota/#more-4631>

⁵⁵ Paul Starr, *The Social Transformation of American Medicine* (New York: Basic Books, 1982).

⁵⁶ Zimmer, *Question is "Why?"* 202–3.

As the median age of the population in western South Dakota increased in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, Rapid City became a destination for retirees. New senior living facilities, retirement homes, and long-term care facilities were built. West Hills Village, for example, developed in 1980 underwent significant expansion starting in 2000 when the association bought Clarkson Health Care. Other nursing homes and retirement centers provided an expanding market for health care services. In addition, several private specialty-driven therapy and surgery centers emerged around the community to serve the growing market. Meanwhile, the Indian Health Service continued to provide healthcare to the Native community and began developing plans for new facilities.

In 2020, Regional Health merged into the Minnesota-based Mayo Clinic network of care, rebranding itself as Monument Health. As recently as 2016, the CEO of Regional Health estimated that the hospital network's economic impact in the Black Hills totaled more than \$1 billion each year, including an institutional payroll of \$300 million and a contribution to the employment of 9,000 additional service providers across the region.⁵⁷

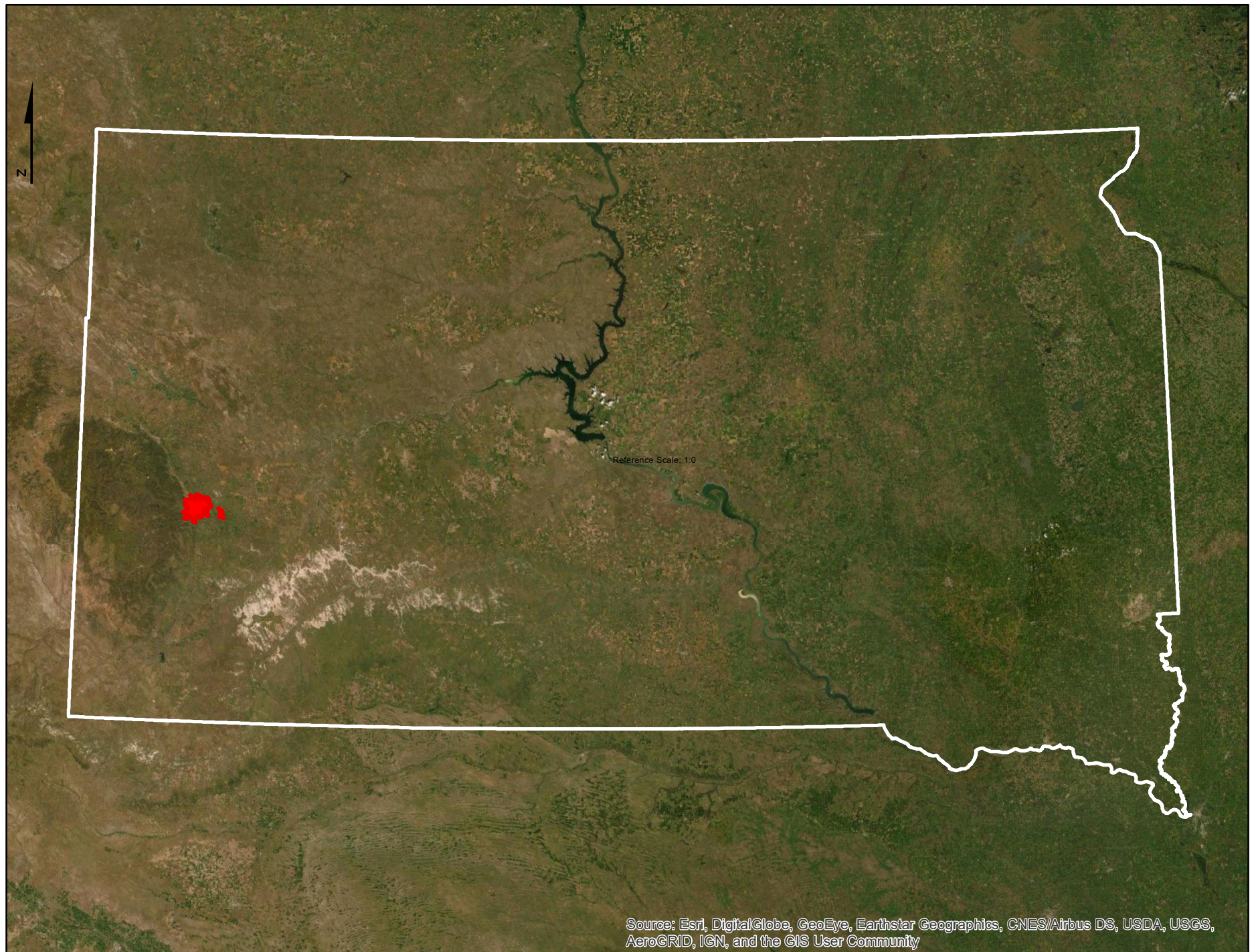
In addition to their aggregate economic impact, healthcare facilities in Rapid City are anchors of memory for area residents, many of whom experienced significant life events—from births to major surgeries, or the loss of loved ones—inside their walls. Others learned their profession in these places and some spent decades in service to local hospital networks and the patients they treat.

Potential Sample Property Types and Associated Features:

- Methodist Deaconess Hospital
- Bennett-Clarkson Hospital
- St. John's McNamara Hospital
- Rapid City Regional Hospital
- West Hills Village

⁵⁷ Jim Holland, "Regional Health Leader: Some Employees Not Devoted to Being No. 1 Are Gone," *Rapid City Journal* March 26, 2016, accessed February 13, 2020, https://rapidcityjournal.com/news/local/regional-health-leader-some-employees-not-devoted-to-being-no-1-are-gone/article_bf09070a-7c4f-5b6c-89f3-e22b2662943a.html. According to the US Bureau of Economic Analysis, health care and social assistance accounted for \$916 million, or roughly 14 percent, of the metropolitan area's total GDP in 2017. US Bureau of Economic Analysis, MAGDP2 Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by metropolitan area, Rapid City.

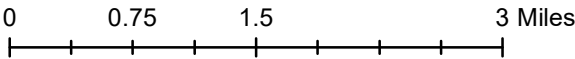
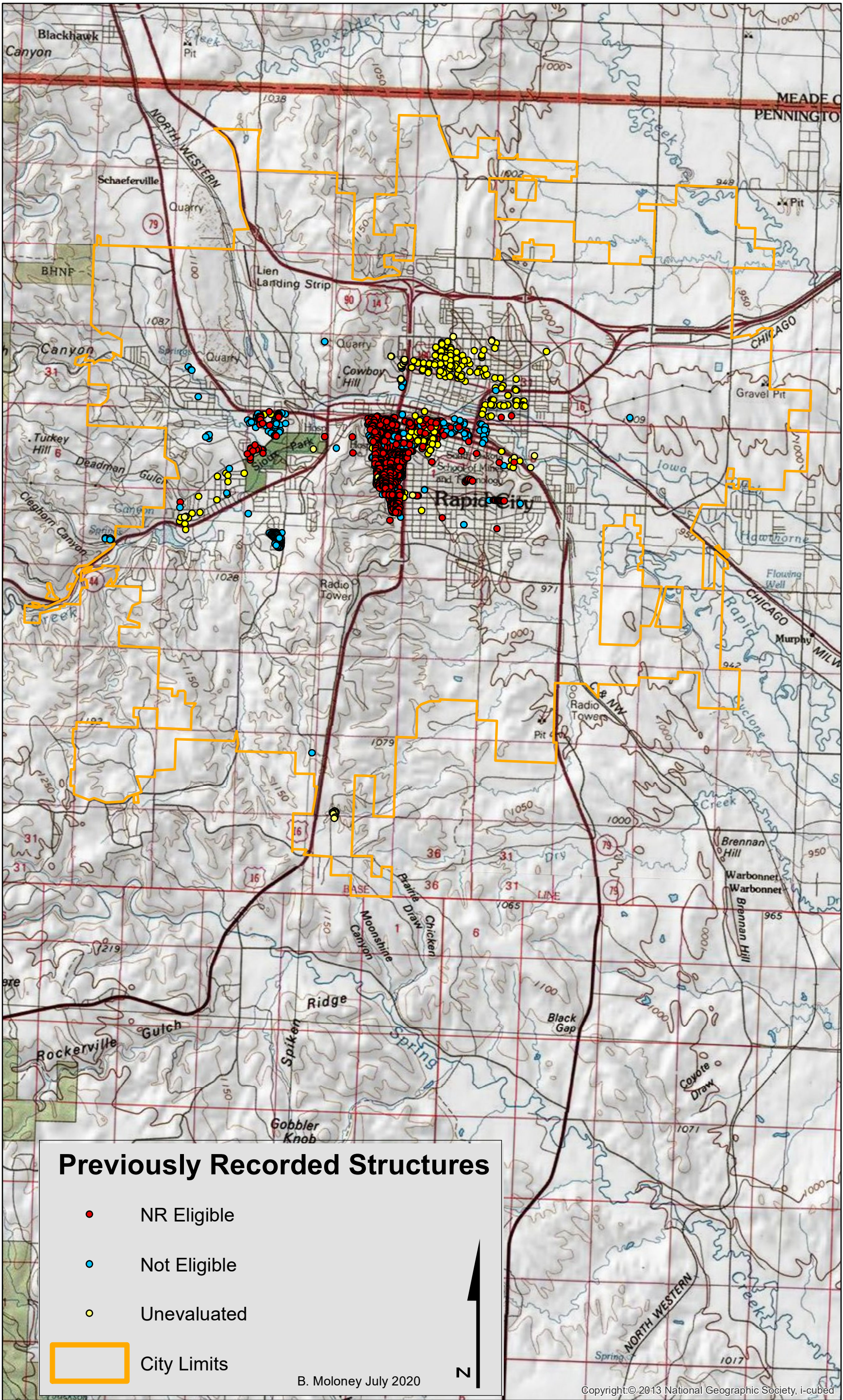
Location of Rapid City Within the Black Hills & State



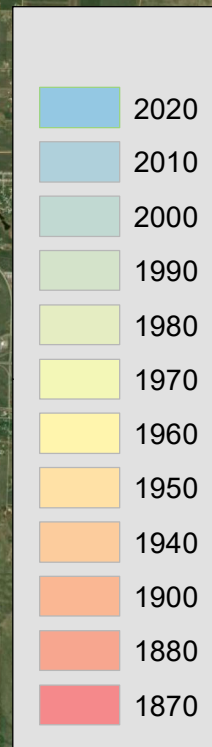
Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community

0 40 80 160 Miles

B. Moloney July 2020



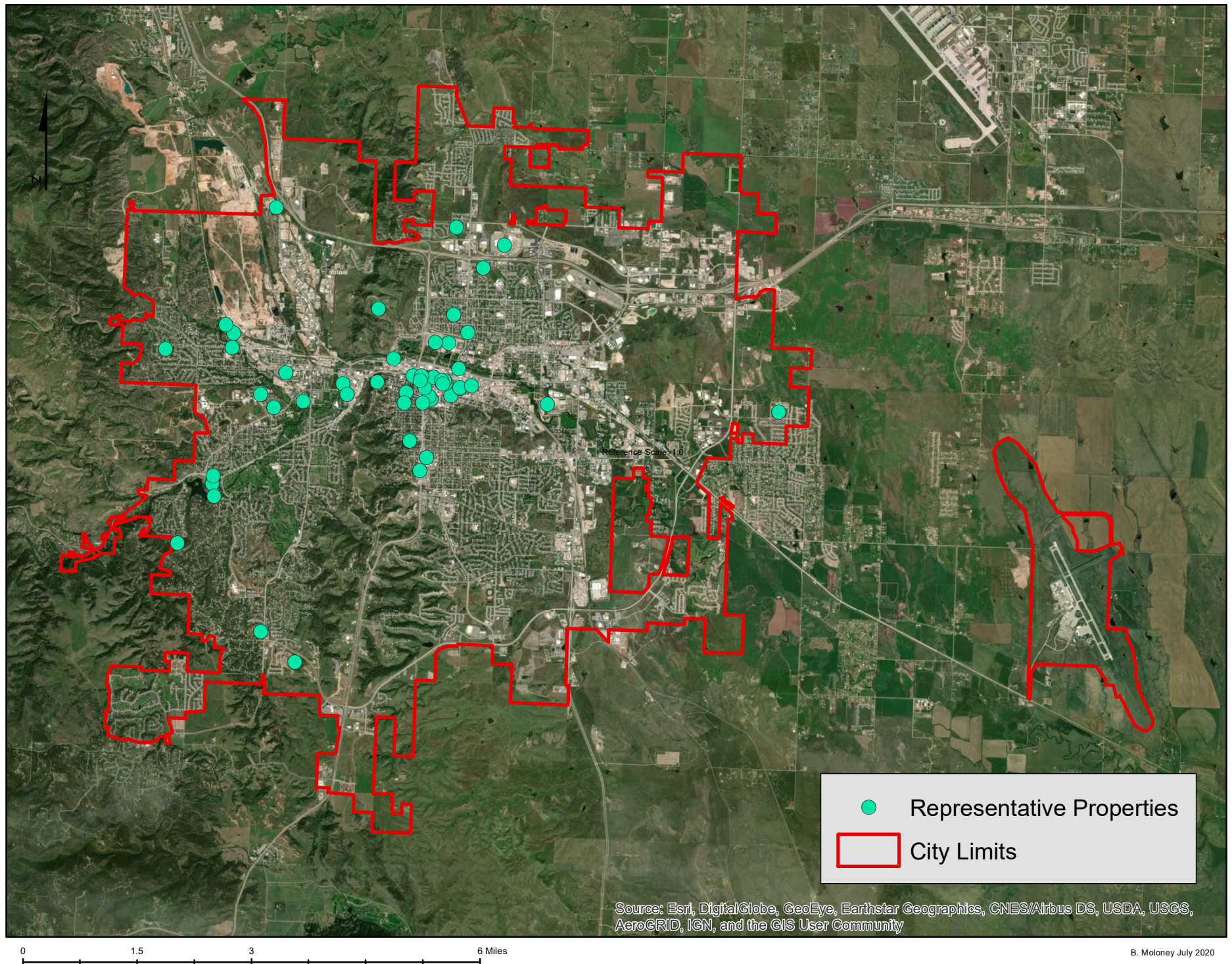
Rapid City Annexations by Decade



Reference Scale: 1:0

0 1.25 2.5 5 Miles

Representative Property Type Locations Aerial: Rapid City Thematic Framework



Representative Property Type Locations Topo: Rapid City Thematic Framework

