



NRHP E-Blasts

Electronic blasts from the National Register of Historic Places, sharing news and information with the Historic Preservation Community

October 2020

Greetings and Well Wishes from the National Register Staff at NPS

The staff of the National Register Program hopes this E-blast, our first during the extended telework period introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, finds our preservation partners in the state offices well. We acknowledge that many state offices are facing a number of challenges at this time, including but not limited to addressing shrinking budgets, managing logistics for online State Review Board meetings, and ensuring the opportunity for public comment on the important work in which we are all engaged, as just a few examples. Please know that we are diligently teleworking and are available via telephone, email, and video conference to discuss our shared work. Do not hesitate to reach out to us during this time and be assured we remain committed to the timely delivery of reviews and technical assistance.

National Register/National Historic Landmarks Programs Welcome Sherry A. Frear, RLA, as New Chief

In April, Sherry A. Frear, RLA, became the permanent program chief for the National Register of Historic Places and National Historic Landmarks program at the National Park Service. She replaces Paul Loether, who retired in 2018. Sherry brings to the National Register an interest in expanding the diversity of listings; updating and reissuing the Bulletins; and developing additional guidance for modern buildings and landscapes. Sherry's experience ranges from programming, planning, and compliance, to design, operations, and interpretation. She has worked at the city, county, and federal levels, including a previous stint with NPS at Lowell National Historical Park. Before rejoining NPS, she worked with the U.S. General Services Administration's Public Buildings Service, in the Office of Design and Construction in Washington, D.C., where she supported program-level responses to documentation efforts, sustainability issues, and compliance challenges. Sherry is a licensed landscape architect, with graduate degrees in Landscape Architecture and Historic Preservation Planning from Cornell University, and a B.A. in American History from the University of Maryland.

Electronic Submissions

On April 10, 2020, the National Register program launched an electronic-only submission process in response to the COVID-19 global pandemic. E-filing allows the work of the National Register to continue to move forward even as program staff and most of our state, Federal, and tribal partners telework or adopt other strategies and schedules to minimize colocation. Instructions for preparing submissions and uploading them into the secure, FTP site are posted on the National Register website at

<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/electronic-only-submission-instructions.htm>.

Section 10 (Geographical Data) Guidance

Section 10 of the National Register form captures the location and extent of the property being nominated while also explaining what the boundaries are and how they were selected. Reviewing the guidelines on pages 56 and 57 of *National Register Bulletin 16A: How to Complete the National Register Registration Form* is essential before finalizing this section of the documentation, especially to ensure accuracy of the Verbal Boundary Description and inserting the coordinate data (both of which are tied to the property locator map). A brief clarification of both verbal boundary descriptions and the importance of identifying the coordinate datum being referenced are provided here.

Verbal Boundary Descriptions

The Verbal Boundary Description in Section 10 (Geographical Data) of the National Register form serves as the legal basis for defining what is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. As such, it needs to be as accurate as possible. A metes-and-bounds description with a beginning point at a known and permanent location is the traditional method employed to convey this information. Other acceptable methods include citing a legal description based on a survey; including a properly scaled map; or providing a tax parcel reference. If a tax parcel is used, a date that the tax information was accessed and a graphic representation of the parcel should be provided. The graphic representation (map) should be dated. This is important since tax parcels may be split without subdividing the land.

While “parcel” and “lot” are often used interchangeably, there is a difference between them. Simply stated, a parcel is an identification for taxation purposes, while a lot is a recognized subdivision of property with a written legal description that addresses permissions or constraints upon its development. It is common for a lot and a parcel to share the same space, but this is not always uniform in execution. Some county GIS systems do not include the extent of a lot when depicting tax parcels. Taxable boundaries sometimes do not include rights-of-way for roads.

Maps and the Importance of Specifying the Coordinate Datum

When completing a National Register nomination, particular attention must be afforded to specifying the coordinate datum in the map descriptions. This information can be found on all USGS maps but often gets omitted when only a partial map (or map detail) is included with the National Register registration form. The three most common datums in use in the continental United States are:

- NAD 27 CONUS-North American Datum of 1927 for the Continental United States (common on older USGS Maps)
- NAD 83-North American Datum of 1983 (employed on newer USGS maps)
- WGS 84-World Geodetic System of 1984 (the default datum used by the GPS system)

When submitting maps from other sources such as Google Earth or an agency GIS, nominators should verify the datum and be sure to include it in the nomination form submitted to NPS. Coordinates should be in decimal degrees (preferred) or UTM's. Degree, minute, and second coordinates can readily and accurately be converted using the online tool at <https://www.fcc.gov/media/radio/dms-decimal>. Every map that shows a geographic coordinate system such as UTM or Latitude/Longitude with any precision will also identify the datum referenced.

For resources less than 10 acres in size, a single point centroid coordinate (point around which a circle is drawn) is usually sufficient. For larger, irregularly shaped districts a simple polygon such as a rectangle surrounding the area of the district will suffice. In some instances, such as linear features or those requiring greater precision for preservation purposes, a larger number of coordinates may be warranted.

Thank you for working with us in preserving history!