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National Park Service

ARTICLE • SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Preservation Planning Guidelines

Introduction

These Guidelines link the Standards for Preservation Planning with more specific guidance and technical information. They describe one approach to meeting the Standards for Preservation Planning. Agencies, organizations or individuals proposing to approach planning differently may wish to review their approaches with the National Park Service.

The Guidelines are organized as follows:

Managing the Planning Process

Developing Historic Contexts

Developing Goals for a Historic Context

Integrating Individual Historic Contexts - Creating the Preservation Plan

Coordinating with Management Frameworks

Recommended Sources of Technical Information [Note: Sources are outdated and are not included here.]

Managing the Planning Process

The preservation planning process must include an explicit approach to implementation, a provision for review and revision of all elements, and a mechanism for resolving conflicts within the overall set of preservation goals and between this set of goals and other land use planning goals. It is recommended that the process and its products be described in public documents.

Implementing the Process

The planning process is a continuous cycle. To establish and maintain such a process, however, the process must be divided into manageable segments that can be performed, within a defined period, such as a fiscal year or budget cycle. One means of achieving this is to define a period of time during which all the preliminary steps in the planning process will be completed. These preliminary steps would include setting a schedule for subsequent activities.

Review and Revision

Planning is a dynamic process. It is expected that the content of the historic contexts described in Standard I and the goals and priorities described in Standard II will be altered based on new information obtained as planning proceeds. The incorporation of this information is essential to improve the content of the plan and to keep it up-to-date and useful. New information must be reviewed regularly and systematically, and the plan revised accordingly.

Public Participation

The success of the preservation planning process depends on how well it solicits and integrates the views of various groups. The planning process is directed first toward resolving conflicts in goals for historic preservation, and second toward resolving conflicts between historic preservation goals and other land use planning goals. Public participation is integral to this approach and includes at least the following actions:

1. Involving historians, architectural historians, archeologists, folklorists and persons from related disciplines to define, review and revise the historic contexts, goals and priorities;
2. Involving interested individuals, organizations and communities in the planning area in identifying the kinds of historic properties that may exist and suitable protective measures;
3. Involving prospective users of the preservation plan in defining issues, goals and priorities;
4. Providing for coordination with other planning efforts at local, State, regional and national levels, as appropriate; and
5. Creating mechanisms for identifying and resolving conflicts about historic preservation issues. The development of historic contexts, for example, should be based on the professional input of all disciplines involved in preservation and not be limited to a single discipline. For prehistoric archeology, for example, data from fields such as geology, geomorphology and geography may also be needed. The individuals and organizations to be involved will depend, in part, on those present or interested in the planning area.

Documents Resulting from the Planning Process

In most cases, the planning process produces documents that explain how the process works and that discuss the historic contexts and related goals and priorities. While the process can operate in the absence of these documents, planning documents are important because they are the most effective means of communicating the process and its recommendations to others. Planning documents also record decisions about historic properties.

As various parts of the planning process are reviewed and revised to reflect current information, related documents must also be updated. Planning documents should be created in a form that can be easily revised. It is also recommended that the format language and organization of any documents or other materials (visual aids, etc.) containing preservation planning information meet the needs of prospective users.

Developing Historic Contexts

General Approach

Available information about historic properties must be divided into manageable units before it can be useful for planning purposes. Major decisions about identifying, evaluating, registering and treating historic properties are most reliably made in the context of other related properties. A historic context is an organizational format that groups information about related historic properties, based on a theme, geographic limits and chronological period. A single historic context describes one or more aspects of the historic development of an area, considering history, architecture, archeology, engineering and culture

and identifies the significant patterns that individual historic properties represent, for example, Coal Mining in Northeastern Pennsylvania between 1860 and 1930. A set of historic contexts is a comprehensive summary of all aspects of the history of the area.

The historic context is the cornerstone of the planning process. The goal of preservation planning is to identify, evaluate, register and treat the full range of properties representing each historic context, rather than only one or two types of properties. Identification activities are organized to ensure that research and survey activities include properties representing all aspects of the historic context. Evaluation uses the historic context as the framework within which to apply the criteria for evaluation to specific properties or property types. Decisions about treatment of properties are made with the goal of treating the range of properties in the context. The use of historic contexts in organizing major preservation activities ensures that those activities result in the preservation of the wide variety of properties that represent our history, rather than only a small, biased sample of properties.

Historic contexts, as theoretical constructs, are linked to actual historic properties through the concept of property type. Property types permit the development of plans for identification, evaluation and treatment even in the absence of complete knowledge of individual properties. Like the historic context, property types are artificial constructs which may be revised as necessary. Historic contexts can be developed at a variety of scales appropriate for local, State and regional planning. Give the probability of historic contexts overlapping in an area, it is important to coordinate the development and use of contexts at all levels. Generally, the State Historic Preservation Office possesses the most complete body of information about historic properties and, in practice, is in the best position perform this function.

The development of historic contexts generally results in documents that describe the prehistoric processes or patterns that define the context. Each of the contexts selected should be developed to the point of identifying important property types to be useful in later preservation decision-making. The amount of detail included in these summaries will vary depending on the level (local, State, regional, or national) at which the contexts are developed and on their intended uses. For most planning purposes, a synopsis of the written description of the historic context is sufficient.

Creating a Historic Context

Generally, historic contexts should not be constructed so broadly as to include all property types under a single historic context or so narrowly as to contain only one property type per historic context. The following procedures should be followed in creating a historic context.

1. Identify the concept, time period and geographical limits for the historic context

Existing information, concepts, theories, models and descriptions should be used as the basis for defining historic contexts. Biases in primary and secondary sources should be identified and accounted for when existing information is used in defining historic contexts.

The identification and description of historic contexts should incorporate contributions from all disciplines involved in historic preservation. The chronological period and geographical area of each historic context should be defined after the conceptual basis is established. However, there may be exceptions, especially in defining prehistoric contexts where drainage systems or physiographic regions often are outlined first. The geographical boundaries for historic contexts should not be based upon contemporary political, project or other contemporary boundaries if those boundaries do not coincide with historical boundaries. For example, boundaries for prehistoric contexts will have little relationship to contemporary city, county or State boundaries.

2. Assemble the existing information about the historic context

a. **Collecting information:** Several kinds of information are needed to construct a preservation plan. Information about the history of the area encompassed by the historic context must be collected, including any information about historic properties that have already been identified. Existing survey or inventory entries are an important source of information about historic properties. Other sources may include literature on prehistory, history, architecture and the environment; social and environmental impact assessments; county and State land use plans; architectural and folklife studies and oral histories; ethnographic research; State historic inventories and registers; technical reports prepared for Section 106 or other assessments of historic properties; and direct consultation with individuals and organized groups.

In addition, organizations and groups that may have important roles in defining historic contexts and values should be identified. In most cases a range of knowledgeable professionals drawn from the preservation, planning and academic communities will be available to assist in defining contexts and in identifying sources of information. In other cases, however, development of historic contexts may occur in areas whose history or prehistory has not been extensively studied. In these situations, broad general historic contexts should be initially identified using available literature and expertise, with the expectation that the contexts will be revised and subdivided in the future as primary source research and field survey are conducted. It is also important to identify such sources of information as existing planning data, which is needed to establish goals for identification, evaluation and treatment, and to identify factors that will affect attainment of those goals.

The same approach for obtaining information is not necessarily desirable for all historic contexts. Information should not be gathered without first considering its relative importance to the historic context, the cost and time involved, and the expertise required to obtain it. In many cases, for example, published sources may be used in writing initial definitions of historic contexts; archival research or field work may be needed for subsequent activities.

b. **Assessing information:** All information should be reviewed to identify bias in historic perspective, methodological approach, or area of coverage. For example, field surveys for archeological sites may have ignored historic archeological sites, or county land use plans may have emphasized only development goals.

3. Synthesize information

The information collection and analysis results in a written narrative of the historic context. This narrative provides a detailed synthesis of the data that have been collected and analyzed. The narrative covers the history of the area from the chosen perspective and identifies important patterns, events, persons or cultural values. In the process of identifying the important patterns, one should consider:

- Trends in area settlement and development, if relevant;
- Aesthetic and artistic values embodied in architecture, construction technology, or craftsmanship;
- Research values or problems relevant to the historic context; social and physical sciences and humanities; and cultural interests of local communities; and
- Intangible cultural values of ethnic groups and Native American peoples.

4. Define property types

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

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

Property types defined for the historic context "Coal Mining in Northeastern Pennsylvania, 1860-1930" might include coal extraction and processing complexes; railroad and canal transportation systems; commercial districts; mine workers'

housing; churches, social clubs and other community facilities reflecting the ethnic origins of workers; and residences and other properties associated with mine owners and other industrialists.

a. Identify property types: The narrative should discuss the kinds of properties expected within the geographical limits of the context and group them into those property types most useful in representing important historic trends.

Generally, property types should be defined after the historic context has been defined. Property types in common usage ("Queen Anne House," "mill buildings" or "stratified sites") should not be adopted without first verifying their relevance to the historic contexts being used.

b. Characterize the locational patterns of property types: Generalizations about where particular types of properties are likely to be found can serve as a guide for identification and treatment. Generalizations about the distribution of archeological properties are frequently used. The distribution of other historic properties often can be estimated based on recognizable historical, environmental or cultural factors that determined their location. Locational patterns of property types should be based upon models that have an explicit theoretical or historical basis and can be tested in the field. The model may be the product of historical research and analysis ("Prior to widespread use of steam power, mills were located on rivers and streams able to produce water power" or "plantation houses in the Mississippi Black Belt were located on sandy clay knolls"), or it may result from sampling techniques. Often the results of statistically valid sample surveys can be used to describe the locational patterns of a representative portion of properties belonging to a particular property type. Other surveys can also provide a basis for suggesting locational patterns if a diversity of historic properties was recorded and a variety of environmental zones was inspected. It is likely that the identification of locational patterns will come from a combination of these sources. Expected or predicted locational patterns of property types should be developed with a provision made for their verification.

c. Characterize the current condition of property types: The expected condition of property types should be evaluated to assist in the development of identification, evaluation and treatment strategies, and to help define physical integrity thresholds for various property types. The following should be assessed for each property type:

1. Inherent characteristics of a property type that either contribute to or detract from its physical preservation. For example, a property type commonly constructed of fragile materials is more likely to be deteriorated than a property type constructed of durable materials; structures whose historic function or design limits the potential for alternative uses (water towers) are less likely to be reused than structures whose design allows a wider variety of other uses (commercial buildings or warehouses).
2. Aspects of the social and natural environment that may affect the preservation or visibility of the property type. For example, community values placed on certain types of properties (churches, historic cemeteries) may result in their maintenance while the need to reuse valuable materials may stimulate the disappearance of properties like abandoned houses and barns.
3. It may be most efficient to estimate the condition of property types based on professional knowledge of existing properties and field test these estimates using a small sample of properties representative of each type.

5. Identify information needs

Filling gaps in information is an important element of the preservation plan designed for each historic context. Statements of the information needed should be as specific as possible, focusing on the information needed, the historic context and property types it applies to, and why the information is needed to perform identification, evaluation, or treatment activities.

Developing Goals for a Historic Context

Developing Goals

A goal is a statement of preferred preservation activities, which is generally stated in terms of property types.

The purpose of establishing preservation goals is to set forth a "best case" version of how properties in the historic context should be identified, evaluated, registered and treated.

Preservation goals should be oriented toward the greatest possible protection of properties in the historic context and should be based on the principle that properties should be preserved in place if possible, through affirmative treatments like rehabilitation, stabilization or restoration. Generally, goals will be specific to the historic context and will often be phrased in terms of property types. Some of these goals will be related to information needs previously identified for the historic context. Collectively, the goals for a historic context should be a coherent statement of program direction covering all aspects of the context.

For each goal, a statement should be prepared identifying:

1. The goal, including the context and property types to which the goal applies and the geographical area in which they are located;
2. The activities required to achieve the goal;
3. The most appropriate methods or strategies for carrying out the activities;
4. A schedule within which the activities should be completed; and
5. The amount of effort required to accomplish the goal, as well as a way to evaluate progress toward its accomplishment.

Setting priorities for the goals

Once goals have been developed they need to be ranked in importance. Ranking involves examining each goal in light of a number of factors.

1. General social, economic, political and environmental conditions and trends affecting (positively and negatively) the identification, evaluation, registration and treatment of property types in the historic context.

Some property types in the historic context may be more directly threatened by deterioration, land development patterns, contemporary use patterns, or public perceptions of their value, and such property types should be given priority consideration.

2. Major cost or technical considerations affecting the identification, evaluation and treatment of property types in the historic context.

The identification or treatment of some property types may be technically possible but the cost prohibitive; or techniques may not currently be perfected (for example, the identification of submerged sites or objects, or the

evaluation of sites containing material for which dating techniques are still being developed).

3. Identification, evaluation, registration and treatment activities previously carried out for property types in the historic context.

If a number of properties representing one aspect of a historic context have been recorded or preserved, treatment of additional members of that property type may receive lower priority than treatment of a property type for which no examples have yet been recorded or preserved. This approach ensures that the focus of recording or preserving all elements of the historic context is retained, rather than limiting activities to preserving properties representing only some aspects of the context.

The result of considering the goals in light of these concerns will be a list of refined goals ranked in order of priority.

Integrating Individual Contexts - Creating the Preservationist Plan

When historic contexts overlap geographically, competing goals and priorities must be integrated for effective preservation planning. The ranking of goals for each historic context must be reconciled to ensure that recommendations for one context do not contradict those for another. This important step results in an overall set of priorities for several historic contexts and a list of the activities to be performed to achieve the ranked goals. When applied to a specific geographical area, this is the preservation plan for that area.

It is expected that in many instances historic contexts will overlap geographically. Overlapping contexts are likely to occur in two combinations—those that were defined at the same scale (i.e., textile development in Smithtown 1850-1910 and Civil War in Smithtown 1855-1870) and those defined at different scales (i.e., Civil War in Smithtown and Civil War in the Shenandoah Valley). The contexts may share the same property types, although the shared property types will probably have different levels of importance, or they may group the same properties into different property types, reflecting either a different scale of analysis or a different historical perspective. As previously noted, many of the goals that are formulated for a historic context will focus on the property types defined for that context. Thus it is critical that the integration of goals include the explicit consideration of the potential for shared property type membership by individual properties. For example, when the same property types are used by two contexts, reconciling the goals will require weighing the level of importance assigned to each property type. The degree to which integration of historic contexts must involve reconciling property types may be limited by the coordinated development of historic contexts used at various levels.

Integration with Management Frameworks

Preservation goals and priorities are adapted to land units through integration with other planning concerns. This integration must involve the resolution of conflicts that arise when competing resources occupy the same land base. Successful resolution of these conflicts can often be achieved through judicious combination of inventory, evaluation and treatment activities. Since historic properties are irreplaceable, these activities should be heavily weighted to discourage the destruction of significant properties and to be compatible with the primary land use.

Part of a series of articles titled *Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation* (<https://www.nps.gov/articles/series.htm?id=62144687-B082-538A-A0174FFF26496394>).

Previous: [Preservation Planning Standards](https://www.nps.gov/articles/sec_stds_planning_standard_s.htm)
(https://www.nps.gov/articles/sec_stds_planning_standard_s.htm).

Next: [Identification Standards](https://www.nps.gov/articles/sec_stds_id_standards.htm)
(https://www.nps.gov/articles/sec_stds_id_standards.htm).



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