National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

code

See instructions in How to Complete National Register Forms Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Buffalo Main Street Historic District

Buffalo Main Street Historic District and or common

Location

2.

street & number Main Street

Buffalo city, town

Wyoming state

Classification 3.

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
X district	public	X_ occupied	agriculture	museum
building(s)	X private	unoccupied	X_commercial	park
structure	both	work in progress	educational	private residence
site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	entertainment	religious
object	<u>n/a</u> in process	yes: restricted	government	scientific
	<u>n/a</u> being considered	X yes: unrestricted	industrial	transportation
		no	military	other:

vicinity of

county

056

N/A

Johnson

Owner of Property 4.

name	Multiple							
street &	number	Multiple						
city, tov	vn	Multiple		vicinity of	N/A	state	Wyoming	
5.	Locat	ion of L	.egal	Descript	tion			
courtho	use, registr	y of deeds, etc.	Johnso	on County Cou	urthouse			
street &	number		:6 Noi	rth Main				
city, tov	vn Bu	ffalo				state	Wyoming	82834
6.	Repre	esentati	ion in	Existing	g Surve	eys 📃		
title	Wyoming	Sites Surve	ey .	has this	property been	determined e	igible?	yes X no
date	1980-81				tec	leral X_sta	te cour	nty local
depo sit	ory for surv	ey records	920 Tho	mes	-			
city, tou	wn Cł	neyenne		· · ·		state	Wyoming	82002

For NPS us	se only		
received	MAR	6	1984
date ente	red		

not for publication

code 019

7. Description

Condition	
excellent	

- 57	excellent
<u>X</u>	good
	fair

_ deteriorated _ ruins	$\frac{\textbf{Check one}}{X} \text{ unaltered} \\ \frac{X}{X} \text{ altered}$
unexposed	

Check one original site n/a_{moved} date n/a

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Buffalo Main Street Historic District contains historically significant buildings primarily dating from 1900 to 1932. Most are two-story structures, a few are one-story structures, and all have flat roofs. Of the 18 buildings, 12 are identified as contributing and six are designated as non-contributing/ non-intrusive. While they may have lost integrity in terms of exterior facades, they continue to be an important part of this tightly knit commercial district and contribute in terms of scale, design, feeling, association, and use. Additionally, many retain original facades beneath newer materials and have potential as tax act projects. This $1\frac{1}{2}$ block district extends diagonally along Main Street at the heart of the larger commercial area. It is divided midway in the block between Fetterman Street and Fort Street on the north. Clear Creek, originally the impetus for locating Buffalo at this site runs under Main Street just south of this boundary. Thus the commercial district is uniquely laid out along a sloped and curving Main Street. This unusual setting aides in Buffalo's retention of integrity and especially enhances the feeling and association of the district. Angus Street serves as the southern boundary. The district includes only the buildings on the west side of Main Street, with the exception of the bar and theatre at the northeast corner of the district-included because of their architectural contributions to the district. The district is bounded by alleys on the west. Buffalo's buildings are typical of other commercial structures constructed in Wyoming and the West during the same period, and are representative of the cattle industry's recovery from weather, political battles of the 1880's and 90's, and the trend for growth experienced at the turn of the century. Facade details represent a simple stylistic approach to commercial design. Most of the buildings are constructed of brick, a few are stone, and some have been stuccoed. They have large storefront windows with recessed entries, larger buildings have multiple entries, there are occasional iron cornices, brackets, decorative brick work, pressed metal ornaments and stone sills and lintels. Modern exterior changes are predominately limited to the first floors, strengthening the continuity of second-story facades. Clearstory windows are often obscured by modern signage but are evident. The scale and density is that of a visually intact, tightly knit commercial core of one and two-story structures with shared walls.

SEE ADDENDUM

8. Significance

1400–1499 1500–1599 1600–1699 1700–1799 X 1800–1899	Areas of Significance—C archeology-prehistoric archeology-historic agriculture architecture art X commerce communications	 community planning conservation economics education engineering x exploration/settlement 	Iandscape architectur Iaw Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature Iterature	e religion science sculpture social/ humanitarian theater transportation other (specify)
Specific dates	1900-1932	Builder/Architect ur	ıknown (local)	

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

This state and locally significant district is associated with and representative of the chain of events--removal of Indian control, homesteading, cattle ranching and agricultural development, foreign investments, the tourist industry and mineral development--which have made significant contributions to the broad patterns of Johnson County and Wyoming history. It is typical of similar western communities but unique because it has avoided boom and bust cycles and therefore remains intact. It is also associated with locally significant businessmen and merchants as well as major economic trends which molded Wyoming history.

The buildings in the Buffalo Main Street Historic District represent a prosperous commercial area supported by the agricultural base of the upper Powder River Basin in northern Wyoming. Located at the heart of the commercial district, these structures embody the distinctive characteristics of small western town development in the late 19th and early 20th century (integrity of design, setting, materials workmanship, feeling, and association). The district is located on the winding Main Street with Clear Creek dividing north and south Main, enhanced by Buffalo's location at the foot of the Big Horn mountains. The combination of this unusual curving Main Street, the romantic setting, and the architecturally cohesive district make it one of Wyoming's most distinctive downtowns. Diverse economic and governmental factors have supported Buffalo's growth and success from its earliest beginnings. The Bozeman Trail brought the first white settlers into the area in the 1860's and 70's but it wasn't until the removal of hostile Indian control and the establishment of Fort McKinney in 1876 that cattlemen and homesteaders became permanent. By 1879 there was sufficient need for Buffalo, now an incorporated community, to serve as county seat. Homesteaders, freighters, and cattlemen were joined by businessmen and entrepreneurs ready to invest their money and labor in Buffalo. An influx of state and locally significant wealthy foreigners and the rapid success of Powder River ranching increased the need for commercial goods and services and Buffalo became the heart of commercial activity for one of Wyoming's largest counties. As early as the 1880's, tourists were frequenting area dude ranches; and although agriculture has always been the dominant force in the town's economy, tourist dollars have diversified and strengthened the economic base. Buffalo's steady growth continued into the 1930's and then tapered off in the face of depression. Although the town continues to thrive, the downtown district remains as a reminder of her greatest period of growth: 1879 to 1932. Today, mineral development contributes to continued stability supporting the traditional agricultural and tourist base and helping Buffalo to avoid the ravages of boom and bust which plague many other Wyoming communities. The main street while continuing to present a small rural community atmosphere demonstrates the solid economic successes of Buffalo's past.

SEE ADDENDUM

9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE ADDENDUM ITEM #9

	iominated property	approximately	five acres					
Quadrangle	name Buffalo,	WY			Quadrang	le scale 1:2	4,000	
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c 1 3	3 6 4 6 4 0	4 9 1 1 6 5 0	. D	1 3	3 6 4 7 2 0	4 9 1 1	6 5 0	
E 1 3	3 6 4 7 2 0	4 9 1 1 6 1 0						
G 1 3	3 6 4 6 3 0	4 9 1 1 4 3 0	н	1 3	3 6 4 6 7 0	4 9 1 1	4 2 0	
Verbal bou	ndary descriptio	n and justificatio	n					
		-						
SEE /	ADDENDUM IT	EM #10						
List all sta	tes and counties	for properties ov	verlapping stat	e or co	ounty boundaries			
state	N/A	code N	A county	. N//	\	code	N/A	
state	N/A	code N	I/A county	N/A	\	codo	NI / A	
		pared By		IN / F	<u>\</u>	code	<u>N/A</u>	
organization N/A street & number Box 398 / Box 40		/ Box 40		telephone (307) 777-6179				
		lite House		- •	_{ate} Wyoming			
city or town	Sheridan	BIG Horn		St				
			servati			ertific	ation	
12. S	tate His	toric Pre	فتعرب ومتكارك ومرابع المورانيون وكفا			ertific	ation	
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ADDENDUM: #7 Description

Main Street between Fetterman Street and Fort Street-West Side

Stores (16-22 North Main): 1900; two stories, flat roof, red smooth coursed brick with three rows brick molding at top, twelve double hung sash windows 1 over 1 lights, sandstone pedimented window heads with rough cut sandstone sills. First floor has three separate businesses with sandstone frieze above all and pillasters between each. One shop is tan-painted with window and wooden door with one large light; middle shop is smooth faced coursed stone facade with brick at bottom; modern metal windows and door; third shop is wood painted red and white with modern metal window and door. CONTRIBUTING.

Occidental Hotel, (10 North Main): 1900; two stories; red smooth coursed brick, sandstone molding at top of flat roof; second story has five double hung sash windows 1 over 1 light with smooth sandstone lentils and sills; first floor has large modern windows, modern door in middle with two sets of windows on each side with four lights each; canvas canopy. CONTRIBUTING.

Diner (2 North Main): 1964; one story, small gray concrete block structure with two large windows, wood door with large light and very plain. NONCON-TRIBUTING STRUCTURE.

Main Street between Fetterman Street and Angus Street-West Side

Bar (4 South Main): 1900, two stories, flat roof; similar to International Style-stucco, completely plain on second story with three double hung sash windows 1 over 1 lights; first floor has plain stucco pilasters on corners and sides of entrance; there are blocks of thick glass above door and on sides of door. NONCONTRIBUTING.

Hotel Idlewild and Office (10-12 South Main): 1919; three stories; flat roof, tan smooth-coursed brick front, red brick sides; sandstone cornice at top, brown bricks inlaid in a design at top and sides of front. Windows on second and third stories have two large windows with one light flanked by two smaller windows on each side with six lights each; above all that is a row of leaded glass windows with wood trim painted pale green; sandstone molding around windows; belt course above first floor. First story has metal siding, modern metal windows, and door. CONTRIBUTING.

Bar (14 South Main): 1932, two stories, flat roof; plain stucco, three double hung sash windows, 2 over 1 lights on second story; first story--siding of uncoursed rock, modern metal door and small modern window. NONCONTRI-BUTING.

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- Store (22 South Main): 1900, two stories, flat roof, smooth-coursed brick painted tan, molding at top. Five double hung sash windows 2 over 1 lights with brick relieving arches and smooth sandstone sills on second story. First story has wood siding painted red and modern windows and door. CONTRIBUTING.
- Store (28-30 South Main): 1900, two stories; flat roof, smooth-coursed brick painted gray; entablature with ornate floral design on frieze; five double hung sash windows--6 over 1 lights, larger center window with 8 over 1 lights. First floor has pilasters at corners with bull's eye design and modern windows and door. CONTRIBUTING.
- Store (38 South Main): 1926, remodeled 1961; two stories, flat roof, brown smooth-coursed brick with molding at top; six double hung sash windows 6 over 6 lights with small side windows 12 over 1 lights on two large center windows; metal canopy, modern metal windows and door on first floor. NONCONTRIBUTING STRUCTURE.
- Office, Store and Apartment Buildings (42, 46, 48 South Main): 1909; two stories, flat roof; similar to International Style's second story has stucco and no ornamentation, seven double hung sash windows; first floor has brown wood siding, three modern entrances and windows. NONCONTRIBUTING STRUCTURE.
- Capitol Hotel Building (54-66 South Main): 1900; two stories; flat roof, tan smooth-coursed brick, entablature at top, 14 double hung sash windows on second story with 1 over 1 lights, sandstone cornice heads and rough cut stone lentils. First floor has three fronts--one with wood siding, modern windows and doors, tan brick at bottom; second has tan metal siding and modern windows and door; third has old leaded glass with modern windows and door. CONTRIBUTING.
- Store (76 South Main): 1900; one story, flat roof, stucco-plain modern metal windows and door; blue tile at bottom, canvas canopy. NONCONTRIBUTING STRUCTURE.
- Store (80 South Main): 1922; one story, flat roof, brown metal canopy; modern metal windows and door. NONCONTRIBUTING STRUCTURE.

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Office (84-89 South Main): 1900; two stories, white metal facade with floral designs carved into it; large entablature with bull's eye design on frieze; two double hung sash windows on second floor 2 over 2 lights; pilasters at corners and on either side of windows; first floor--large wood trimmed windows with wood door with one single large light and transom. CONTRI-BUTING.

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Office (90-94 South Main): 1900; two stories; rough cut random-coursed ashlar with large wooden entablature at top--bull's eye design on frieze. Second story has four double hung sash windows 1 over 1 lights with rough cut stone sills and lentils; first floor has three entrances--all wood-trimmed doors with single large lights, windows are large, wood-trimmed, 1 over 1 lights. CONTRIBUTING.

Office Buildings (96, 98, 100 South Main): 1910; two stories; red smoothcoursed brick, molding at top; second floor--five double hung sash windows 1 over 1 lights with smooth sandstone lentils and brick sills--same on sides of building; first floor has two entrances with wooden doors with single lights and modern metal windows. CONTRIBUTING.

Main Street between Fetterman Street and Benteen Street--East Side

Bison Theatre (7 North Main): 1930; two stories, tan coursed brick, sandstone crown molding at top, sandstone entablature with simple bull's eye design on frieze; paneled pilasters at corners--panel is sandstone with bull's eye design inlaid; top of panels are arched with keystones. Seven double hung sash windows on second floor with 4 over 1 lights and simple sandstone beltcourse. CONTRIBUTING.

Bar (One North Main): 1909; two stories, flat roof; red brick smooth-coursed on second story, wood on first story; sandstone cornice at top, second floor has four double hung sash windows 1 over 1 lights with sandstone sills and lentils. First floor has modern windows with transoms which have been painted above them; sandstone pilasters on corners of first floor and cornice; modern wood door. CONTRIBUTING.

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ADDENDUM Item #8--SIGNIFICANCE

Wyoming is typical of the development of the western cattle ranching industry which had its beginnings in the vast open ranges of Texas. After the Civil War as the railroads began moving west, they met huge herds moving north to rich northern grasslands which offered superior grazing. Transporting beeves to market had long been a major consideration, and Wyoming's cattle industry would become solidly established only after completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869. Southern Wyoming quickly became the focus of the territory's passage of legislation which made railroads liable for killed or injured stock.

Northern Wyoming experienced effective Indian control until the military campaigns of 1876-77 which ended hostile Indian control and made possible the colorful period of growth and expansion for the industry on a statewide basis. This early period became known as the Era of Public Domain, and was characterized by the fact that the largest part of most ranches was the vast grass-covered ranges, as yet unfenced and unsettled. Adequate water and good grass were the fundamental necessities for ranching, but gaining title to the kinds of acreage needed was not possible under existing land laws.

Experts estimate that no less than 40 acres of grazing land per cow is essential on the high plains with 5,000 acres as the rough figure required for a successful ranching operation. Even if a rancher were able to meet all the requirements of the various acts and combine his privileges, he could only gain title to 1,120 acres of land; thus the practice began of locating headquarters on patented land along streams and rivers and using the open range for grazing. In an area with average rainfall well below 20 inches per year, the men who controlled the water controlled the range. It was this system which soon led to incorporation of strict regulations and control of the public domain by the more powerful ranchers.

Cattle ranching, like most other early western industries, followed a pattern of boom or bust. The boom was dominated by investment capital, much of it from the east and Europe. Widely publicized accounts of huge profits attracted speculators into the industry. In a very short time much of the northern plains region was occupied by massive herds owned by large corporate cattle companies. The largest were often under absentee or multiple ownership and controlled by managers who had little or no direct contact with the owners. Managers and ranchers soon learned they would have to cooperate to protect themselves from disease, theft, and settlement on "their" domain. In Wyoming, a powerful association known as the Wyoming Stock Growers Association was formed to protect the economic and political interests of its members. The large membership and closely knit organization of this group insured it success in becoming the official spokesman for the cattle business. The Association began to prescribe the laws and social mores; they became active in territorial

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Item #8 Significance (continued)

politics and quickly dominated the political scene. The leading men in the territory were active members and the Association inevitably became very powerful in lawmaking and political leadership.

The cattle boom lasted little more than a decade. Greed and ignorance of what the land could support led owners and stockholders to demand more and more cattle on their ranges. A drought in 1886 left grass and water in short supply and cattle in poor shape for one of the worst winters in history. The speculative bubble burst when the heavy snow of 1886-87 covered the grass and unrelenting cold froze creeks and streams solid. Hundreds of thousands of head of cattle died, thousands more were emaciated; thus, hundreds of ranchers were ruined. The storm also exposed book count herds, herd counts based on estimated figures and projections rather than actual counts, and a wide variety of poor and shady management practices some stockmen had been engaging in to satisfy investors' demands. Many ranchers were totally ruined and left the country. Those who stayed faced serious problems. The industry had declined drastically, eastern markets were flooded with poor quality beeves, and continued overstocking would keep beef prices down for more than a decade. Foreign and eastern capital was harder to come by and credit grew ever more costly. The Federal government was becoming adamant about the removal of fences from the public domain. In time, better management practices grew out of the lessons learned from the bust; but in the interim, the adversity, decline of profits, and the increased influx of smaller operators combined to make large corporate ranchers more determined to protect their interests.

While Sheridan and Johnson Counties featured sizeable corporate holdings, they also attracted more small owner-operator ranchmen than some of the less watered regions. Resentment over the 1884 Maverick law, which prohibited cowboys from starting their own herds with "unclaimed" calves, and other concerns such as round-ups, use of the public domain, fencing water and lenient juries in cattle theft cases, contributed to an increasing friction between the large and small ranchers. The argument finally came to a head in the winter of 1892 when members of the Association organized and planned a raid into Johnson County. The raid was to be a punitive expedition against a group the Association had determined to be rustlers. Many of these had been ignoring rules and regulations set up by the Stock Growers Association and were agitating to undermine the group's power. Some were, in fact, cattle thieves; others more probably were guilty by association. Most though were simply small operators struggling to establish themselves in a business dominated by large owners who controlled huge tracts of the public domain, influenced state government through over-representation, and intimidated the cowboys with strict regulations and blackballing. The size and nature of the force, (25 hired Texas gunmen, several corporate owners and managers and a six-car train to haul horses, wagons and equipment) indicates their

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Item #8 Significance (continued)

intention was to exterminate several rustlers and discourage rustling or any additional influx of small land holders, rather than simply force suspected rustlers out of the area, as has been argued. The regulators did manage to corner and kill two men, Nate Champion and Nick Ray, and burn down a barn at Kaycee in Johnson County before they were themselves cornered at the TA Ranch by a large troop of locals. Fortunately for the invaders, a military force from Fort McKinney was alerted and they were rescued, placed in custody, and returned to Cheyenne for trial. Rumors as to who was directly involved and who had known of the planned invasion were rampant, and many of Wyoming's top political leaders were implicated. Because of a series of bureaucratic complications the invaders were never brought to trial, a fact that continues to be a source of some bitterness for descendants of Johnson County War veterans.

The ranching industry recovered and by the turn of the century Johnson County and Buffalo were experiencing a degree of prosperity from an influx of homesteaders and the new economic boost derived from the discovery of oil in the Salt Creek Oil Fields. Farming and sheepherding also entered Johnson County at the turn of the century. Buffalo's Main Street continued a steady development from the 1890's through the 1930's and this is evidenced by the many buildings which remain on Main Street from this period. The original log building which was the Occidental Hotel was built in 1879, but was then replaced by a larger brick structure in the 1900's. The growth of Buffalo continued at a steady pace in spite of economic changes in the ensuing forty years. Following the winding cow trail along which the first buildings were erected, the original Main Street consisted primarily of false-front frame and log structures. As the town continued to grow, these structures were replaced by the brick and stone buildings we see today. Although there were economic slumps, the population continued to grow and Buffalo Main Street and its merchants were there to serve the agricultural/ranching community. Buffalo was to encounter the same economic problems as the rest of the nation during the Depression years, but there was some building on Main Street which resulted in many one-story buildings. Tourism and the advent of the car were also significant factors in the well-being of the Buffalo Main Street economy from the 1920's. Buffalo's rich tradition and history are reflected in the buildings of its Main Street.

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Continuation sheet Addendum Item number ⁹ Page ¹

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Continuation sheet Verbal Boundary Description Item number 10



ADDENDUM Item #10--Verbal Boundary Description and Justification

The Buffalo Main Street Historic District begins at point A, located at the corner of Angus Street and the east side of the alley between south Main and Adams Street. The boundary then moves to the north along the east side of the alley, crosses Clear Creek, and continues to the north to point B, which marks the intersection of the alley with an imaginary east-west line, extending to the sidewalk from the north face of the Occidental Hotel. The boundary then proceeds along the aforementioned line and the north face of the Occidental to point C, located at the edge of the sidewalk on north Main on the same east-west line as point B. The boundary then proceeds at a sharp angle to the southeast to point D, which is located on the sidewalk on the east side of north Main and directly in line with an imaginary east-west line extending from the north face of the Bison Theatre. The boundary then proceeds east along the north wall of the theatre to the west side of the alley between north Main and Lobban Street to point E. The boundary then proceeds south along the west side of the alley to an imaginary line running east-west and extending from the south face of the Buffalo Bar at point F, then west along the south wall of the bar across the street to the sidewalk on the west side of Main Street at point G. It then proceeds along the west side of Main to the south to point H, located at the corner ofsouth Main and Angus and then proceeds directly west along the north side of Angus to the point of beginning.

This boundary encompasses Buffalo's highest concentration of downtown commercial buildings retaining integrity. The boundary primarily follows sidewalks and alleys and exterior walls of some buildings only when it is necessary to exclude modern intrusions or buildings rendered non-contributing by alterations. The boundary crosses north Main to include the Bison Theatre and the Buffalo Bar, two exceptionally intact structures with high potential as tax act projects. Both buildings are important architectural contributors to the district. The boundary defines a contiguous district with a minimum of intrusions.

For legal clarification the boundaries described herein include those structures located on lots 1 – 19 Block 1, lots 1 – 5 and south 13 feet of lot 6 Block 9 and lots 1,2, and $S9\frac{1}{2}$ feet of lot 3 Block 18, city addition city of Buffalo Sect. 35 T51N R82W 6th PM, as described in item #7 of this nomination.



SITE PLAN

In the past the National Register staff has been inclined to judge a district's integrity by comparing the number of contributing structures with the number of noncontributing structures. We feel this would be an arbitrary and nonproductive tactic in the case of the Buffalo Downtown. While this site plan is not drawn to scale, it is drawn to represent the size of contributing facades in relation to noncontributing facades within the district. As can be seen from the enclosed photographs, many of the contributing structures feature double or multiple storefronts; while with the exception of one, the noncontributing structures are smaller single front buildings which represent Buffalo's highest concentration of buildings retaining integrity and pose positive prospects for tax act projects. There is a great deal of community pride in this small town, and the downtown merchants and citizens are eagerly awaiting a National Register District designation. Apart from its obvious historical and local architectural significance, the district will serve as a positive incentive for other Wyoming communities to become involved in historic preservation projects.