

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Multiple Property Documentation Form



This form is for use in documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Type all entries.

**A. Name of Multiple Property Listing**

Historic Resources of Chehalis

**B. Associated Historic Contexts**

The Urban Growth of Chehalis, 1850-1950

Development of a Resource Economy in Chehalis, 1850-1950

**C. Geographical Data**

The incorporated city limits of Chehalis

See continuation sheet

**D. Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Planning and Evaluation.

*Jacob E. [Signature]*  
Signature of certifying official

Aug. 22, 1991  
Date

Washington State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation  
State or Federal agency and bureau

I, hereby, certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

*[Signature]*  
for Signature of the Keeper of the National Register

10/7/91  
Date

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## E. Statement of Historic Contexts

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Discuss each historic context listed in Section B.

This multiple property statement provides a contextual framework for evaluating and nominating to the National Register of Historic Places properties associated with a century of urban development in Chehalis. It identifies two historic contexts and three property types.

**Introduction.** The history of Chehalis between 1850 and 1950 has been characterized by two broad themes: (1) urban growth shaped by persistent efforts at town promotion and planning, and (2) development of an economy based on the processing, sale, and transport of natural resources. Both themes are characteristic of patterns of historical development in other rural communities established in the western United States during the 19th century.

Europeans and white Americans brought to Chehalis--and to the West more generally--ways of making a living and attitudes about nature that made the extraction and export of natural resources the region's dominant economic activity well into the 20th century. Euro-Americans viewed the physical world as a set of commodities for human use, and they set out to trap, log, mine, fish, and farm. Today this legacy is evident in the settlements that developed from these enterprises: some survived only as ghost towns, others are thriving communities.

Urban success was usually rooted in the ability of residents to capitalize on a propitious geographic location over a sustained period of time. Through persistent efforts at civic promotion, the residents of Chehalis succeeded in establishing a permanent community at the confluence of the Chehalis and Newaukum rivers. Ironically, the town's proximity to the Chehalis River has hindered, as much as encouraged, the urban ambitions of Chehalis residents. Initially, citizens sought to secure the future of their settlement--as well as their own well-being--by exploiting the fertile soil of the floodplain and the adjacent stands of timber. They calculated that the waterway promised a link with the markets of coastal cities. As periodic flooding reminded people of the disadvantages of settlement on flood plains, though, subsequent urban growth attempted to keep the river at a safe distance. The railroad, not the river, came to provide the crucial connection for the Chehalis economy. The first urban core was constructed at the railroad tracks, and the town developed as a processing center for lumber and agriculture.

For the purposes of the multiple property nomination, these two historical themes will each define a separate "associated historic context."

### I. The Urban Growth of Chehalis, 1850-1950

A town of 6,410 today, Chehalis is located in the Chehalis valley of southwestern Washington, midway between the cities of Seattle and Portland, Oregon, on Interstate 5 and the line of the Burlington Northern Railroad. The city itself is situated between the Chehalis River and a high bluff whose coal and clay deposits helped establish an industrial base. The surrounding Chehalis valley, once densely forested, is now a region of broad open meadows, known locally as "prairies." The foothills of the Cascades rise to the east and the Pacific Ocean lies about fifty miles to the west.

**ORIGINS OF CHEHALIS.** The origins of the settlement that became the city of Chehalis are chiefly associated with the activities of four individuals: a refugee from the California gold fields searching for a lucky break in the Oregon Territory, a prominent territorial politician looking for a smart investment, an energetic civic promoter, and a stubborn widow with a distinct urban vision for her town.

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*Schuyler Stuart Saunders (c. 1820-1860).* Schuyler Saunders had tried his hand at farming in New York State and mining in the California gold rush before moving to the Chehalis valley in 1851 to stake a claim to 640 acres at the confluence of the Chehalis and Newaukum rivers. Because the present site of Chehalis is largely located on the Saunders Donation Land Claim of 1851, Saunders is generally regarded as the “founder” of Chehalis, even though during his lifetime only a couple of families lived on the parcel. The early Saunders residence was located just east of the present intersection of Market and Main.

Under the terms of the Donation Land Claim Act of 1850, an early version of the Homestead Act unique to the Pacific Northwest, any adult white male citizen of the United States could acquire title to 320 acres of land in the Oregon Territory (which included the present State of Washington) if he farmed and lived on the land for four years. If he were married, his wife could acquire an additional 320 acres in her own right. Through a surveying error, the Donation Land Claim of Schuyler and Eliza Saunders totaled 639, rather than 640, acres.

No settlement developed in the vicinity of the Saunders homestead until the 1870's, but travelers soon began calling the site Saunders Bottom, a reference to the marshy conditions at the confluence that made horse and wagon travel difficult. When a territorial post office operated briefly at the Saunders home in 1858-59, postmaster Saunders tried to modify popular practice by choosing the name Saunders Prairie for the site, but the label Saunders Bottom persisted.

*Obadiah B. McFadden (1814-1875).* In 1859, the chief justice of the territorial supreme court, O. B. McFadden, purchased the southern half of the Saunders claim and had Schuyler Saunders erect a log house for his family. This structure stands today, in remodeled form, as the oldest residence in Chehalis and was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1975.

A native of Pennsylvania and an ardent supporter of President Franklin Pierce, McFadden was appointed a justice of the supreme court of the Oregon Territory in 1853. Following the creation of a separate Washington Territory, McFadden was in stalled on the Washington court in 1854 and served briefly as its chief justice between 1858 and 1861, when the newly elected Lincoln administration replaced him with a Republican appointee. McFadden continued to practice law in Olympia and served a term as territorial delegate in the United States Congress. At the time of his death in 1875, McFadden is reported to have acquired 900 acres in the Chehalis valley.

One of McFadden's first projects as a lawyer in private practice was a campaign for a decent road through the Chehalis marshes. Through his prominence and connections in Olympia, McFadden raised \$1,000 to construct a corduroy road of cedar logs through the wetlands in 1863. Like Schuyler Saunders, O. B. McFadden preferred that his place of residence bear a less disparaging name than Saunders

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Bottom. McFadden is credited with bestowing the name Chehalis on the village, sometime in the early 1870's, after he became postmaster. The territorial legislature officially recognized the new name in 1879.

*William West (1839-1915).* William West is regarded as the “father” of Chehalis because of his early and continuing role in promoting the urban ambitions of the settlement. Through West’s efforts, the Northern Pacific Railroad was persuaded to establish a rail stop at Saunders Bottom, and the territorial government agreed to transfer the seat of Lewis County to the young town. The two decisions secured the early economic and political future of Chehalis.

West was an English immigrant to North America, first to Canada and then to Illinois. He arrived in Saunders Bottom in 1864 and purchased a small homestead near the present Alexander Park from a man tired of trying to hack farmland from forest. West found his own efforts more remunerative. It was “herculean work cutting down the giant forest trees” without dynamite or stump pullers, he later recalled, but his efforts paid off. When he found a merchant willing to sell his wheat, oats, and peas, as well as bacon and eggs, in the Olympia market, West was able to expand from a subsistence to a commercial operation. By the 1870's, West had sufficient capital to invest in the first businesses in the village and to help underwrite the construction of the county courthouse he worked to obtain for Chehalis.

With a comfortable financial situation, West turned his attention to a variety of civic projects, including construction of the first schoolhouse (in 1876) and service as county auditor, county treasurer, deputy sheriff, city councilman, and mayor.

*Eliza Tynan Saunders Barrett (1826-1900).* The wife of Schuyler Saunders is largely unrecognized today for the pivotal role she played in shaping the urban form of modern Chehalis. Through her control of half of the Saunders Donation Land Claim, her decisions about land speculation and development guided urban growth for over thirty years after her divorce from Saunders in 1859. Elizabeth Tynan was an Irish immigrant to the United States who was working as a waitress in Portland, Oregon when she met and married Schuyler Saunders in 1851. Shortly thereafter, the couple moved to the Chehalis valley and filed a claim for 640 acres under the Donation Land Claim Act. Following nine years of marriage, in which Schuyler and Eliza (as she came to be called) had five children, she married three more times. Her second husband deserted both her and their daughter; a third marriage (in 1865) produced two children and ended in divorce. A fourth marriage to John C. Barrett also ended in divorce, but Eliza chose to keep this husband’s last name until her own death in 1900.<sup>1</sup>

Because of her considerable real estate holdings, a number of men, including several husbands, attempted to take advantage of her. It is said that she could neither read nor write, but she was a quick learner. Whether out of trepidation after being cheated once too often, or out of well-placed shrewdness about

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<sup>1</sup>In a final indignity, her gravestone at Fernhill Cemetery misspelled her last name as Barrette.

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the pattern of urban growth, Eliza Barrett chose to sell and develop her property cautiously. Urban promoter William West was one of her many critics. "The growth of Chehalis," he asserted in his memoirs, "was greatly hindered by the reluctance of the owner of the land to lay off a townsite, or to sell any land to anyone else that would do so, only a few blocks being laid off at any one time, so that the population increased very slowly."

For her own reasons, Eliza Barrett was in no rush to join the men anxious to make a fast buck in real estate promotions, even as the village evolved around her. She platted a small parcel in 1875 and five more in 1881-83--actions that failed to satisfy local promoters, but Barrett held her ground. Eventually, between 1888 and 1893, Eliza Barrett sold or platted a total of ten sizable parcels and even decided to develop a couple of lots herself. Significantly, her decisions about land use and civic progress emphasized priorities rather different from the materialistic calculations of city fathers. She chose to construct the first music hall in Chehalis, the Tynan Opera House (1889). She is also credited with building the first Catholic church in Chehalis (1889) and a Catholic boarding school for girls (1895), municipal contributions that reflected her cultural roots as an Irish-American living in a predominately Protestant community. Her one purely commercial venture was the construction of the Barrett Block (1891), across Chehalis Avenue from the present courthouse. None of these structures is extant.

**EFFORTS AT PROMOTION AND PLANNING.** A fledgling rural settlement had been established at the confluence of the Chehalis and Newaukum rivers by the 1860's, but its longevity was by no means assured in the fluctuating conditions of the 19th-century Northwest. In the course of the following decades, the citizens of Saunders Bottom sought to guarantee a future for their community through persistent and imaginative efforts at town promotion and planning. Their schemes reflected a combination of civic altruism and urban ambition, mixed with considerable entrepreneurial drive and calculations of individual self-interest.

***Railroad Station (1872-73).*** While the Chehalis River offered a useful commercial waterway for farmers in the vicinity--and an enterprising merchant had inaugurated steamer service on the river as early as 1866--19th-century prosperity hinged on the accessibility of rail transportation. Chehalis lay on the route of the Northern Pacific Railroad line completed in 1873 between the Columbia River and the Puget Sound terminus at Tacoma, but initially the railroad decided to bypass the settlement.

Like a sports franchise today that expects municipal concessions in exchange for locating a team in a particular city, 19th-century railroads made similar demands in exchange for the economic advantages of a rail link. In the case of Chehalis, the Northern Pacific asked for a gift of land (so it could market real estate near its tracks), but, evidently, Eliza Barrett had second thoughts about the arrangement at the last minute. In retaliation, the railroad platted forty acres three miles away and named the townsite Newaukum.

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Chehalis residents, including William West, refused to watch Newaukum emerge at their expense. From a lawyer, probably O. B. McFadden, they learned the Northern Pacific could be compelled to stop at Chehalis by flying a red flag as the trains approached. Eliza Barrett was persuaded to sell several lots near the tracks, and local farmers formed a joint stock company to erect a warehouse, permitting the railroad to use it free of charge and enabling themselves to store and ship the agricultural produce of the Chehalis hinterland to the markets served by the railroad.

The joint stock company and the commercial enterprises that it inspired represented the kernel around which the first Chehalis business district developed. Shortly after the warehouse was constructed, a neighboring merchant opened a branch store next door. Five years later, William West and his brother-in-law John Dobson rented the warehouse and converted it into a slaughterhouse. A small passenger station was constructed in the early 1880's, just as the Northern Pacific tracks between Puget Sound and Lake Superior were completed in 1883.

In the following decades, Chehalis acquired significance as the hub of two other railroad lines. In 1890 the Northern Pacific built a branch line west from Chehalis to South Bend on Willapa Bay. Between 1908 and 1955, the Cowlitz, Chehalis and Cascade Railroad operated as a short line road, hauling logs of the Carlisle Lumber Company in central Lewis County to Chehalis and Centralia. The present Northern Pacific depot on Front Street (now the Lewis County Museum) was built in 1912; it was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1974.

*County Seat (1873-74).* With a degree of economic promise assured for the community as a rail stop on a transcontinental line, local promoters moved to secure a permanent political identity for the town.

In 1873, William West and O. B. McFadden, among others, canvassed local voters and petitioned the territorial legislature to transfer the seat of Lewis County to Chehalis. Apparently in opposition from the current county seat, Claquato, was not nearly as intense as opposition from the Northern Pacific, which argued that its townsite at Newaukum should become the political center of Lewis County. The legislative decision to designate Chehalis seems to have been influenced by the willingness of local capitalists to finance construction of the county courthouse. Legislators appropriated only \$1,000 for the building, and five Chehalis businessmen made up the difference of \$2,000. The courthouse was completed in 1874. The present courthouse at Main and Chehalis was completed in 1927.

*Chehalis River Bridge (1870's).* To facilitate movement of people and freight between the Chehalis rail station and the other side of the valley, town boosters organized a movement to replace an existing ferry with a bridge. When the commissioners of Lewis County declined to appropriate any funds for the project, a public subscription raised a couple of thousand dollars and local merchants and farmers had the bridge built themselves. This structure was the first bridge across the Chehalis River, and it survived until the flood of 1882. A second bridge was constructed with both county and private funds.

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*County Fair (1882).* To promote the reputation of local livestock and farm and garden produce--and of Lewis County more generally--an agricultural association and exhibition ground was established in 1882, and for a few years the association organized an annual county fair. In 1909 land between Chehalis and Centralia became the site of the Southwest Washington Fairgrounds.

*Municipal Incorporation (1883).* Through the 1870's, informal public meetings and the leadership of local boosters had provided political structure in the community. In 1883, the village was formally incorporated, and an elected town council took on the task of governance. Following statehood for Washington, the city was incorporated a second time, under state law, in 1889.

*Washington State Reform School (1889).* Construction of the State Reform School on a fifty-acre site on the outskirts of Chehalis represented an important political plum for the young town and acknowledged that state legislators looked kindly on the community's future development. Banker and real estate developer John Dobson played an important role in securing for Chehalis the detention facility for delinquent boys. In the original design for the reform school, inmates were to cultivate neighboring acreage and supply the institution's food needs. The site has had a number of subsequent names: the Washington State Training School, the Green Hill Academy, and the present Green Hill School.

*The Citizens' Club (organized, 1888-89).* With civic status assured and transportation systems in place, efforts to promote and plan the town of Chehalis passed in the 1880's from a generation of pioneer boosters into the hands of civic organizations and real estate development companies.

The Citizens' Club of Chehalis was organized in the late 1880's to promote "civic progress," by which its members had in mind expanding the local economic base, promoting town growth, supporting municipal improvement projects, and bolstering civic pride. The organization worked to bring both prospective residents and new businesses to the Chehalis valley. By 1915, one newspaper could comment that the Citizens' Club was "at the back of every enterprise the city has had or now has." In 1927, the Citizens' Club changed its name to the Chamber of Commerce.

The most active period in the history of the organization occurred in the first two decades of the 20th century. The movers and shakers of the Citizens' Club exploited the occasion of the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition held in Seattle in 1909 to advertise to a national audience the benefits of Lewis County. In elaborate brochures prepared for Exposition visitors, the club's "Publicity Department" made a pitch to capitalists to bring new industry to Chehalis, citing the accessibility of local coal fields as a source of power and the proximity of the rail road for shipping. In particular, the Citizens' Club tried to target prospective residents, arguing that the so-called logged off lands of the county were ideally suited for orchards, dairies, and home sites because they were inexpensive to purchase, as low as five dollars an acre, it was claimed. Through the 1910's, the Citizens' Club maintained a full-time secretary with responsibilities to advertise the community and locate potential residents and employers. By 1912

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one newspaper could report that the publicity campaign related to the Exposition had brought half a dozen industries to Chehalis, all with substantial payrolls.

*Chehalis Land and Timber Company (1888).* For much of American history, land use has been shaped by private decisions, rather than governmental policies. Continental development and wide spread farm ownership may have been facilitated through the Donation Land Claim and Homestead Acts, for example, but government passed ultimate responsibility for land use planning (or its absence) to individuals. Such was also the case at the community level. For the most part, the form and growth of American cities have been shaped by town promoters, developers, and realtors.

In Chehalis, the Chehalis Land and Timber Company emerged as the largest and most influential force in town planning at the turn of the century. It was organized in 1888 by a group of local investors who purchased a sizable tract of land in the northern half of the Saunders Donation Land Claim from Eliza Barrett and began selling town lots. Its most vigorous platting activity occurred in a twenty-year period between 1888 and 1906. For civic boosters like William West, the company accomplished an important public purpose, finally furnishing "plenty of room for the town to expand."

The original investors in the Chehalis Land and Timber Company included five men. N. B. Coffman (1857-1940), trained as a lawyer in the Midwest, came to Chehalis in the 1880's, where he established a prominent regional bank, which was reorganized and incorporated in 1889 as the First National Bank of Chehalis (subsequently called Coffman, Dobson & Co.). Conveniently, Coffman's associates in the Chehalis Land and Timber Company were also the chief stockholders and directors of the First National Bank. John Dobson (1841-1907), an English immigrant, arrived in Chehalis with his brother-in-law William West in the 1860's and acquired considerable land on what became the west side of the town. Francis Donahoe (1847-1926) was a prosperous farmer, rancher, and real estate investor who served a term in the state senate. A native of Pennsylvania, his real estate holdings had their origins in the purchase in the 1870's of a farmstead in Chehalis from the railroad. Daniel Caldwell Millett (1846-1908) was a lawyer and businessman who came to Chehalis from Wisconsin in the 1880's. William Muir Urquhart (1855-1933), son of a Scottish immigrant to Lewis County, was a prosperous Chehalis merchant and banker with considerable real estate holdings.

These five men dominated banking and real estate in Chehalis at the turn of the century through their ownership and control of both the First National Bank and the Chehalis Land and Timber Company. All were prominent citizens who held important public office. Dobson, Donahoe, Millett, and Urquhart all served terms as mayor. Coffman was an organizer and first president of the Citizens' Club.

*Chehalis Improvement Company (c. 1890).* The Chehalis Improvement Company was organized to shift the city's central business district from Main Street to North Market Boulevard, through the construction of impressive new commercial buildings. Between 1890 and 1892, the Improvement Company erected a pair of two story brick buildings (the Improvement Block and the Columbus Block) on Chehalis Land



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and Timber real estate, each on a prime corner lot at the intersection of Market and Boistfort Street. Directly across the street was the First National Bank building, which had been constructed at the site in 1889. The success of this Chehalis Improvement Company venture is best illustrated by the fact that Market and Boistfort has been regarded as the heart of the commercial district of Chehalis for most of the 20th century.

The stockholders of the Chehalis Improvement Company included some of the same Chehalis families who held stock or directorships in the Chehalis Land and Timber Company and the First National Bank--the Coffmans, the Dobsons, and the Milletts--as well as other prominent families like the Wests. In many ways, the Chehalis Improvement Company functioned as the construction and development branch of the banking and real estate interests represented by the First National Bank and Chehalis Land and Timber.

**PATTERNS OF PHYSICAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC EXPANSION.** Between 1850 and 1950, Chehalis developed from a rural hamlet with a handful of pioneer homesteads to an agricultural and wood processing center of over 5,600 residents. Within this century of growth, the city center has migrated twice, and most of the present urban form of Chehalis was established by 1920. Since the 1950's, the business district has shifted a third time, to the shopping mall complex on National Avenue, between the Twin Cities of Chehalis and Centralia.

***First City Center: Western Main Street.*** Chehalis's first commercial district and civic center was located along Main Street west of the tracks of the Northern Pacific Railroad. There were two reasons for the early concentration of activity in this area. First was its proximity to the railroad, the transportation and communication link with distant markets and political capitals. Second was the availability of real estate. As early as 1875, the widow of Schuyler Saunders (her married name was Eliza Tynan Basye at the time) platted three blocks of Main Street, west of the railroad tracks, and here the town began to grow.

The first glimmering of an urban core was the collection of buildings and businesses that sprung up in the 1870's near the warehouse erected as the settlement's first railroad station. The small warehouse was followed by a general store established by a merchant from a neighboring community, and by the end of the decade the warehouse itself had been enlarged into a full-scale meat packing plant. Construction of two civic buildings in the mid-1870's confirmed the municipal significance of western Main Street. When Chehalis was designated the county seat, the courthouse was erected on an acre west of the tracks and a block north of Main Street, the present North Street. Two years later, in 1876, the first schoolhouse was built near the courthouse at State and Center streets.

***Second City Center: Main Street and Chehalis Avenue.*** As the town developed in the 1880's, commercial activity spread east along Main Street toward its intersection with Chehalis Avenue. Again, Eliza Barrett played a crucial role as an urban planner, when she released for development five parcels between 1881 and 1883. One of her many critics, who believed she had not been sufficiently receptive to previous

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schemes to develop her land, was pleased with the platting. "Parties holding property in the past with a death grip have been gradually letting go" in Chehalis, he informed the readers of the Lewis County Bee in 1884.

Toward the end of the decade, Eliza Barrett moved to solidify the increasing importance of this new city center. To affirm the intersection of Main and Chehalis as the commercial and cultural heart of the city, she undertook construction of two significant structures on diagonal corners: the Tynan Opera House (1889) and the Barrett Block (1891), a large brick building that came to house a bank and the Barrett Hotel.

Two fires in 1892 destroyed most of the wooden buildings in this part of town and sealed the fate of the Main Street city center. The first great fire in Chehalis history occurred in March 1892 and consumed a block of business buildings. A second fire on May 22nd, less than two months later, was even more devastating, leveling about thirty buildings in four blocks. The blaze spread so rapidly that "little was saved by the residents and business men in the entire district," according to the Chehalis Nugget, reporting on the day of the inferno.

In the newspaper's opinion, both fires were set deliberately. After the March fire, a number of citizens in the burned-out district suspected arson. The second fire, the Nugget stated flatly, "was beyond doubt started by an incendiary." Although redevelopment was considered for Main Street, the post fire building boom occurred six blocks to the north on Market Boulevard, evidently much resented by the merchants and residents of the former downtown. One consequence of the fire was that the value of Eliza Barrett's real estate decreased greatly in value.

***Third City Center: Market Avenue and Boistfort Street.*** The dramatic shift of the central business district from Main Street to Market Boulevard in the 1890's is often attributed to the two calamitous fires of 1892. It is not widely understood that the fires coincided with the migration of the city center to Market Boulevard, rather than actually inaugurating the shift, as commonly believed.

Even before 1892, some of the city's leading citizens were backing a competing business district centered at the intersection of Market and Boistfort Street. The First National Bank building, erected in 1889, was the first important commercial structure at the location, and other buildings quickly followed the example of the community's leading bank. The Chehalis Improvement Company constructed its two buildings, the Improvement Block (1891) and the Columbus Block (1892), on opposite corners at Market and Boistfort.<sup>2</sup> A first-class hotel went up next. Between 1890 and 1894, the Chehalis Land and Timber

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<sup>2</sup>Soon after, construction of a fourth retail-office structure, the Commercial Block, had established an impressive, modern building at each corner of the intersection by 1893. Although the First National Bank building was razed in 1949, the other three are extant. Today, the Columbus Block is sometimes

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Company, with financing from the First National Bank, constructed the St. Helens Hotel on Market at Cascade Avenue. (The proximity and visibility of Mt. St. Helens, fifty miles to the southeast, has long been a source of civic pride.) In short, three years before the fires, Chehalis banking and real estate interests were already embarked on a major development project outside the traditional business corridor of Main Street.

The motives behind this effort to reshape the commercial geography of Chehalis seemed clear to the local journalist who characterized the activities of the Chehalis Improvement Company as an attempt by prominent citizens to insure “a solid appearance for the town as well as a profitable investment for themselves.” But the undertaking may also have represented an attempt by civic boosters to reduce Eliza Barrett’s future role in urban growth--by establishing a downtown outside her control. The fires of 1892 contributed to the success of the effort to build a new business district by signaling dramatically and decisively Main Street’s loss of preeminence.

New commercial buildings continued to be erected on both Chehalis Avenue and Main Street, as well as on Market Boulevard, but the civic prominence of Market was unchallenged after the 1890’s. Construction of two significant structures in the early 1910’s testified eloquently to Market Boulevard’s role as the “main street” of 20th-century Chehalis. A new civic center (1910), consisting of the city hall and public library, was located at the southern end of the business district, on Market at Park and Cascade. Anchoring the northern end (at Market and Front Street), the Northern Pacific Railroad built its new depot (1912).

*Residential and Industrial Districts.* The street plan of modern Chehalis defies the traditional rectangular grid pattern often associated with townsites laid out on even topography. Rather than being a single rectangular grid, the street pattern of Chehalis is a complex set of four miniature grids that abut one another at odd angles. Each of these “mini-grids” was the result of a separate attempt to plan and develop a neighborhood through the process of “platting.” An idea of how residential and industrial districts evolved beyond the urban core can be gained from a glance at when these mini-grids were imposed on the landscape.<sup>3</sup>

One mini-grid is evident in the **Downtown-Industrial District**, an area bounded by Division Street, North Market Boulevard, and an unseen line running roughly parallel and a bit north of First Street. This mini-

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called the Coffman Building.

<sup>3</sup>It should be noted that decisions to plat did not always produce either quick real estate sales or immediate development. Like today, national depressions (in the mid-1870’s and mid 1890’s, for example) and fluctuations in the regional economy could confound the shrewdest expectations of developers. Nevertheless, plat dates can suggest the broad patterns of growth in the physical form of communities.

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grid represents the section of Chehalis platted by Eliza Barrett between 1875 and 1893. Many of the streets in the so-called Alfred Street Addition (1890) of this mini-grid carry the first names of Eliza Barrett's children, including her four sons by Schuyler Saunders (James, Alfred, William, and Joseph).

A second mini-grid can be seen north and east of Market. The northeast **Hillside District** was platted by the Chehalis Land and Timber Company in 1888 and 1889. The company named the five major streets of the new residential neighborhood after the first five presidents of the United States, perhaps out of a show of patriotism connected with statehood (1889) for the Washington Territory. The southern portion along Washington and Market, beyond the present civic center, was platted in the 1910's. The hilly terrain of the Fair Oaks Terrace area was platted in the 1920's. John Dobson Park was a gift to the city from the Chehalis Land and Timber Company as a memorial to one of its partners.

Together, the Downtown-Industrial and the northeastern Hillside districts comprised the northern half of the original Saunders Donation Land Claim, which Eliza Barrett came to control after her divorce from Schuyler Saunders in 1859. The unseen line that roughly parallels First and East Main streets is a survey or's sight line that divided the Saunders Donation Land Claim into two halves in 1859, when O. B. McFadden purchased the southern half from Schuyler Saunders.

In the area south of this line, now referred to as the **Central District**, can be seen a third mini-grid, in which the east-west thoroughfares are delineated simply by numbers. Members of the McFadden family evidently platted the First, Second, and Third Street area between 1883 and 1890. Most of the Central District was platted by the partners of the Chehalis Land and Timber Company between 1905 and 1910. The Millett athletic field was a gift to the city from the Land and Timber Company and one of its associates, Daniel C. Millett.

A fourth mini-grid is evident in the **West Side District**. This area north of Division Street lies outside the boundaries of the Saunders Donation Land Claim. It was acquired and platted, in large part, by William West and the investors of the Chehalis Land and Timber Company between 1888 and 1904. After about 1909, the north-south streets to the west of State Avenue carried the names of an assortment of American states.

*Demographic Patterns.* In its first decades, the population of Chehalis was composed primarily of Caucasians of British and German ancestry who made their way to Chehalis chiefly from the northeastern and midwestern United States, but also from Oregon and California, as well as Canada, Norway, and Sweden. Until about 1920, men outnumbered women in Chehalis, when the gender distribution became (and has stayed) roughly equivalent. The period of greatest gender disparity occurred in the 1860's, the result of an influx of disappointed miners from the Fraser River gold rush looking to try their luck on Chehalis valley farms.

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*Population of Chehalis*

1875	100	1940	4,857
1883	800	1950	5,639
1890	1,309	1960	5,199
1900	1,775	1970	5,727
1910	4,507	1980	6,100
1920	4,558	1990	6,410
1930	4,907		

Generally, we can see two periods in the population history of Chehalis: (1) rapid growth between the 1870's and early 1910's and (2) slow and generally steady growth since the 1910's.

Like the population of the Pacific Northwest as a whole, rapid demographic expansion characterized the period between the 1870's and early 1910's in Chehalis. From a population of approximately 100 in 1875, the new county seat grew to 1,309 in 1890 and to 4,507 by 1910. This rate of growth, over 4,000 percent, has not been equaled since in Chehalis. The flurry of platting activity between 1888 and 1893 provided the lots, residences, and jobs that encouraged almost 3,000 people to move to the community in the first decade of the 20th century.

There were both national and regional reasons for the demographic and physical expansion of Chehalis between 1875 and the early 1910's. In part, the boom and bust cycles of the American economy shaped urban development. The town began its period of rapid growth in the 1880's, as the country climbed out of the so-called Panic of 1873. The Chehalis economy slowed after 1893, a result of the depression of the mid-nineties. Prosperity returned again until a similar slow-down in the mid-teens. In addition, regional events contributed to the pattern of growth. The long-awaited completion of the northern transcontinental railroad in 1883, statehood for Washington in 1889, and the opening of a branch railroad from Chehalis to the coast in 1890 all fostered a spirit of optimism and investment. These four decades of demographic and physical expansion essentially established the urban form of present-day Chehalis by the 1910's.

The last seventy or so years represent a second major period in the population history of Chehalis. Since the mid 1910's, the population has grown at a slow but steady rate. The town had 6,410 residents by 1990, an increase since 1910 of 42 percent. There were two exceptions to this general 20th-century trend of growth. Like many other communities in the United States, Chehalis lost residents during the hard times of the 1930's. A population dip also occurred in the 1950's, when mechanization in the lumber industry and a decline in the number of commercial farms in Lewis County exacerbated unemployment. Since 1960 the population of Chehalis has returned to the pattern of slow but steady growth.

## **II. Development of a Resource Economy in Chehalis, 1850-1950**

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A second theme in the history of Chehalis--and a second "associated historic context" in this multiple property nomination--is the development of an economy based on the processing, sale, and transport of natural resources. Between 1850 and 1950, the Chehalis economy was closely linked to three industries: timber and wood products, agriculture and food processing, and minerals. Of these, timber and agriculture were of major significance to Chehalis--as they were to the economy of the Northwest as a whole. The Chehalis Industrial Park south of town was established in the mid-1950's.

**TIMBER AND WOOD PRODUCTS.** The earliest lumber manufacturing in Chehalis centered at saw and shingle mills built on the river, at the foot of what became Prindle Street, in the 1870's and 1880's. Timber remained central to the Chehalis economy well into the middle of the 20th century, but sawmills and shingle mills came to be supplemented by specialty firms after 1900.

The local wood products industry centered on the manufacture of furniture and the fabrication of pre-cut houses. The Chehalis Furniture and Manufacturing Company became the largest industry in town, with 150 employees, shortly after its organization in 1900. Until the late 1910's, its plant on Front Street produced a line of furniture manufactured from ash, oak, maple, and fir. Other wood products firms specialized in millwork for pre-cut houses, producing components like doors, windows, cabinets, porch columns, moldings, and gutters. Of these factories, the Palmer Lumber and Manufacturing Company (established in 1906) became one of the most important, through its association with two of the leading American distributors of factory-built "catalog houses," the Gordon-VanTine Company of Davenport, Iowa and the Montgomery Ward Company. (The Chehalis residence of the founder of the Palmer company, an example of the Colonial Revival "Classic Box" architectural style, was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1986.)

In the late 1920's, a cross arms and conduit factory was organized to manufacture the wooden cross arms and braces used on electrical transmission and telephone poles. Although the company is no longer in operation, the structure on Chehalis Avenue is presently extant. Due to chemical toxins at the site, the plant is scheduled for demolition.

**AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD PROCESSING.** Some of the first agricultural processing establishments in Chehalis included the meat packing house of West and Dobson (1878) and the Chehalis Flouring Mill Company (1882), where locally grown wheat was turned into flour. Between the 1880's and 1910's, hop growing became a small but important staple of Lewis County agriculture, particularly in the Chehalis valley. While much of the hops crop was exported, the town boasted several hop kilns and breweries until the state went "dry" in 1916.

Suspecting that timber alone would not support Chehalis forever, the businessmen of the Citizens' Club embarked on a campaign to diversify the local agricultural economy. In one attempt, the Citizens' Club persuaded the United States Flax Company to underwrite an experiment with flax production and processing in the Chehalis valley, but this venture had failed by the 1910's. A more successful enterprise

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was the effort to establish a fruit and vegetable cannery by organizing local merchants and farmers into the Lewis County Canning Association (1915). In 1928, the association's packing plant in Chehalis was purchased by the Seattle-based National Fruit Canning Company, which continues to operate the cannery. By 1950, the National Fruit company was packing and shipping peas, corn, berries, peaches, and broccoli from the southwestern Washington region.

Chehalis became a processing center for dairy products, as well as field and garden crops. As the dairy industry expanded in the Chehalis valley after the turn of the century, a condensery (1907) was established by the Pacific Coast Condensed Milk Company to produce the nationally marketed Carnation evaporated milk label. When the Carnation plant cut back its purchases of local milk in the late 1910's, county farmers organized themselves into a cooperative marketing association, that came to be known in 1919 as the Lewis-Pacific Dairymen's Association. The cooperative financed and built a milk processing plant (1921) in Chehalis that manufactured butter, cheese, and powdered milk under the Darigold label. As early as 1914, the Lewis County Cooperative Creamery had been established in Chehalis. In 1940, the presence of a steady supply of milk in the Chehalis area prompted the Kraft Foods Company to open a Chehalis plant (a new building was constructed in 1947) to produce cheeses, salad dressings, and sandwich spreads.

Efforts to create a regional poultry industry flourished briefly at mid-century, and for a time civic boosters sought to turn Chehalis into "the turkey capital of America." Most poultry businesses in the Chehalis vicinity had disappeared by the 1970's.

One of the earliest agricultural processing establishments in Chehalis was the I. P. Callison Company. Started as a feed mill and store in 1904, the Callison firm developed into a major distributor of botanical drugs (like cascara bark and digitalis leaves) and evergreens (like ferns, cedar boughs, and Christmas trees). It also became a producer of peppermint and spearmint oil. The present Callison facility on National Avenue at the northern gateway to Chehalis occupies the former Carnation (later Borden) condensery.

**MINERAL EXTRACTION AND PROCESSING.** Mineral extraction and processing in Chehalis centered on coal, clay, and gunpowder.

Plans to develop coal mines began in the 1890's, and within a few years regional shipment of coal handled the output of thirty-four mines in the Chehalis and Centralia area. The bluff east of Chehalis contained deposits of low-grade coal (lignite), and these veins were tapped by mines along National Avenue within the city limits and along Coal Creek northeast of town, where a coal-fired power plant supplied electricity for the interurban railway that connected the Twin Cities. The local coal mining boom lost its steam in the 1910's, as coal fields opened in other parts of the Northwest. The Chehalis Coal Company and the Superior Coal Company operated the largest mines in the vicinity.

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The coal-rich Chehalis bluff was also a good source of clay soils that proved useful in the manufacture of brick. One of the oldest industries in town was the Chehalis Tile and Brick Company, established in 1902 below the bluff along National Avenue, adjacent to the coal supplies used to fuel the kilns and steam-powered machinery. Until just recently, the company manufactured common brick, sewer and drain tile, and facing brick, chiefly for southwest Washington and Olympic Peninsula markets. The tile and brick plant is currently extant.

The manufacture of gunpowder was never as significant an industry in Chehalis as either coal or clay were, but the Imperial Powder Company did operate a plant in Chehalis beginning in the 1910's. The gunpowder company was one of the half dozen businesses lured to Chehalis by the publicity campaign of the Citizens' Club. An explosion in the Chehalis plant killed eight teenage girls in 1911.



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## F. Associated Property Types

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### I. Name of Property Type Commercial Properties of Chehalis

#### II. Description

The historic commercial properties of Chehalis include two broad categories: downtown commercial buildings and manufacturing structures. **Downtown Commercial Buildings.** The commercial buildings of downtown Chehalis served both the demands of industry and the needs of residents, and they housed a range of business activities: retail and general merchandise stores, professional offices, banks, hotels, and entertainment facilities, like theaters and restaurants. Between 1890 and 1920, the most common building form in downtown Chehalis was the so-called two-part commercial block, constructed of brick with relatively little exterior ornamentation. Most had two stories, although three-, four-, and even six-story blocks existed. The two-part distinction reflected the division of interior space between a street level story used for retail stores (or a bank lobby, for example) and upper stories devoted to offices (or hotel rooms, perhaps)--an extremely flexible design that could accommodate a variety of commercial purposes. One-part commercial blocks were found both in and beyond the downtown core, often functioning as markets, laundries, and "corner" businesses, as in the Central District. **Manufacturing Structures.** Manufacturing and light industrial activity in Chehalis between 1850 and 1950 centered on the processing, sale, and transport of natural resources. Manufacturing structures included the mills and factories of the timber and wood products industry, the processing plants of agricultural and food products firms, and the mines and industrial facilities of coal, brick, and gunpowder companies. The most prevalent construction materials were wood, brick, and concrete. The oldest extant manufacturing structure in Chehalis dates from 1902.

#### III. Significance

Commercial properties are significant for their association with the origins and urban development of Chehalis between 1850 and the mid-20th century. They express in physical form the contours of the local economy, as well as the urban ambitions and civic pride of town residents. They reflect the central role that private enterprise has played in the United States in guiding use of natural resources and the appearance of cityscape. The associated historic contexts for this property type are: "The Urban Growth of Chehalis" and "The Development of a Resource Economy in Chehalis."

#### IV. Registration Requirements

To be considered for inclusion in this multiple property nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, commercial properties must meet two requirements. (1) The property must be significantly associated with the history of Chehalis between 1850 and 1950, or it must be a significant example of an important architectural form, style, or period. Note that while the accompanying historic context statement assesses the period between 1850 and 1950, an eligible property itself must be at least 50 years old. (2) The property must retain integrity. "Integrity" for commercial properties implies retention of basic elements of the original form, exterior facade, and interior character. For a property that is significant for its associational qualities (rather than its purely architectural features), some loss of historic fabric is acceptable if the dominant and characteristic features of the property are extant. It is to be expected that commercial properties will have been remodeled to accommodate changing business uses, and these changes should be carefully evaluated.

### I. Name of Property Type Institutional Properties of Chehalis

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## II. Description

The historic institutional properties of Chehalis include three broad categories: civic, educational, and religious and fraternal structures. **Civic Properties.** The civic buildings of Chehalis house a variety of government agencies and public services, representing three levels of government: federal (the United States Post Office [1933], county (the Lewis County Courthouse [1927], and municipal (the Chehalis Civic Center [1910] and the Civic Auditorium [now the Public Safety Building]). The city's system of public parks originated about 1910, and a reservoir and filter plant date from 1914. **Educational Buildings.** Of a half dozen or so public schools, two were built prior to 1940: the Cascade School (1922) and the R. E. Bennett School (1928) constructed in a Spanish eclectic style as a junior high school. The Green Hill School, originally the Washington State Reform School (1889), is a complex of buildings south of town that has been expanded over time. **Religious and Fraternal Buildings.** Churches were some of the first institutional buildings erected in Chehalis, beginning in the 1880's, but most of the original structures have since been replaced or substantially remodeled. There are several private, church-affiliated schools, including a parochial school, St. Joseph's (1922). While many social clubs and fraternal groups made initial use of rooms in commercial buildings or homes for meetings, some organizations erected substantial structures, like the Masonic Temple (1932) and the Odd Fellows Hall.

## III. Significance

Institutional properties are significant for their association with the urban growth of Chehalis between 1850 and 1950. They express in physical form the ways in which town residents constructed political and educational systems, as well as religious and social organizations, to meet the challenges of urban life. Institutional properties reflect well the central role that the city of Chehalis has played as a political and cultural center in Lewis County for over a century. The associated historic context for this property type is "The Urban Growth of Chehalis."

## IV. Registration Requirements

To be considered for inclusion in this multiple property nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, institutional properties must meet two requirements. (1) The property must be significantly associated with the history of Chehalis between 1850 and 1950, or it must be a significant example of an important architectural form, style, or period. Note that while the accompanying historic context statement assesses the period between 1850 and 1950, an eligible property itself must be at least 50 years old. Because properties owned by religious institutions, or used for religious purposes, are usually not listed in the National Register, an eligible religious property must derive its primary significance from its historical importance or architectural distinction. (2) The property must retain integrity. "Integrity" for institutional properties implies retention of basic elements of the original form, exterior facade, and interior character. For a property that is significant for its associational qualities (rather than its purely

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architectural features), some loss of historic fabric is acceptable if the dominant and characteristic features of the property are extant.

I. Name of Property Type  Residential Properties of Chehalis

II. Description

The historic residential properties of Chehalis include examples of both vernacular and elite domestic architecture. **Elite Residences.** As was typical in other small cities, the “zone of better residence” in Chehalis was defined by selected streets, rather than being an entire district. Between 1880 and the 1920’s, the prosperous and prominent of Chehalis tended to build their homes on the West Side (especially along Pennsylvania Avenue) and in the northeastern Hillside District along Washington and Adams avenues. To express their good taste, most erected residences in the popular Colonial Revival and Craftsman architectural styles, with several homeowners preferring the Queen Anne and Shingle styles. **Vernacular Residences.** Most citizens lived in modest single-family residences, apartment buildings, and boarding houses. The majority of this housing stock was balloon frame construction, erected before 1920. One vernacular form has special significance today because of its association with the development of a resource economy. A number of examples of “company housing” survive in Chehalis in the form of mill worker cottages. These simple, single-family residences were constructed along Prindle Street sometime between 1905 and 1912 to house employees of a nearby lumber mill.

III. Significance

Residential properties are significant for their association with the origins and urban development of Chehalis between 1850 and 1950. They reflect the process by which the city as a whole developed, neighborhood by neighborhood, street by street. In the case of single-family residences, traditionally the dominant housing form in Chehalis, they express in physical form the individual aspiration to home ownership, one of the defining characteristics of the United States as a middle-class society. They also reflect significant architectural patterns and trends. The associated historic contexts for this property type are: “The Urban Growth of Chehalis” and “The Development of a Resource Economy in Chehalis.”

IV. Registration Requirements

To be considered for inclusion in this multiple property nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, residential properties must meet two requirements. (1) The property must be significantly associated with the history of Chehalis between 1850 and 1950, or it must be a significant example of an important architectural form, style, or period. Note that while the accompanying historic context statement assesses the period between 1850 and 1950, an eligible property itself must be at least 50 years old. (2) The property must retain integrity. “Integrity” for residential properties implies retention of basic elements of the original form, exterior facade, and interior character. For a property that is significant for its associational qualities (rather than its purely architectural features), some loss of historic

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fabric is acceptable if the dominant and characteristic features of the property are extant. Greater integrity is required for residential properties that are significant illustrations of an architectural form, style, or period.

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**G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods**

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Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.

This multiple property nomination is based on information collected in a two-phase process. In Phase I, a comprehensive survey was conducted of properties within the city of Chehalis that were at least 50 years old. Using records in the Lewis County Assessor's Office, the Lewis County Historical Museum, and the Chehalis Public Library, project staff identified 1,498 properties. A field survey of all properties was then conducted by George Hauer of the municipal Department of Community Services. Subsequently, the project staff and the city's Historical Commission identified 224 properties as significant and potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. With funding from the City of Chehalis and the Washington State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, an inventory of the 224 properties was published in August 1987 by the Department of Community Services with the assistance of The Phoenix Group.

In Phase II of the project, Dr. Robert Weyeneth was hired in April 1990 to research and prepare the historic context statement, associated property type statements, and individual property nominations of the present multiple property submission. Research support was provided by Brenda O'Connor and Margaret Langus of the Lewis County Historical Museum, George Hauer of the Department of Community Services, and Jan Ziehler of the Chehalis Public Library. The thematic focus of the historic

See continuation sheet

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**H. Major Bibliographical References**

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Chehalis Community Development Committee, *A History of Chehalis* (1955), reprinted by the St. Helens Club (1976).

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Chehalis Public Library: pamphlet files.

Lewis County Assessor's Office: historical maps.

Lewis County Auditor's Office: records of plats.

Lewis County Museum: historical maps and pamphlet files.

*Polk's Lewis County Directories*, 1904- .

Sanborn Map Company, Chehalis fire insurance maps: for the years 1893, 1896 (corrected to 1905), 1912 (corrected to 1916), and 1924 (corrected to 1945).

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional documentation:

- State historic preservation office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency

- Local government  
 University  
 Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

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**I. Form Prepared By**

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name/title Dr. Robert R. Weyeneth  
organization PAST PERFECT Consulting date August 1991  
street & number P.O. Box 5288 telephone (604) 736-4236  
city or town Bellingham state WA zip code 98227-5288

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context statement was designed to include the entire history of the community, from its origins to the beginning of the postwar period. The three property types were derived from an understanding of their association and function within typical patterns of urban development in the United States. In the anticipated third phase of the project, the city expects that volunteers from the community will prepare nomination forms for individual properties following the framework established by this submission and using information compiled in the comprehensive survey.