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A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

As stated in the Preface to National Register Bulletin 16A, "How to Complete the National Register Nomination Form", published by the National Park Service:

"The National Register of Historic Places is the official Federal list of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering and culture. These contribute to an understanding of the historical and cultural foundations of the Nation."

The National Register includes all historic and prehistoric units of the National Park System, National Historic Landmarks and properties significant in National, State or local history or prehistory that have been nominated by State Historic Preservation Officers, Federal agencies, and others, and have been approved for listing by the National Park Service. It includes individual buildings, structures, sites and objects as well as historic districts. A National Register listing recognizes the significance of properties and districts. By doing so, it identifies significant historic resources in a community. The National Register is maintained by the U. S. Department of the Interior. A list of all listed properties can be obtained for each state and county through the Department of the Interior in print or on-line at <http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/index.htm>. In Arizona, the National Register program is administered by the State Historic Preservation Office of State Parks at (602) 542-4180. The City of Prescott staff prepares the nominations to the National Register of Historic Places for districts within the City Limits of Prescott. Nominations for individual properties within the City of Prescott must be funded by the property owner or a sponsor and prepared by the property owner or a private consultant.

A National Register historic district is a historic district that is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The boundaries of National Register districts

are tightly drawn to encompass concentrated areas of historic buildings. In Prescott, the first National Register Nomination was prepared and approved in 1978. This district, called the Territorial Architecture of Prescott MRA, documents a number of buildings scattered around Prescott which were built before 1912. In 1989, three districts were approved – East Prescott, West Prescott, and Pine Crest. Subsequently, the following districts have been approved: Fleury’s Addition, Prescott Armory, Mile High Park, South Prescott Townsite, Joslin and Whipple and Whipple Heights. Each of these National Register nominations includes socio-economic and architectural histories of the neighborhood and an Arizona Historic Property Inventory form for each parcel of land contained within the district boundaries, whether it includes a building or not. Each inventory form indicates whether or not that particular property is eligible or not eligible for the National Register. To be eligible, a building must be 50 years old or more and have “historic integrity”. Eligible properties are designated as “contributors” and non-eligible properties are designated as “non-contributors”. Once the nomination to the National Register is approved, those buildings designated as contributors are listed in the National Register and become eligible for funding programs and various tax benefits.

Listing in the National Register of Historic Places does not place any restrictions on the property listed. Therefore, there is no requirement that a property owner give permission for the listing if the property is listed through the district nomination process. Some properties are individually listed. In these cases, a separate nomination is prepared just for that particular property and the property owner’s permission is usually required.

All records regarding the National Register, except for archaeological sites, are public information. Most of the nominations for Prescott are available at the City of Prescott, Sharlot Hall Museum, the City Library and through the State Historic Preservation Office in Phoenix.

Listing in the National Register of Historic Places does not require conformance to design guidelines (though the building may be removed from the National Register if inappropriate changes are made) nor does it prevent demolition. The responsibility for protecting historic resources is passed to the local level of government through enabling legislation at the Federal and State levels. The City of Prescott has a Historic Preservation Ordinance and a Preservation Commission, which is appointed by the Mayor and City Council. This Commission is responsible for overseeing certain historic preservation issues within certain neighborhoods.