



What is an Historical Context?

Historical contexts:

Identify and explain the major themes, factors and processes that have influenced the history of a neighbourhood.

Their objective is to provide a framework to investigate, identify and manage heritage resources.

They are not intended to be a detailed account of all aspects of the history of a neighbourhood.

They are not intended to replace histories designed to serve other purposes.

An analysis of history, including the very recent past, is central to heritage assessment and management. A heritage resource needs to be considered in the context of the history and historical geography of the neighbourhood surrounding it and the underlying historical influences that have shaped and continue to shape the area. The historical context of a place ensures that the significance of heritage resources can be understood, logically analyzed and clearly stated.

An historic context statement is a document used in planning for a community's heritage resources. It identifies the broad patterns of historic development in the community and identifies historic property types, such as buildings, sites, structures, objects, landscapes or districts which represent these patterns of development. An historic context statement provides direction for evaluating and protecting significant heritage resources. As a planning document, it is meant to be a dynamic work, evolving as a community's needs and desires change.

The historical context expands the broad themes of history into an historical narrative about a neighbourhood. Historical contexts, used in conjunction with a thematic framework and information about the physical evidence of a place, can help to identify heritage values in a neighbourhood and guide approaches to heritage conservation and management. They can also draw attention to gaps in an existing heritage register, or identify areas requiring more detailed historical research.

Historical contexts and themes are created with community input and support the heritage values of the neighbourhood as identified by the local community.



New Westminster's Neighbourhoods Identifying Historical Contexts

Historical themes:

*Put a resource historically
in place and time*

*Unite a variety of actions,
events, functions, people,
place and time*

*Prevent the concentration
on any one particular type
of resource, period or
event in history*

*Ensure that a broad
range of heritage
resources is considered,
touching on many
aspects of the region's
history*

*Flow across all peoples,
places, and time periods*

What is a Thematic Framework?

Historical themes are ways of describing a major force or process which has contributed to history. The following historical themes create an historical context of provincial, regional, and local history within which the heritage significance of each of New Westminster's neighbourhoods and their component parts can be understood, assessed, and compared.

History is complex, and as a result, important historical features, events and/or assets may not be easily slotted into one of the themes. Themes will overlap, and there will be repetition and perhaps ambiguity as to which is the most applicable theme.

The thematic framework summarizes the context and themes identified for the five neighbourhoods. Essentially, the thematic framework is guided by asking the question, "What do people value about their neighbourhood, and why?" The framework is developed through a synthesis of the historical context, research, information collected on site, and input from the New Westminster residents associations.

Historical themes developed for New Westminster's neighbourhoods can be used to inform the management of the area's heritage. This includes the selection of historic and cultural sites for nomination to the Community Heritage Register. It also includes the ability to sustain the area's rich diversity of intangible cultural heritage, such as stories, festivals, celebrations, arts, sports, and other valued forms of expression and community building.

Additionally, the themes provide a background on the area's historic identity and sense of place for consideration in any future economic or tourism initiatives.

Because themes connect the historical context to values and places, they are an excellent way to organize information so that it has continuity. This information can then be used to move forward with the community heritage register and the writing of comprehensive statements of



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significance.

Together, the themes are intended to:

- Capture the heritage values of the city of New Westminster and the evolution of its geographic community over time
- Capture the reader or audience's imagination in their language
- Capture the unique character defining elements of the community and overlaps between one community and elsewhere
- Connect the past to the present
- Connect heritage values to the experience of physical surroundings

These stories of the past and words and themes, that workshop participants, Community Heritage Commission members, the Stakeholder Group and others identified as important characteristics of New Westminster's neighbourhoods incorporate the stakeholders' heritage values. Considered against the factual record of the historical context, heritage values were used by the consultant team as the basis for defining the thematic framework.

Public Consultation

In order to understand what the community valued or was concerned about in their neighbourhood, sessions were held with the resident's associations for each neighbourhood. The following questions were used to stimulate discussions about neighbourhood value and character:

- What are some of the important features of the your neighbourhood?
- Why are they important?
- Where are they located?
- What are some of the historical themes of the neighbourhood?
- What words best describe your neighbourhood?
- What are your concerns about changes to the neighbourhood?