



Historic Preservation Services

Community Development & Neighborhood Services
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Fort Collins Civil Rights Historic Context Study Community Meeting #1 – July 27, 2022 Questions and Answers

How did McDoux Preservation come up with the information that was included in the meeting presentation?

The National Park Service (NPS) provides a structure for how historic context studies are developed and what is included in them. This includes the Civil Rights Thematic Framework (2008, online at www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalhistoriclandmarks/civil-rights-framework.htm), which defines the themes that are important for documenting sites related to civil rights in the United States. NPS then commissioned “theme studies” that explore the various themes identified in the Framework, such as “discrimination in education.” Each theme study provides a historical overview of that topic, as well as how to identify properties associated with that theme and otherwise apply that information in historic preservation. Historic context studies then explore those themes at a state or (in this case) local level, which makes it easier for City staff to identify potential historic landmarks or historic districts. Historic designations or nominations to the National Register of Historic Places require that the property or historic district being nominated is placed in context and discussed in comparison to other similar resources. This work therefore lays the foundation for future landmark/district designations or nominations to the National Register. The City of Fort Collins has already developed historic context studies for about 25 topics; this project extends the Historic Preservation Program’s Local History Project work to cover the topic of Civil Rights movement.

What has McDoux Preservation done so far?

Prior to this meeting, McDoux received thousands of historical and archival documents shared by the City Historic Preservation staff, which provide information on the seven demographic groups that will be the focus of this project. During the week of July 25, 2022, McDoux consultants visited archives in Denver and Fort Collins to collect additional material that is not available online. However, this project is just getting started, so the consultants do not yet have all of the information that they need to do this work.

How did the City select the seven demographic groups that will be the focus of this project?

During previous Local History projects, the City documented the stories of different demographic groups in Fort Collins. Those projects did not include the history of civil rights in this city, and the Historic Preservation staff recognized that as a gap that needed to be addressed. This is only one chapter in a longer process of developing community-driven information, so City staff expects that, during this project, they and the consultants will identify topics for future study that are not part of the scope of the Civil Rights study, such as disability rights or the history of immigration in Fort Collins. Finally, the number of groups that could be included in this project is limited by the funding available from the state grant and matching funds contributed by the City.



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How were the Community Ambassadors chosen, and is it still possible for people to volunteer to serve on that committee?

Everyone in Fort Collins is welcomed and encouraged to participate in this project. The Community Ambassadors are people with social, civic, and professional relationships who can serve as connectors between the City/consultants and the community, helping to identify individuals who might have information about civil rights here. The committee was started in a very limited way during the process of applying for the grant, when the City identified people who could help preliminarily plan the project; they formed the initial core of the committee. After receiving the grant, preservation planner Jim Bertolini began reaching out to more people to build relationships. This community meeting is another opportunity to do that. If anyone is interested in being a Community Ambassador, they should contact project manager Maren Bzdek to discuss that possibility.

What is the diversity of the Community Ambassadors committee?

During the initial contacts, City staff aimed to make sure every demographic group was represented by at least one person. However, that list was heavily skewed toward academic partners at Colorado State University. Now, the committee is being expanded to include people from across the community, with the goal that it will continue to be representative of everyone in Fort Collins.

What is the timeline for this study?

This project will explore the history of civil rights in Fort Collins from around 1869, when the first non-Indigenous settlement was established, through 2020.

Why stop at 2020 when civil rights issues are still present in American society?

The project team recognizes that civil rights is still a major issue. However, this project has to have a cut-off point so that it will be manageable, and ending this investigation in 2020 makes it possible to include anti-Asian hostility at the beginning of the pandemic. These studies can be revised later to include a longer timeframe.

What is the geographic boundary of this study?

The study will be generally limited to the Fort Collins area, understanding that some neighborhoods that are now within the city limits were not included for much of the city's history and that marginalized people often lived outside formal municipal boundaries.

Can individuals contribute information, such as family histories, interviews with elders, etc.?

Yes! The project team welcomes and encourages anyone with that sort of information to share it. Please contact project manager Maren Bzdek to make arrangements.

Do these projects ever get political pushback?

Yes! McDoux specializes in community engagement for projects that are already or are expected to become contentious. Steph McDougal seeks to bring everyone to the table and to learn about everyone's concerns, complaints, etc. so that they understand all of those points of view. McDoux's goal is to build these projects to include a great deal of community involvement, which makes it more



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difficult for politics to get in the way of doing good work.

Is access to health care on the list of topics for this project?

No. That may be explored during a future project, but it is not within the scope of this one.

Have the consultants from McDoux visited the different historic areas in the city?

Yes. McDoux toured the city and historic areas with City staff. For example, they toured Tres Colonias and were able to observe the differences between those neighborhoods.

Did the consultants get a chance to see the sculpture, “The Hand That Feeds”?

Yes. The consultants report having questions about the short-handled hoe, since they are from a farming area in the Midwest but had not seen one of those before. It was helpful for them to learn about the meaning of the short-handled hoe and understand how that resonates throughout this community.

How can people share information with the project team?

All information should be shared with project manager Maren Bzdek, who will make sure that it gets to the consultants. To make sure that your information is captured accurately and in your own words, it’s best to provide it in writing. However, if that would be difficult for someone for whatever reason, Maren can help find a workable alternative.

Will the McDoux consultants be residing in Fort Collins during this project?

No. The consultants work all over the United States and in multiple communities at one time, so they do not move to each community they work in.

What will be the products of this project and what will the City do with those?

This project lays a foundation for properties to be designated as local landmarks/historic districts or nominated to the National Register of Historic Places, to ensure that the properties that are being preserved represent the entire community. Following the formal organization of the current system for historic preservation in 1966, the first things that were nominated or designated were fancy houses that had been owned by rich white men, but that is only a small part of the story of a community. Over the years, historic preservation professionals and organizations have done a better job of documenting a more inclusive histories and the places that represent those histories, but more can be done. In many cities around the United States, places that have been officially recognized as “historic” do not proportionally represent the people who have lived or still live in that city.

The information that will be collected during this project — not just place-based information — can be used for other purposes as well. For example, to create a sense of belonging and to recognize and honor the stories of people who came before us.

How will this transcend text? Is there an opportunity for creating a visual narrative?

This project will provide a foundation for that sort of future work. For example, city governments use Geographic Information System (GIS) spatial databases to track the locations of everything within the city, including historic resources. That GIS information can be used to create interactive maps called



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StoryMaps that present stories in a visual way. Other options include museum exhibits, visual art presentations, etc. Other options are ways to create interpretive materials that tell the story of specific sites, including buildings that no longer exist.

How will you make sure that the different demographic groups are equitably represented in the project and in the list of prioritized sites for further investigation?

To some extent, that will depend on the information to which the project team has access. We recognize that newspaper articles, books, and other written records did not include the full history of the entire community. That's why it is so important for the community to be involved in this project and share information, so that the project team is not limited to what is included in archives.

If more than 100 sites are identified during this project, the project team — in collaboration with the community — will need to prioritize what should include in the list.

How will this project express the emotion that is part of these stories and places?

Emotion comes in primarily through oral histories and the contributions of peoples' own stories and lived experiences. Those things are able to bring in the emotion that otherwise would not be included in the kind of technical documents that this project will produce.

Do you have methodological tools, as historians, to help remedy the historical exclusion of a community when the elders are no longer with us?

As information is collected during this project, it will all be archived so that it will be available for future use. McDoux consultant Steph McDougal says, "Our job as historians is to figure out what the story is and how to tell it. We'll take a shot at that and then ask you all to tell us what we got wrong and how to make it better." This project is intended to be a dialogue between the project team and the community, working together in collaboration.

The City doesn't always have the best track record with this community. How much control will the City have over the final product, and will they be able to keep information out of the historic contexts because it doesn't make them look good?

One major goal of this project is absolute transparency. The McDoux consultants will write the draft historic context documents. They will document all changes requested by the City, as well as all of the comments received from the community. That information will be provided on the project webpage.

Will the community have the opportunity to raise concerns if people are not happy with what is included (or not included) in the historic context documents?

Yes. Please contact project manager Maren Bzdek if you have concerns. However, please be aware that these are high-level histories and will not include detailed family stories or recounting of specific events. That more detailed information, collected during this project, can be used in future work that builds upon the historic contexts.