



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Highway
Administration**

NEBRASKA DIVISION

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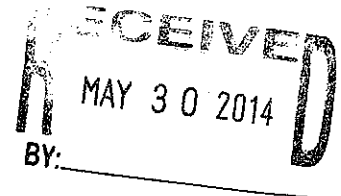
L. Robert Puschendorf
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
Nebraska State Historical Society
P.O. Box 82554
Lincoln, NE 68508



HP# 1405-135-01
County JO
STR. X ARCHEO. X
Resp. SP Date 20140603

Dear Mr. Puschendorf:

**Project ENH-49(46), CN 13214
Tecumseh Historic Square Preservation
City of Tecumseh, Johnson County
Cultural Resources Identification and Evaluation**



Please review this document on historic resources for the subject project as required under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 as amended, and implementing regulations at 36 CFR Part 800.

An evaluation of the potential for cultural resources, both archeology and standing structures, is included below and in the Enclosure.

Project Description

The Project is generally described as a Reconstruction of existing brick streets and existing concrete walkways. The Project Study Area, as shown on the attached aerial, includes brick paved streets, concrete paved parking, concrete paved walkways, and concrete curb and gutters (Enclosure 1, Figure 1). The brick surfacing has either deteriorated in place, been repaired/replaced with materials such as asphalt or concrete, or has remained in good condition. The same brick streets have over time settled or heaved creating uneven surfaces. The concrete paved parking areas, concrete paved walkways, and concrete curb and gutters range in condition from fair to poor and lack consistent width, type, or location. The Project would include removing all existing brick, relaying the existing brick that are in good condition, and replacing the balance of the degraded brick with an acceptable brick that is either the same or similar type of brick as the existing. During this process not only will the brick roadway be replaced, but both the existing roadway profile and cross section deficiencies would be improved. In all areas of the brick roadway a granular sub-surface drainage system would be incorporated to primarily address the structural integrity of the brick system and secondarily address a portion of the storm sewer surface runoff. All edges of the brick street would be contained by either a newly installed concrete curb and gutter, newly installed concrete pavement, or an abutting existing street. In combination with the street pavement improvements, various off-street parking areas around the square would either be installed or replaced with concrete pavement. Additionally, all existing walkways installed between the back of curb and the front of the existing buildings around the outside perimeter of the courthouse square would be replaced with concrete complying with current ADA regulations. Concrete walks along both sides of the streets extending radially one

block away from the main courthouse square would also be replaced with concrete sidewalks that maintain both a consistent location and width.

From visible reviews and records research, coal chutes exist below the walkways at several of the buildings surrounding the courthouse square. These coal chutes are no longer in use and have been filled in or abandoned over time by their respective building owners. During the walkway improvement process, each of the coal chutes would be exposed, observed for existing conditions, and then properly abandoned prior to placement of the new concrete walkways.

Similar to the coal chutes there is a series of underground storage vaults along one of the businesses at the northwest corner of 4th & Broadway Streets. These storage vaults are no longer in use and are in poor condition. During the walkway improvements process, each of the underground storage vaults would be exposed, observed for existing conditions, and then properly abandoned prior to placement of the new concrete walkway.

To properly address the significant elevation difference between the street and sidewalk along the west side of 3rd Street, South of Clay Street a newly installed retaining wall is planned. A similar situation exists in front of the City office building, which would be corrected by a combination ramp and retaining wall system complying with current ADA regulations.

Along with all of the surface pavement improvements, utility infrastructure improvements are planned due to their deteriorating condition and location under pavement. Replacement of the existing cobra style street lights, installed in the late 1980s located along the outside perimeter of the square, with period correct energy efficient street lighting will complement and match the lights currently located on the inside perimeter of the courthouse square. The proposed historic style lighting would both enhance the historic character of the district and reference (but not exactly replicate) the types of lights historically used in the square as identified through historic photographs. New storm sewer inlets would be placed at the southern end of both 3rd Street and 4th Street so the storm water surface drainage from the streets can be collected and directed into the existing buried storm sewer system. The network of existing water pipes around the perimeter of the courthouse square would be replaced and located under the new pavement. All utility improvements, excluding the water system, are considered participating. Although the water system improvements will not be funded by the project, they would be included during construction of the pavement improvements due to the proposed installation location.

Temporary pedestrian access would be required to maintain business access during construction. Construction would be phased so only one street at a time will be under construction. During this time, one street will be closed and a detour route posted that would avoid the historic square. The detour route would be north on 2nd St. and 5th St. to Jackson St. However, access to the square would be maintained via the other three streets that would not be under construction at that time.

Area of Potential Effect

The area of potential effect (APE) for Section 106 purposes is defined at Sec. 800.16(d) in the regulations as the geographic area or areas within which an undertaking may directly or indirectly cause alterations

in the character or use of historic properties, if any such properties exist. The area of potential effect is influenced by the scale and nature of an undertaking and may be different for different kinds of effects caused by the undertaking.

The APE for this undertaking encompasses an area to include the downtown commercial core where the actual construction activity will take place as well as the streets surrounding the downtown core where the detour route will be located. Construction activity will be limited to the brick streets and sidewalks in the commercial core. No activity is planned for the surrounding neighborhood streets or right-of-way. As such the only potential impacts to the residential neighborhood will be caused by the detour route. Limited traffic and controlled construction will limit the detour routes to small portions of the project at any one time. It is anticipated that one-half to one block of the downtown brick streets will be under construction at a time.

The APE for the Tecumseh Historic Square Preservation project includes a rectangular area bounded by the half block north of Jackson Street to the north, 6th Street to the east, the railroad tracks to the south, and 1st Street to the west. This includes the limits of construction and also identifies the detour route on the west, north, and east boundaries of the project. The project map identifies the APE for this undertaking.

The APE for archeological properties was chosen to adequately identify any historic properties that maybe potentially altered by this undertaking. The APE for *direct* effects includes the area of construction activity described in the preceding Project Description; specifically, reconstruction of the existing brick streets and concrete walkways in the Tecumseh downtown commercial core, with possible ground disturbance up to a depth of 10 feet (See Figure 6 below). There are no construction activities planned along the detour route or surrounding streets warranting their inclusion in the archeological APE. Definition of a broader *indirect* APE for secondary or cumulative impacts is not required in this instance.

This report will incorporate all standing structures, adjacent sidewalks, curbs, and subterranean features within the APE for the undertaking as well as any potential for the presence of historic districts. The field investigation identified and documented all standing structures within the APE that were historic (approximately 50 years old or older), listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), as well as properties that were previously surveyed by the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

The Built Environment

An evaluation of the built environment was conducted by Melissa Dirr of Historic Resources Group (HRG). The history of the built environment was examined through the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) inventory and site files, the Tecumseh Architectural District NRHP nomination, Johnson County Courthouse NRHP Nomination, Tecumseh Opera House NRHP nomination, Reconnaissance Level Survey for Johnson County, Nebraska Historic Building Survey, and the Central Business District Master Plan. In addition, Tecumseh plat maps and websites were consulted as appropriate. Finally, an on-site survey and evaluation was completed by Dirr in May 2013.

Tecumseh retains a unique status as a historic community because much of the community, both residential and commercial, is currently listed in the NRHP as part of the Tecumseh Architectural District (NRHP 1975). Because the district boundaries defined in the NRHP nomination extend well outside the APE for this undertaking, all buildings within the APE are currently National Register listed, and a vast majority of those buildings contribute to the historic district. This study evaluated the current condition of those buildings and assigned a current status as to whether or not the individual resources contribute to the NRHP listed district. As such a greater emphasis was placed on the evaluation of non-contributing resources, with the understanding and acceptance that all buildings are currently listed as part of the architectural district.

Any resources that were not included in previous studies or in National Register nominations are evaluated in Enclosure 1. These resources are limited and include the historic brick streets in the commercial district, the objects and structures in the courthouse square, and several subterranean features of the district that are associated with buildings and are not considered archeological resources. These resources are briefly discussed below. Please see Enclosure 1 for additional information.

There are 150 buildings located within the APE and included in the Tecumseh Architectural District NRHP nomination, and of those, 8 were identified as non-contributing (Enclosure 1). These non-contributing properties do not meet the 50 year age recommendation or they no longer retain sufficient integrity to be considered good candidates for NRHP listing. Two properties, the Johnson County Courthouse and the Opera House are individually listed in the NRHP.

The brick streets in the commercial historic core of Tecumseh have not previously been evaluated for NRHP significance. These brick streets, installed around 1913, retain a high degree of integrity with regard to location, setting, feeling and association and are recommended eligible under Criterion A as a contributing feature to the existing Tecumseh Architectural District. Though the addition of sidewalks were part of the same 1913 paving project which installed the brick pavers, the concrete has been repaired and replaced several times in the ensuing years, and no longer retains sufficient physical integrity to be considered NRHP eligible. Although the sidewalks themselves are not eligible, there are two features associated with the Ellsworth Building at 398 Broadway, a light well and an exterior stair accessing the basement that are considered contributing features associated with the building and not the sidewalk.

Resources located on the public courthouse square, but that were not included in the 1989 NRHP nomination, were evaluated for NRHP significance. The Grand Army of the Republic Statue, the band shell and a small brick building are all recommended eligible as contributing features to the NRHP nomination.

Water mains serving the city of Tecumseh are located under the streets within the APE for this undertaking. The water mains are not recommended eligible. The lines do not retain historic significance as they are not representative of early or significant engineering, physical integrity has been diminished because of alterations to line connections over time, and the represents a functional service feature of the city of Tecumseh and does not retain significance. There is no

potential for the water main line to yield information that is not already well established in the historic record, and therefore, the resource is not recommended eligible under Criterion D.

Coal chutes in the commercial buildings around courthouse square in Tecumseh are located in basement and foundation walls. The openings are in the lower level foundation wall which faces the courthouse square. These openings vary in size and were typically between 3 to 4 feet square. The coal chutes provided direct access for the fuel source into the building. Openings in the sidewalk would have provided an area where coal could be directly shoveled from above ground directly into the below sidewalk openings to the basement where the coal burning furnaces were located. A variety of materials were utilized to close the openings including concrete masonry units, boards, and bricks. The sidewalk has been altered and repaved over the years and the openings to access coal chutes no longer exist. Though these coal chutes are physical manifestations of the functionality of the historic buildings around the courthouse square, the features are minor in nature, and do not contribute to the significance of the historic properties. It is important to note that the buildings surrounding the square are currently listed in the National Register as part of the Tecumseh Architectural District. As such the coal chutes are part of the building walls and, therefore are listed in the NRHP as part of the building.

However, the coal chutes do not represent a significant individual feature or system that would independently eligible outside the building. The coal chutes are not eligible as historic archeological resources under criterion D. There is no potential for these features to yield significant information as these features are well documented in the historical record.

Under the sidewalk next to the building at 398 Broadway is a large subdivided open storage vault. This storage area is located under the sidewalk, and is not part of the building at 398 Broadway. These open rooms subterranean rooms are in poor structural condition with exposed rebar protruding from spalling concrete and steel beams that have been significantly diminished from rust and water damage. This structural integrity issue and severe deterioration are contributing to the diminished structural integrity of the sidewalk. Historically these areas are not uncommon and could have a variety of purposes from materials storage to ventilation. Throughout time many of these types of storage areas have been infilled due to lack of use, and structural integrity issues. This underground storage feature does not retain significance, does not contribute to part of a broader theme in Tecumseh, and is not recommended eligible.

Archeological Evaluation

An archeological evaluation was conducted by Highway Archeology Program Manager Rob Bozell and Highway Archeologist Karen Steinauer from November 2013 through January 2014 (Enclosure 1). A review of the Nebraska State Historical Society Cultural Resources Geographic Information System (NCRGIS) archeological resources database and historic maps disclosed that there are no previously recorded archeological properties within the APE.

A visual reconnaissance was conducted on January 24, 2014 of the direct physical APE which showed the project location to be entirely within the densely built commercial square that has been previously impacted by standing structures, utilities and/or roadways. As a result, efforts were focused on addressing two concerns, 1) the NRHP eligibility of the below grade "vaults" attached or immediately adjacent to the commercial buildings as *archeological features*, and 2) the ground disturbance associated with the relocation of the water lines.

While the exact number of these features and their locations is not precisely known, none of the below grade vaults, accumulated floor debris, or infill materials have the potential to answer significant research questions about the history of coal usage or community development and commerce in Tecumseh beyond what is available through archival sources. Further, the existing commercial building surrounding the square appear to be built subsequent to original wooden buildings associated with the establishment of the town in the 1860-70's and lack potential to yield information about that earlier time period of initial settlement of Tecumseh. The storage vaults are recommended not eligible for inclusion on the NRHP under Criterion D as archeological properties in their own right due to a lack of ability to contribute important information to our understanding of human history.

The Tecumseh Commercial Square is situated on a prominent rise above the North Fork of the Big Nemaha River and several smaller tributaries – a southeast Nebraska topographic setting typical of those containing burials and other important site types (Holen et al. 1996). Due to previous development around the square, there is low potential for intact significant prehistoric surface remains to be present. No additional field work is recommended prior to construction. However, given the prominent landform, there is some potential for buried deposits in situ. As a precaution, it is recommended that coordination between the project manager, the contractor, and a qualified archeologist be initiated prior to construction, to establish a protocol in the event of a post-review discovery and possibly develop a monitoring program for the trenching for the water lines after removal of brick streets.

An archeological survey of the possible detours was not required as there are no construction activities planned for these routes and therefore the detours have no potential to affect archeological resources. It is recommended that there are no archeological historic properties present in the APE.

Eligibility Recommendations

The Federal Highway Administration respectfully requests NeSHPO concurrence with these NRHP eligibility recommendations.

If you have any questions regarding this information, do not hesitate to contact me at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely yours,


for Melissa Maięfski
Program Delivery Team Lead

Enclosure

CONCUR:


Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer


Date