Understanding Historic Context and the Period of Significance

All historic districts begin with a historic context that defines what history causes a district to be significant in our record of past events, places, and/or people. Below is an example of how the historic context of a district determines what structures are significant and which elements should be preserved based on their contribution to the district. Typically, a historic context helps define a period of significance, by outlining the when the historic pattern or events occurred. Demonstrated below are examples of how two different historic contexts alter the period of significance, historic elements, and contributing structures.

**Fictional District #1:**

In the late 19th century, the Victorian house was constructed to demonstrate wealth during the Industrial Age. The period of significance for this district is distinguished between 1880-1910.

The historic elements representative of the period of significance are pitched roofs, bay windows, arched entrance, and decorative spindles. The structures which contain these elements are considered contributing buildings to the district.

![Illustration of Fictional District #1](image1.png)

**Fictional District #2:**

In the 20th century, the region’s market began to decline, and many immigrated to the area looking for work. These cultural trends led to simplification of structural ornamentation and a larger physical form that would house multiple tenants or larger families. The period of significance for this district is between 1920-1940.

The historic elements representative of this period of significance include three-story flat roof buildings, ribbon and glass block windows, and smooth stucco wall surfaces.

![Illustration of Fictional District #2](image2.png)
Brighton's Historic District Period of Significance

Applying Historic Context to Brighton's Downtown

The Hughes railroad station located just east of what is now known as Downtown Brighton served as the catalyst to the growth of the city. Bringing in pioneers from all over the world, it was they who helped establish the City of Brighton.

During the 1880s, Brighton was a thriving village. It boasted a school, a church, a blacksmith shop, a hotel, a meat market, two general stores, a post office, a railroad, and a telegraph stations, a newspaper, a creamery, three saloons and a growing number of residences. Each one of these businesses and residences could be found on what is now known as Main Street in Downtown Brighton. Only a few of the original buildings remain today, but the historic nature of what pioneers envisioned is still visible in the architecture. Buildings tell the story of how people lived and how they changed throughout the years. Over the last century, Brighton’s businesses changed, buildings came and went, but the 19th and 20th style of architecture continued. However, after the end of World War II, the style of architecture changed and is reflected in the building style.

The period of significance for the Brighton Downtown District is set between 1882 - 1945. The contributing buildings will include those constructed during 1882 – 1945 that maintains integrity and exhibit historic elements as defined below.

**Historic Elements**

The goal of a historic district is to preserve architectural elements which represent Brighton’s historic Period of Significance as described above. Architectural elements of Brighton’s Historic District include:

- One-Part Commercial Block (one story high)
- Two-Part Commercial Block (two stories high)
- Multiple Entrance Types
  - Diagonal Entrance
  - Recessed Entrance
  - Flush Entrance
- Windows
  - Transoms (windows above doors)
  - Large Plate Glass Windows - large glass paned storefronts
- Kick Plates: space between windows and foundation
- Decorative Brick Work: generally located at top of building

Properties which have lost a majority of their historic elements can no longer be considered contributing structures. If, in the future, a property chooses to remove non-historic elements and reveals contributing elements that can be restored, the potential to become a contributing building is possible.