

**Rapid City Postwar Schools**  
**Historic Context and Recommendation of National Register**  
**Eligibility**



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Prepared for Rapid City Historic Preservation Commission  
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## **Abstract**

The purpose of Rapid City Postwar Schools historic context report is to provide city personnel with a resource to use for future educational programming and to identify schools that may be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Specifically, this report provides background information for the city to fulfill efforts to identify and document the significance of schools built within this period. This report focuses on the architecture of elementary and middle schools built between 1949 and 1972. The report provides an analysis and history of the property type and incorporates individual site survey forms for five buildings.

This report focuses on school building features and design implemented throughout the city following World War II. None of the buildings are currently listed in the NRHP and continued city expansion and modernization pressure the resource. In 2021 an interpretive essay entitled, “The Modern School: Postwar School Architecture in Rapid City” was prepared. Additionally, statewide contexts for Post-World War II Architecture in South Dakota prepared by Michelle L. Dennis for the South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office, *Modern Residential Architecture in South Dakota, 1949-1975*, and *Schools in Nebraska* contexts were undertaken by the state. These combined documents, along with supplemental newspaper, primary, and secondary research provide a detailed analysis of the history of the era, its resources, and its historic significance to the city. This document will focus on the history and design of school buildings in this era and reference to essays mentioned above should be referenced for broader or policy issues throughout this period.

The post war era in Rapid City was a time of significant population growth and city expansion. The increase in population and shifting densities resulted in a public response to provide services to newly populated areas. Schools, parks, neighborhoods, and convenience services were constructed to respond to these pressures.

## **Introduction and Administrative Information**

Rapid City Postwar Schools Historic Context was prepared for the City of Rapid City through their historic preservation commission by Historic Resources Group, Inc. (HRG) in 2022. This historic context study addresses the built environment in Rapid City, specifically school buildings. The document provides a historic context for school buildings constructed during the post-World War II era and will provide National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligibility recommendations for any schools that may meet NRHP standards. Fourteen schools were surveyed during field investigations in March 2022. The timeframe for this context incorporates a temporal period of mid-twentieth century planning and educational needs beginning in 1949 through 1972 when geopolitical demands and architectural tenants shifted. The report will build the history of the era and provide a basis to evaluate physical integrity and historic significance of the resources. This report will provide foundational information for a determination of eligibility, but not fulfill all the requirements of National Register listing. Individual preliminary eligibility forms provided by the South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office will be provided for six distinct resources within city limits. Evaluation methodology will also be described to further assist with future planning projects for the city. The report is prepared by Melissa Dirr Gengler of Historic Resources Group, Inc. (HRG). Melissa meets the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Standards in the areas of architectural history and history.

Following the context and significance development discussion are individual building descriptions that will provide additional physical description of those schools surveyed. The description of the major structures within the built environment documents the existing physical features and characteristics, changes over time, and the retention of physical integrity (design, materials, workmanship, location, setting, feeling, and association). It will also identify those features that make the buildings unique and specific to their place in Rapid City.

14 properties were included in a reconnaissance field inventory, six preliminary eligibility forms were prepared, and two buildings are recommended eligible.