

# **HILLCREST RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY**

**RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA**

sponsored by the

City of Rapid City  
Historic Preservation Commission

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this survey was to conduct a reconnaissance-level survey of the Hillcrest neighborhood in Rapid City, SD and to evaluate the neighborhood for its potential to be listed as a historic district. The project was sponsored by the Historic Preservation Commission of Rapid City with grant funding assistance from the South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office.

As a result of this survey, it has been determined that the Hillcrest neighborhood no longer has sufficient integrity to warrant nomination as a historic district.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Hillcrest Survey was a reconnaissance-level survey conducted in the spring of 2009. It included a survey of the buildings and structures associated with the development of the Hillcrest neighborhood between 1940 and 1955.

The Hillcrest neighborhood is located in Rapid City, Pennington County, South Dakota, south of the central downtown business district. The neighborhood is small, encompassing only 32 built resources. The surveyed area falls within the Rapid City East Quadrangle of the USGS maps.

The project, which began in March, included both archival and field research. Field documentation occurred in April. The survey was completed by Michelle L. Dennis of M.L. Dennis Consulting, Rapid City.

The City of Rapid City Growth Management Division provides staff support for the Historic Preservation Commission. All information associated with this survey will reside in files in that department.

## **SURVEY REPORT**

### *SETTING*

The Hillcrest neighborhood occupies the top, east and southeast slopes of a small bluff located south of the central downtown core of the city. The top of the bluff is at an elevation of approximately 3390 feet above sea level.

The surveyed area included the original Hillcrest Addition and three subsequent additions to the original. The primary resource type is multi-family housing, including a combination of duplexes and fourplexes. There were a very small number of single-family dwellings within the surveyed area. In addition to residential dwellings, there were also two buildings used as garages and/or utility storage.

Historically, the land was undeveloped. The Hillcrest housing development has been the only use of land at this site.

## *SURVEY METHODOLOGY*

The survey was designed and implemented in accordance with the Federal and state standards for surveys, using the directions set forth in the *South Dakota Historic Resource Survey Manual* (revised 2006). The surveyor meets all qualifications per 36 CFR 61.

The objectives of the survey were twofold:

1. to document the resources associated with the development of the Hillcrest neighborhood, and
2. to evaluate the resources for potential historic district listing

To this end, both field and archival research was undertaken. Information pertaining to the history and physical development of the neighborhood was gathered using several resources, including books and articles about the history of Rapid City and Pennington County, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, city plat maps, the Rapid City Daily Journal, city building permits, and the photo archives at the Minnelusa Pioneer Museum. Field recordation included the completion of site forms and photographs for each resource.

The resources were evaluated as a grouping for potential historic district listing using the National Register standards. In addition, each resource was evaluated for possible individual eligibility.

## *BACKGROUND INFORMATION*

The Hillcrest neighborhood's initial development began on August 19, 1940 when Paul E. Bellamy, of Rapid City, filed a plat for the Hillcrest Addition to Rapid City. In September 1940 it was announced that construction had begun on a 46-unit housing project, known as Hillcrest Terrace. The fourteen buildings were to be one-story duplex units and two-story fourplex units, all with basements. All of the buildings would face outward on a peripheral one-way drive, which circled the top of the hill, providing an excellent view of most of the city. Each of the units would be finished with quality materials. The building permits totaled \$92,000 for the project and construction of the initial units was completed by early 1941 (RC Daily Journal).

Hillcrest Terrace was successful for Bellamy and he eventually platted three more additions (see plat map in appendices). Hillcrest Addition #2 was platted March 19, 1942 and resulted in the construction of four single-family dwellings and seven multi-family dwellings (three of these were moved in 1955 to Hillcrest Addition #4). Hillcrest Addition #3, filed May 1, 1943, was actually a replat of Tract F of Hillcrest Addition #2. A total of three multi-family units and one single-family unit (since converted to a duplex) were constructed in Hillcrest Addition #3 (one of the multi-family buildings was moved in 1952). Hillcrest Addition #4 was platted on December 27, 1954 and became the site of the units moved from the north end of the neighborhood after a landslide from the northeast side of the upper terrace blocked off two streets and threatened the stability of the buildings.

The Hillcrest Development was the first modern residential development of its kind in Rapid City. Its construction at the end of the Great Depression signaled a change in housing patterns in the city where never before had an entire neighborhood been developed that was predominantly multi-family units.

There have been no previous surveys of the Hillcrest neighborhood and none of the resources associated with the surveyed area have been listed on any registers.

### *SURVEY RESULTS*

The reconnaissance survey of the Hillcrest neighborhood has determined that it is not eligible for listing as a historic district, nor are there any individual buildings identified as eligible for individual listing.

Clearly the neighborhood meets the standard for 50 years of age. A case might also be made for its significance as the first multi-family neighborhood in Rapid City. Its integrity, however, has been compromised over the years and the loss of character-defining features is substantial.

Of the seven aspects of integrity, as defined by the National Register of Historic Places, integrity exists only in the areas of location (with the exception of the four buildings that were moved, but even then, they were moved to a newer platted addition adjacent to the original additions), setting, and association. The historic integrity of design, materials and workmanship, and to some degree the aspect of feeling, has been substantially compromised.

The buildings originally were quite modernistic in style, a departure from earlier residential architecture in Rapid City. The boxy-shaped buildings had flat roofs and windows situated near the corners of the buildings. They were originally covered with a horizontal lapped siding and windows were 2:2 double hung wood sash. Over the years a number of the buildings were sold to different property owners; only those buildings located at the top of the bluff and are still known as Hillcrest Terrace, are owned by a single owner and operated as a housing development.

With these shifts in ownership have come various alterations. A number of the flat roofs have been changed to gabled roofs. Most of the buildings have a secondary siding. Many of the buildings have replacement windows; in some cases, the window openings have shifted from the original corner locations.

All of these changes have resulted in the loss of the original modernistic architecture and character of the buildings and neighborhood. Because these elements were the character-defining features of the buildings, it has been determined that the degree of alteration has resulted in a substantial loss of integrity. Therefore the Hillcrest neighborhood is no longer eligible for listing on the National Register.

### *FURTHER SURVEY NEEDS*

At this point in time, there appears to be no need for further survey of the area.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

- U.S.G.S. Topographical map showing the Hillcrest bluff in the center of the map
- Plat map showing Hillcrest Additions # 1 – 4
- Aerial of Hillcrest Terrace with number corresponding to survey identification
- Survey forms

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**USGS Rapid City, South Dakota, United States 01 Jul 1978**



0 200M

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