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SITKA HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN

INTRODUCTION

In April of 1993 the City and Borough of Sitka passed an ordinance creating the Sitka Historic Preservation Commission. The purpose of the Commission is to undertake historic preservation duties including the formation of a plan to insure preservation and protection of cultural resources. The themes, time periods and places found within the City and Borough of Sitka are very diverse. It is essential these historic contexts are part of our plan, so that responsible decisions regarding their protection can be made.

Long range planning is an on-going process which must address economic, social and political changes in order to set forth policies which set an appropriate direction. It is with these factors in mind that this plan has been developed.

HISTORIC OVERVIEW

An understanding of the present-day world of Sitka and our place in it depends on an appreciation of the past, which is summarized in the following overview:

Native Americans occupied this region for centuries before the coming of the first Europeans, and Sitka was site of the last armed conflicts between the two cultures in Alaska. In the following era, Sitka was the capital of Russian America and the most important European settlement on the West Coast of America. The ceremony transferring Alaska from Russia took place here in 1867.

Sitka was the seat of government under American rule until 1906, and became a center of education, commerce, mining, boat building, fishing, fish processing and lumber manufacture. It has continuously been a center of Native culture and tradition.

Sitka was the site of military bases and coastal fortifications during World War 11. In the postwar period new health and educational facilities serving the entire Alaska territory were located here, and with the coming of the Alaska Pulp Corporation mill, Sitka became one of the most important industrial centers of Alaska.

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

1. To create and maintain an inventory of known pre-historic, historic and architectural resources within the City and Borough of Sitka, Alaska.
2. To review and make recommendations concerning undertakings which may impact cultural resources.
3. To encourage local support of historical preservation.
4. To consider preservation concerns of residents.

GOAL OF THE PLAN

1. To create an inventory of known resources using existing literature and local knowledge.

Action Steps:

- A. Consult existing inventories (AHRS, NPS, USFS, City and Borough of Sitka, Sitka Tribal Association).
- B. Interview local residents.
- C. Conduct a literature search of local sources and libraries.
- D. Create a system for maintaining appropriate restricted access.
- E. Identify gaps in the inventory.
- F. Design a site recording form which will be available to the public.
- G. Solicit public input through local media.

2. To adopt and implement policies promoting preservation of resources.

Action Steps:

- A. Establish a local project review process which utilizes the Preservation Plan.
- B. Identify a strategy for coordinating historical preservation and inventory effects between governmental agencies with the City and Borough of Sitka.

3. To review and develop nominations to the National Register of Historic Places for properties within the jurisdiction.

Action Steps:

- A. Include local input as a regular agenda item whenever nominations are scheduled for review.
- B. Make material concerning the nomination process available to the public.

4. To update the Preservation Plan to accomodate changes in the inventory.

Action Steps:

- A. Complete an annual review by Commission members.
- B. Prepare and submit an annual report to SHPO.
- C. Solicit public input of preservation priorities.

5. To increase public awareness and appreciation of historical preservation in the City and Borough of Sitka.

Action Steps:

- A. Develop a long term education plan.
- B. Make preservation materials available at the local library.
- C. Recognize significant preservation efforts by individuals in the community.
- D. Encourage community activities that cause residents to reflect on the rich local history and heritage (i.e., Alaska Day).