



Best Practices Review

A publication on National Register Bulletin guidance

Numerous Nominations? Consider the Multiple Property Documentation Form Approach

Introduction

The National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form (NPS 10-900-b)(MPDF) is a tool for nominating related significant properties (*National Register Bulletin: How to Complete the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form* (Multiple Bulletin, p. 2). This approach effectively creates a comparative baseline for evaluating similar properties within a geographical area.

The MPDF is not a nomination in its own right, but serves as a basis for evaluating the National Register eligibility of related properties. For this reason, an MPDF is typically referred to as a “multiple cover” or simply a “cover.” It provides a framework for evaluating properties that share a common historic context. These contexts may be thematic (e.g., “Fire Stations in Puerto Rico,” “The Black American Experience in Pasco, Washington”) or temporal (e.g., “New Deal-era Resources in Nebraska”), and may apply at macro- or micro-geographic scales (e.g., “Urban Renewal-era Resources in the United States,” “Historic and Architectural Resources of Northfield Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan”).

This issue of the *Best Practices Review* discusses common misunderstandings about using MPDFs and provides examples of properties successfully listed under MPDFs.

Documents Discussed in This Issue

Garden Apartments, Apartment Houses and Apartment Complexes in Arlington County, Virginia 1934-1954

NR. Ref. 64500845

Windsor Apartments

Arlington, Virginia

NR Ref. 100006520

Historic and Architectural Resources of Northfield Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan

NR Ref. 100012311

German Park Recreation Club

Northfield Township, Michigan

NR Ref. 100012313

Historic Resources of Joplin, Missouri

NR Ref. 64501012

Joplin YMCA

Joplin, Missouri

NR Ref. 100007358

Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780–1968

NR Ref. 100003191

Valence House

Grand Isle, Louisiana

NR Ref. 100008740

These documents are available on the National Register’s website at

[Sample Nominations - Multiple Property Documentation.](#)

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What is a Multiple Property Documentation Form?

An MPDF defines and describes one or more historic contexts, details associated property types related to the historic contexts, and establishes significance and integrity requirements for nominating properties to the National Register (Multiple Bulletin, p. 4). It streamlines the nomination process by providing:

- one or more historic contexts (Section E)
- registration requirements to distinguish eligible from non-eligible properties (Section F), and
- geographic parameters for the context (Section G).

An MPDF is ordinarily submitted along with one or more nominations. A best practice is to include at least one nomination as a “test case” to demonstrate the effectiveness of the cover. Once accepted, the MPDF is available to be used for future nominations. To date, over 2,000 MPDFs have been accepted and a list of those multiple covers is available on the [National Register’s data download webpage](#).

What is a Multiple Property Submission?

When submitted to the National Register of Historic Places, the Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF), together with individual registration forms, constitute a “multiple property submission.” Information common to the group of properties is presented in the MPDF, while information specific to each individual building, site, district, structure, or object is recorded on an individual registration form, National Register Registration Form 10-900-a (Multiple Bulletin, p. 2). Each MPDF and each property registration form is individually entered into the National Register Information System database, where it receives a unique identification number.

However, an MPDF accepted by the National Register does not confer eligibility on properties that do not meet National Register criteria. All properties—be it a building, structure, object, site, or district—individually nominated under the MPDF must meet the National Register criteria for listing: the property must be significant and retain integrity, as must be demonstrated in the individual property’s registration form. For example, the MPDF may be accepted but a nomination submitted along with the MPDF may be returned for correction or rejected.

Long-time preservationists and close readers of the National Register regulations at 36 C.F.R. Part 60 will note references to “Multiple Resource Format submission” (for properties within a specified geographic area) and “Thematic Group Format submission” (for properties properly related by theme, style, or archeological form). “Multiple Property Submission” (MPS) has since replaced those legacy terms.

Using an MPDF in a Nomination

Properties nominated under an MPDF must be related to at least one of its contexts (if there is more than one) and must be one of the property types specified in the MPDF. While nominations associated with an MPDF follow the same requirements as a typical individual nomination, the MPDF supports streamlining the Section 8 significance discussion.

National Register Bulletin: How to Complete the National Register Registration Form (Form Bulletin) advises that

[r]egistration forms for properties may be completed at the same time as the multiple property documentation form, or any time thereafter. ...Common information is discussed once in the multiple property documentation form (NPS 10-900-b) and can be simply referenced in the individual registration forms.

(Form Bulletin, p. 66.)

Still, some nominations are associated with an MPDF reference that MPDF only minimally—often simply by identifying it in the registration form’s Section 1 at "Name of related multiple property listing"—without discussing the MPDF’s content elsewhere in the nomination. This practice creates a document that cannot stand on its own, because readers and researchers need to track down and cross-reference the supporting MPDF to understand the property. On the other hand, some nominations supported by an MPDF include extensive portions of the MPDF historic context in the nomination, typically in Section 8 “Statement of Significance.” This copy-and-paste approach bypasses the streamlining benefits of the MPDF.

The following are best practices for completing a nomination associated with an MPDF. Chapter 4 of the Form Bulletin, “Documenting Properties Within Multiple Property Submissions” provides detailed guidance on referencing an MPDF in a nomination.

Section 1– Name of Related Multiple Property Listing

Identify the full name of the MPDF here (e.g., “Fire Stations in Puerto Rico”).

Section 7 – Description

Section 7 should clearly identify the relevant property type as specified in the MPDF and describe the physical characteristics that distinguish the resource as a member of that property type. For example, the Section 7 summary in the nomination for the **Joplin YMCA** in Joplin, Missouri (NR Ref. 100007358), clearly identifies the property type that is identified in the MPDF “Historic Resources of Joplin, Missouri” (NR Ref. 64501012):

Designed by the Kansas City-Joplin architecture firm Smith, Rea, & Lovitt in early 1918, the institutional building is an example of the Cultural and Recreational Property Type described in the “Historic Resources of Joplin, Missouri” Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF).

(Joplin Registration Form, Sec. 7, p. 1.)

This nomination includes in Section 7 a helpful call-and-response style table listing the MPDF’s Cultural and Recreational Property Type registration requirements and explaining how the building meets each of those requirements:

- Constructed between 1870-1960.
 - ✓ The Joplin YMCA opened in 1921.
- Located within Joplin’s 1960 city boundaries.
 - ✓ Joplin YMCA constructed at the west edge of downtown.
- Retains architectural composition, ornamental details, and materials of primary elevation(s).
 - ✓ Doors and windows have been replaced, but the public-facing east and north elevations retain their historic composition, details, and materials. Non-historic window units fill existing masonry openings and can be replaced with new units without altering the historic openings.
 - ✓ Fenestration patterns, ornamental details, and materials of the primary elevations remain intact.

(Joplin Registration Form, Sec. 7, pp. 14-15.)

Likewise, the Section 7 summary in the nomination for the **Windsor Apartments** in Arlington, Virginia (NR Ref. 100006520), after providing a brief description of the property’s spatial arrangement and Colonial Revival style, clearly ties the property’s physical character and features to the physical registration requirements of the MPDF under which it is nominated:

As such, this is a garden apartment property and is listed as a resource in the 2011 *Amendment to the Garden Apartments, Apartment Houses and Apartment Complexes in Arlington County, Virginia 1934-1954 Multiple Property Documentation Form* [NR Ref. 64500845]. As defined by the *Multiple Property Documentation Form*, the property meets the registration requirements of the garden apartment subtype and is significant for providing a new type of housing for residents within Arlington County, in this instance, during the years of World War II. The design of Windsor Apartments and its relationship to the surrounding landscape represents a distinctly mid-20th century idea of multi-residential living that was also a leading housing type and style heavily influenced and promoted by the Federal Housing Administration during the 1930s through the 1950s.

(Windsor Apartments Registration Form, p. 5.)

The narrative description concludes with an analysis of the property’s integrity, specifically citing the requirements of the MPDF: “As required by the Multiple Property Documentation Form, *Garden Apartments, Apartment Houses and Apartment Complexes in Arlington County, Virginia: 1934-1954*, Windsor Apartments retain the seven aspects of integrity” (Windsor Apartments Registration Form, p. 10). The narrative then walks the reader through each aspect of integrity:

- It has not been moved from its original location and thus has integrity of **location**.
- It is a garden apartment complex that reflects the stylistic influences, as well as the popular building forms and materials of the mid-1930s through the mid-1950s. In this instance, influences of the traditional Colonial Revival style are featured through brick exterior walls in American bonding, and Colonial Revival-style entry surrounds. The windows have 6/6 replacement sash and the entries have replacement doors, both of which are alterations common for this particular housing type and are sympathetic to the historic design. The fenestration pattern, sills, lintels, and opening sizes are intact.



Windsor Apartments, Arlington, Virginia (NR Ref. 100006520). Photograph by Jennifer Hembree and JulieAnn Murphy.

The interior floor plans of the buildings are also unaltered even though upgrades relating to mechanical systems and/or kitchens and baths have occurred. The complex thus, has integrity of **design, materials** and **workmanship**.

- The complex continues to display evidence of its original landscape design and its associated circulation features through the presence of the central hexagonal courtyard between Buildings 2 and 3, as well as the manicured lawns that Buildings 1 and 4 face. The associated pedestrian walkways to primary entries, as well as the public sidewalks, and to a lesser extent, the property's driveways and some parking are also intact.
- The complex exhibits integrity of **setting**, as the St. Thomas Moore Cathedral and school remains situated across the property's primary side, and the broader surrounding neighborhood continues to be one of numerous multi-family residential buildings. Although the property originally included an overflow parking area west of Building 4 that extended to N. Trenton Street, the elimination of that former paved surface area at the rear of the complex does not negatively impact the property's ability to convey its historic significance as a garden-apartment complex.

(Windsor Apartments Registration Form, p. 10.)



Joplin YMCA, Joplin, Missouri (NR Ref. 100007358). Photograph by Brad Finch.

Section 8 – Statement of Significance

The Section 8 summary paragraph should promptly identify the MPDF by name and specify the historic context(s) and property type(s) for which the property is significant. For example, the **Joplin YMCA** Section 8 summary paragraph states in the first two sentences,

The 1921 Joplin YMCA at 510 South Wall Avenue in Joplin, Jasper County, Missouri is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of RECREATION as an example of the Cultural and Recreational Property Type described in the “Historic Resources of Joplin, Missouri” Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF). Applicable historic contexts discussed in the MPDF include “Evolution of Joplin as a Regional Commercial and Industrial Center: 1871-1960” and “Community Development Patterns in Joplin: 1871-1960.”

(Joplin YMCA Registration Form, Sec. 8, p. 18.)

The narrative should not repeat the entirety of the relevant historic context(s) from the MPDF but rather focus the discussion on the portions of the context relevant to the nominated property.



German Park Recreation Club, North Township, Michigan (NR Ref. 100012313). Photograph by Cheri LaFlamme Szcodronski.

“Historic and Architectural Resources of Northfield Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan” (NR Ref. 100012311) addresses the historic properties in a nearly 40-square-mile area, one with several distinct communities addressed through four thematic contexts. The Section 8 summary paragraph in the nomination for the **German Park Recreation Club** (NR Ref. 100012313) names the MPDF and identifies both the relevant contexts and the property types:

Historic context for German Park Recreation Club is provided in the related Multiple Property Documentation Form “Historic and Architectural Resources of Northfield Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan, 1824 – 1980,” including “Early Northfield Township: An Agricultural Landscape (1824-1880)” on context pages E5-17, “Changes to Rural Life (1880-1945)” on pages E24-28, and “The Post-War Era (1945-1980)” on pages E28-33. The property falls under the property types “Civic, Commercial, and Recreational Buildings” on pages F38-39 and “Ethnic Heritage Properties” on page F39, including registration requirements, period of significance, and integrity assessment. Specifically, the club was established by the local German immigrant community that lived in the immediate vicinity, serving as a center of social and recreational opportunities celebrating German culture, as well as providing mutual support and protection for its members.

(German Park Registration Form, p. 15.)

Note that property type, typically addressed in Section 7 of the nomination, may be addressed in Section 8 given that in an MPDF, property type is closely associated with significance.

The Section 8 narrative provides a three-paragraph summary of immigrant settlement in the area but also points the reader to the MPDF for more detail:

Additional historic context about the formation of Washtenaw County and Northfield Township; Indigenous peoples and early European settlement of the county; and the immigration of German-speaking Europeans to this area; and the formation of a German ethnic community in Northfield Township may be found in the associated Multiple Property Documentation Form, “Historic Resources of Northfield Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan, 1824-1980,” context pages E5-11.

(German Park Registration Form, p. 17.)

The narrative then continues with a discussion of the establishment and growth of the German Park Recreation Club.

Additional historic contexts may need to be developed in nominations for properties listed under an MPDF. For example, an MPDF is typically organized at a specific geographic level, but an individual property may also be evaluated at another, often smaller, geographic level (Multiple Bulletin, p. 6). For example, if the MPDF context is broad—as is “Urban Renewal-era Resources in the United States” (NR Ref. 100012679)—the narrative should address how the nationwide context applies but it will likely need additional context to document the property’s significance at the state or local levels. Similarly, the Historic Residential Suburbs MPDF discusses national suburbanization trends as demonstrated by associated property types ranging from planned residential communities to concentrations of multiple family units. However, the MPDF also cautions that “[n]ominations for such property types will generally require contextual discussion beyond that provided in Section E [Statement of Historic Contexts] of this multiple property form” (Suburbs MPDF, p. 44).

The nomination for the **Joplin YMCA** provides example where additional context was needed. The “Historic Resources of Joplin, Missouri” MPDF addresses the historic resources within a nearly 40-square-mile community and recreational facilities are minimally discussed; however, in demonstrating how and why the **Joplin YMCA** is significant and worthy of listing in the National Register, the nomination successfully applies two of the themes documented in the MPDF—“Evolution of Joplin as a Regional Commercial and Industrial Center: 1871-1960” and “Community Development Patterns in Joplin: 1871-1960”—supplemented with additional context on recreational facilities in Joplin during the period of significance. As the Form Bulletin advises, a nomination supported by an MPDF should “[d]iscuss any additional significance, mentioning other historic contexts, themes, or areas of significance related to the property not covered by the MPDF” (Form Bulletin, p. 66).

By contrast, the nomination for the **Valence House** (NR Ref. 100008740) required little additional documentation to successfully demonstrate the significance of this property. The Valence House is a significant local example of the Louisiana Coastal Vernacular style as specified by the “buildings” property type in Section F “Associated Property Types” of “Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780–1968” (NR Ref. 100003191). This MPDF contains five historic contexts and the Valence House’s significance is supported by the context “Mid-Century Development (1812–1880).” Because this MPDF focuses narrowly on a specific architectural style



Valence House, Grand Isle, Louisiana (NR Ref. 100008740). Photograph by Emily Ardoin.

in a limited geographic area—and because the Valence House is a strong representation of the once common, now relatively rare Louisiana Coastal Vernacular style in this area—the Section 8 narrative is a single page. The narrative includes the name of the MPDF and the relevant context and the property type, and explains how the nominated building meets the requirements for listing:

The Valence [House] falls under the building property type as defined in the Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968 multiple property submission. Built around 1870, this house falls under the discussion of a Creole type house with interconnected rooms, with no true hallways. The building also has heavy braced timbers, a large attic space, and a generous gallery. On Grand Isle, there are also bungalow style buildings that often also had prominent gable roofs, overhanging eaves, large gabled porches, large windows, beamed ceilings, and casual, hall-less floor plans. The Valence House has all of these features, even including some of the features of the later bungalow style buildings, including the beamed ceilings.

(Valence House Registration Form, p. 8.)

Section 9 – Major Bibliographic References

The bibliography for a nomination supported by an MPDF should not repeat the sources in the MPDF's bibliography but rather include only those sources directly relevant to the nominated property.

Section 10 – Geographical Data

In addition to describing the property boundary, a best practice for the boundary justification in this section is to include a sentence affirming that the property is indeed within the geographic limits as described in the MPDF's Section G "Geographical Data."

Additional Considerations

Evaluating Properties Outside the Historic Period

An MPDF is typically associated with one or more specific historic periods. These timeframes, while not the same as a specific property's "period of significance," help define the temporal boundaries of the MPDF's historic context(s). A property nominated in association with an MPDF typically falls within the timeframe specified in the MPDF's historic context(s) and is located within the boundaries described the MPDF's geographic limits. However, there may be acceptable exceptions, as this hypothetical example demonstrates:

- ✘ A property built in 1970 would not be eligible under an MPDF covering "Railroad Resources of Smithville, 1880–1930."
- ✓ A property from 1940 that reflects the earlier period's context may be eligible under the MPDF if this relationship is well-explained in the nomination.

An MPDF may have been prepared using an arbitrary timeframe—such as an end date of 50-years-ago—for the historic context(s) or property types, limiting its usefulness as time goes by. As with individual nominations, fifty years ago may have been used as the closing date where no more specific date could be determined to end the historic period (Form Bulletin, p. 42.) Nevertheless, the timeframe covered by an MPDF should "based on the period of time when the events significant to the historic context are known to have occurred" (Multiple Bulletin, p. 6). Section H "Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods" of the MPDF form should summarize identification and evaluation methods, including describing how the historic context(s) and period(s) of significance were determined. This section of the form provides the opportunity to present the general approach to organizing data, determining a geographic scope, and delineating the period of significance. The logic for identifying property types and establishing baseline historic integrity, such as through type of survey, should also be summarized here (Multiple Bulletin, p. 20-21).

Amending an MPDF

Like individual property nominations, MPDFs may be revised, refined, and expanded as new information is gathered, new properties are identified, and changes in the condition of related property types are observed (Multiple Bulletin, p. 26). This may entail adding additional historic contexts and/or property types and expanding time periods. Completed nominations for properties potentially eligible under the amended MPDF may be submitted to the National Register at the same time or after the amended MPDF has been approved. An MPDF is amended using the typical Multiple Property Documentation Form NPS 10-900-b with "Amended Submission" checked.

For example, "Garden Apartments, Apartment Houses and Apartment Complexes in Arlington County, Virginia 1934–1954," discussed above, was amended in 2011 to expand upon the 2002 MPDF, providing additional

documentation on programs and conditions that sought to stimulate the economy, relieve demand, and provide quality housing.

A New National MPDF: Urban Renewal-Era Resources in the United States

In December 2025, the National Register issued the multiple property document cover “Urban Renewal-Era Resources in the United States.” This document, prepared under the guidance of National Park Service Senior Historian Paul Lusignan by Rosin Preservation/Heritage Consulting Group, provides historic contexts and registration requirements for properties constructed as the result of the federal urban renewal programs between 1949 and 1974.

“Urban renewal” was among the most significant policies adopted by a wide range of towns and cities during the second half of the twentieth century. Since the mid-1950s, urban renewal programs in various forms have changed the face of many downtown areas, both large and small, across the country. In the past, many in the emerging field of preservation fought against the implementation of urban renewal policies that led to the destruction of swaths of historic properties in urban areas. However, urban renewal projects have aged into the 50-year-ago-standard for evaluating a property for possible listing in the National Register and preservation professionals are now facing the daunting task of assessing the results of those programs.

At the time the NPS launched this MPDF project in 2022, some 40 urban renewal-related properties had been listed in the National Register. However, these listings are from only 21 states; notably absent are nominations for places in dense eastern states, such as Massachusetts, where urban renewal dramatically altered both cityscapes and lifeways.

As preservation professionals continue to expand their work into properties associated with mid-to-late twentieth-century urban development, modern architecture, and urban planning, this MPDF’s comprehensive overview of the period’s urban renewal programs provides context and registration requirements for proponents wishing to prepare National Register nominations for places significant for urban renewal impacts. Because this MPDF is broad, a nomination may have to include additional context to make a case for significance at the state and local levels of significance.

This publication complements the guidance provided in National Register Bulletins by providing examples on specific topics. Your feedback is welcome; please contact Sherry Frear, Chief & Deputy Keeper, sherry_frear@nps.gov.

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The National Register of Historic Places
is the official list of buildings, structures, objects, sites, and districts significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture.