

# **Town of Taos Rural Historic Landscape Study**

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## **Criteria for RHL Nomination Eligibility Submitted by Taos Land Trust**

### **Introduction**

Taos is gifted with a wealth of natural and historic resources. Many different cultures have thrived in this fertile land for thousands of years—archaic hunters and gatherers, prehistoric Puebloan Indians, Indo-Hispano settlers, French fur trappers, and Anglo Americans (Romero and Poese, 2006). Earliest evidence of nomadic hunters in the Taos Valley dates back more than 5,000 years and Pueblo ancestors have been building permanent structures since around 1000 A.D. The first Spanish expedition arrived in the Taos Valley in 1540 and the village of Don Fernando de Taos was settled and named in 1760—sixteen years before the signing of the Declaration of Independence (Town of Taos, 2006).

Each of these cultures has been intimately tied to the land. They have depended on it and shaped it through their livelihoods. This has resulted in a rural and agricultural landscape that has been an integral part of the Taos region for hundreds of years, and remains significant to Taos’s unique character still today.

The historic agricultural practices and rural patterns developed by Indo-Hispano settlers beginning in the sixteenth century are particularly significant and self-evident on many properties today. This is clearly visible in the active use of *acequias* that have been continuously used for hundreds of years, settlement, ownership, and land division patterns, trade routes, etc. (Romero and Poese, 2006). However, the survey is not limited to this historic context alone, but may include other historic periods and attributes. These sites, buildings, objects, and landscapes represent and illustrate uses and patterns that are historically valuable on numerous levels, both regionally and nationally.

We can recognize these historically significant sites by nominating them as Rural Historic Landscapes under the National Historic Preservation Act and National Register of Historic Places.

The following are criteria that can be used to determine Rural Historic Landscape nomination eligibility for properties within the Town of Taos and “gateway” areas on the fringes of Taos. Submission of these criteria will be followed by identification and prioritization of properties for survey, creation of a survey form and database to evaluate nomination eligibility, surveys of selected properties, and a final report with recommendations on inventoried properties. A compilation of historic context is also available.

### **Definitions**

- **Rural Historic Landscape:** “a geographical area that historically has been used by (p.1) people, or shaped or modified by human activity, occupancy, or intervention, and that possesses a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of areas of land use, vegetation, buildings and structures, roads and waterways, and natural features” (Bulletin 30, p.2). “Spatial organization, concentration of historic characteristics, and evidence of the historic period of development distinguish a rural historic landscape from its immediate surroundings” (Bulletin 30, p.2).

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- **Historic Context:** “the span of time when a property was associated with important events, activities, persons, cultural groups, and land uses or attained important physical qualities or characteristics. . . . The period of significance begins with the date of the earliest land use or activity that has importance and is reflected by historic characteristics tangible today” (Bulletin 30, p.21).
- “Information gathered through historic research and field survey is related to the study area’s historic contexts to determine the extent to which identified properties possess the characteristics of important rural property types. Significance, integrity, and boundaries depend upon the presence of tangible landscape features and the evidence of the processes, cultural and natural, that have shaped the landscape” (Bulletin 30, p.12).
- **Significance:** The property must show a link to historic trends, persons, styles, or themes, and it should be a relatively important example or relatively important in itself.
- **Historic integrity:** “requires that the various characteristics that shaped the land during the historic period be present today in much the same way they were historically. No landscape will appear exactly as it did. . . . The general character and feeling of the historic period, however, must be retained for eligibility” (Bulletin 30, p.21).
- **Site:** “A site is the location of an important event, a prehistoric or historic occupation or activity or a building or structure, whether intact or ruined where the location itself possesses historic, cultural or archaeological value regardless of the value of any existing structure” (36 CFR 60).
- **District:** “A district possesses an important concentration or continuity of sites, buildings, structures or objects united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development” (36 CFR 60). Buildings, structures, objects, and collections can also be nominated for the National Register.
- Further information can be found at <http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb16a/>.

### **Criteria**

In order to be nominated as a Rural Historic Landscape, a property should meet the following criteria:

1. **A property should be associated with one or more of the four National Register criteria (Bulletin 30, pp. 13-14).**
  - 1.1. “events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.”
  - 1.2. “the lives of persons significant in our past.”
  - 1.3. Properties embodying “the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.”
    - The distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction “may be present in a number of ways. The organization of space, visible in the arrangement of fields or siting of farmsteads, may illustrate a pattern of land use significant for its representation of traditional practices unique to a community. . . . Similarly, an irrigation or transportation system may reflect an important innovation in engineering that fostered a community’s prosperity.”

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- 1.4. Properties that have “yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.”
  - “Surface or subsurface remains may provide information about agricultural or industrial uses, settlement patterns, or ceremonial traditions,” as well as *lineas* which show cultural patterns of subdivision and providing access to water.
  
- 2. It should be representative of or relate to a significant historic context.**
  - 2.1. “An historic context has three components; a theme or themes, a chronological period and a geographical area. These provide the perspective by which a property can be evaluated for listing in the State Register of Cultural Properties” (New Mexico Form A Instructions, 2006, p.10). Historic contexts may relate to events, patterns of development, associations with important people, architecture, construction or engineering techniques, or research topics.
  - 2.2. The time period the property or object most reflects should help define what characteristics to look for and what characteristics are most important. Note, too, that a property can have attributes from different periods.
  - 2.3. Examples may include grazing brought by Indo-Hispano settlers, the development of *acequia* irrigation, settlement patterns of individual properties or villages like Los Córdovas and La Loma. It can also relate to the introduction of new types of agriculture like the introduction of sheep, development of new technologies and innovations or the establishment of new patterns of land use or division such as *lineas* or land grants/community lands.
  
- 3. It should represent or relate to one or more historic themes.**
  - 3.1. A theme is an area or aspect of history “in which a rural property, through use, occupation, physical character, or association, influenced the development or identity of its community or region” (Bulletin 30, p.20). There are over 30 possible themes, most of which are listed below under 3.8. “Judgments of significance are made by relating facts about the history and existing landscape characteristics of the study area to the themes and property types recognized as important by the area’s historic contexts” (Bulletin 30, p.13).
  - 3.2. **Agriculture**—“Where the land has been used for cultivating crops, raising livestock, and other activities that have contributed to the growth, development, and economy of a community during particular periods in history” (Bulletin 30, p.21).
    - a) For instance, properties associated with significant agricultural uses or practices like sheep grazing, or areas where livestock were gathered for sale.
    - b) When thinking about whether the property has made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of history, remember:
      - It *can* include “activities that spanned long periods of time and underwent substantial change, such as dairy farming. . . . [This] recognizes the significant contributions that rural properties have made. . . . Village and farm clusters, fields and other land use areas, roadways, natural features, vegetation, and boundary demarcations may together illustrate important events and activities that led to a community’s development” (Bulletin 30, p.13).

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- “Eligibility for significance in agriculture on a local level depends on several factors. First, characteristics must have served or resulted from an important event, activity, or theme in agricultural development as recognized by the historic contexts of the area. Second, the property must [presumably] have [historically had] a direct involvement in the significant events or activities by contributing to the area’s economy, productivity, or identity as an agricultural community. Third, through historic landscape characteristics, the property must cogently reflect the period of time in which the important events took place” (Bulletin 30, p.13).
- 3.3. **Commerce**—Industrial and commercial sites such as where there were historic trade fairs, stockyards, butchers.
  - 3.4. **Community Planning & Development**—“Where the spatial organization and character of the landscape are the result of either a consciously designed plan or vernacular patterns of land use or land division” (Bulletin 30, p.21). For instance, land showing land use patterns like *lineas* and agricultural land in lowlands with residential development on adjacent higher ground. A property can also reflect larger scales than a single property. For example, it might be traditional agricultural land adjacent to an historic village center like La Loma.
  - 3.5. **Engineering**—“Where the landscape and its uses reflect the practical application of scientific principles to serve human needs, such as reclamation irrigation, and water power,” such as *acequias* (Bulletin 30, p.21).
  - 3.6. **Exploration/Settlement**—“Where the landscape continues to reflect the exploration, establishment, or early development of a community or region” (Bulletin 30, p.21). This can include land grants and properties reflecting village clusters with outlying agricultural lands.
  - 3.7. **Religion**—This includes sites adapted for ceremonial or religious activities, such as historic churches, *moradas*, and structures or locations related to Pueblo religious practices.
  - 3.8. **Other Historic Themes**—Themes that are equally significant, but less likely to be found in Taos:
    - a) Architecture
    - b) Archaeology—prehistoric
    - c) Archaeology—historic
    - d) Art
    - e) Communications
    - f) Conservation—“Conservation, where the landscape has been the subject of an important stage, event, or development in the conservation of natural or cultural resources” (Bulletin 30, p.21).
    - g) Economics
    - h) Education
    - i) Entertainment/Recreation
    - j) Ethnic Heritage
    - k) Health/Medicine
    - l) Industry
    - m) Invention
    - n) Landscape Architecture

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- o) Law
- p) Literature
- q) Military
- r) Performing Arts
- s) Philosophy
- t) Politics/Government
- u) Science
- v) Social History
- w) Transportation—Particularly historic roads and transportation routes like the Camino Real, assuming they are not paved over.

#### 4. When the property is surveyed, it should have one or more Landscape Characteristics.

4.1. Landscape characteristics are “tangible evidence of the activities and habits of the people who occupied, developed, used, and shaped the land to serve human needs; they may reflect the beliefs, attitudes, traditions, and values of these people” (Bulletin 30, p.3).

a) **Land uses and activities**

- Farming, orchards, signs of livestock markets, remnants of early and important commercial dairies, locations used for animal processing, etc.

b) **Patterns of spatial organization**

- Representative settlement patterns, spatial organization related to topography or water availability, clusters of structures, patterns of division or placement of objects or uses, fences, *linea* subdivision, etc.

c) **Response to the natural environment**

- Natural features that influenced settlement and land use, construction materials (such as *adobe* and *latia* or coyote fences), fertile soils, irrigation, building design, etc.

d) **Cultural traditions**

- Land use practices, buildings, organizations, land division, building forms, construction methods and materials, architectural vernacular, technologies, etc.

e) **Circulation networks**

f) **Boundary demarcations**

g) **Vegetation related to land use**

h) **Buildings, structures, and objects**

i) **Clusters**

j) **Archeological sites**

k) **Small-scale elements**

#### 5. Sites, districts, or objects that seem of obvious historic significance.

5.1. Places and rural lands associated with existing recognized historic resources or buildings or districts on the already listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

5.2. Places and rural lands associated with obvious historic value or sites, such as the Martinez Hacienda or historically associated with traditional village centers like Los Córdovas.

5.3. Current or historic land grants.

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- 5.4. Properties associated with historic events, trade fairs, community activities.
  - 5.5. Other properties exhibiting historic agricultural uses, practices, patterns and development patterns, such as sheep raising, etc.
  - 5.6. Properties having significant patterns of folklife—"Patterns of folklife, established historically, may be perpetuated by the people living in rural properties today. These include traditional customs, crafts, or land use practices that have historic origins and have been passed from one generation to another" (Bulletin 30, p.27).
  - 5.7. Historically important wells and springs, *acequias*, cottonwood-lined streets and fields.
  - 5.8. Additional sites might be chosen because it is related to, or based on input from, the Pueblo.
  - 5.9. Sites particularly shaped or influenced by natural features (such as steep escarpments or streams) within the Town.
  - 5.10. Traditional villages—These often included village centers with surrounding agricultural lands, especially in valleys or *vegas* or *llanos*, or those served by *acequias*.
  - 5.11. Sit down and talk to an historian about important areas off the top of his/her head
  - 5.12. Sites of historic *moradas*, churches, or Pueblo sites.
  - 5.13. Look again at the definition of a rural historic landscape and think if there are others that come to mind.
  - 5.14. One approach may be to look at a property like the Leahy Meadows in El Prado and think about how it differs from the way it appeared before it was first developed or grazed. Did the Leahy Meadows look like the Leahy Meadows of today when it was first settled? What changes have occurred? This may give an indication of objects and patterns that were made to the land that could be representative of the historic context, uses, and innovations.
  - 5.15. Even developed areas are important as part of the built landscape. This can include historic buildings and smaller elements, or they may be related to a village cluster.
- 6. Limit candidates to properties that still have historic integrity.**
- 6.1. "Historic integrity requires that the various characteristics that shaped the land during the historic period be present today in much the same way they were historically. No landscape will appear exactly as it did. . . . The general character and feeling of the historic period, however, must be retained for eligibility" (Bulletin 30, p.21).
  - 6.2. "Decisions about historic integrity require professional judgments about whether a property today reflects the spatial organization, physical components, and historic associations that it attained during the periods of significance. A property's period of significance become the benchmark for measuring whether subsequent changes contribute to its historic evolution or alter its historic integrity" (Bulletin 30, p.21).
  - 6.3. Eliminate properties that are heavily impacted by modern development, especially recent subdivision and residential or commercial development.
  - 6.4. "Historic integrity is the composite effect of seven qualities: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association" (Bulletin 30, p.21).
    - a) Location—Are the historic attributes still in their original or historically significant location?
    - b) Design—Whether the composition of natural and cultural elements comprising the form, plan, and spatial organization of a property are still there.

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- c) Setting—Has the setting of the historic property changed? Is the historic value tied to an aspect of the historic setting that is no longer there? These can be features of the location, such as fertile soils and water. If these are no longer present, then the historic integrity may be impaired.
- d) Materials—These can be natural or human made. Materials add to the sense of time and place. It can also include vegetation, such as cottonwoods planted along a roadway or naturally occurring willows that are left along a stream.
- e) Workmanship—Is workmanship still evident? This is workmanship in both functional/practical items and in decoration/aesthetics, such as certain styles of fences. The workmanship in how crops are raised or how cattle are grazed can “contribute to a property’s historic integrity if it reflects traditional or historic practices” (Bulletin 30, p.23).
- f) Feeling—Does the property retain sufficient integrity to convey the feeling of the historical period?
- g) Association—If the property is being nominated for historical associations, does the existing property still have an identifiable relationship to the history described?

**7. Properties should have clearly definable boundaries.**

- 7.1. “[Boundaries] must encompass the area having historic significance, rather than just scenic values, and contain contributing resources that express the characteristics of the historic landscape” (Bulletin 30, p.24).

**REFERENCES**

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