

**National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior**



**Nicodemus National Historic Site and National Historic Landmark District
Kansas**

NICODEMUS NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE AND NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK DISTRICT VISITOR CENTER SITE SELECTION STUDY FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

BACKGROUND

Nicodemus National Historic Site (NHS) was established by Congress in 1996 under Public Law 104-333 (110 Statute 4163) in recognition of the Nicodemus Townsite as the only remaining town established by African Americans at the end of the Reconstruction period, representing the participation of African Americans in the settlement of the Great Plains. The Nicodemus NHS is composed of five discontinuous historic buildings and parcels located within the unincorporated Townsite of Nicodemus (Townsite) including First Baptist Church; Nicodemus District No.1 Schoolhouse; A.M.E. Church; Fletcher-Switzer Residence (St. Francis Hotel); and Township Hall. The resources of Nicodemus represent the five pillars of many African-American communities during the late 19th and 20th centuries: family/home, church, school, business, and traditions of mutual assistance that evolved into local government. The study area also includes the Nicodemus National Historic Landmark (NHL), which was designated on January 7, 1976, and consists of 161.35 acres located in Graham County, Kansas. The NHL designation recognized the exceptional national significance of the Townsite as a rare surviving example of the late 19th century movement to establish new communities for former slaves away from the injustices encountered in the South after the Civil War.

The Nicodemus NHS is administered and maintained by the National Park Service (NPS), which currently leases the Nicodemus Township Hall and adjacent Roadside Park for visitor facilities. The NPS also leases space in the Nicodemus Housing Authority public housing complex for administrative facilities. The NPS currently owns the A.M.E. Church and site.

The NPS has completed the Nicodemus National Historic Site Visitor Center Site Selection Study and Environmental Assessment (Study/EA), one purpose of which is to determine the best general location for new visitor facilities to include administrative, maintenance, and curatorial storage facilities. The Study/EA is needed to develop a project program and to assess its application to several alternatives. The Nicodemus General Management Plan (GMP) and Cultural Landscape Report (CLR) identify the need for new visitor facilities. The purpose of the Study/EA is to build on the GMP and CLR to provide recommendations on relocation of park facilities, including evaluating the physical

opportunities and constraints of each alternative. The Study/EA includes a no-action alternative, and three action alternatives: Alternative 1 – Townsite; Alternative 2 – Township; and Alternative 3 – NHS Historic Buildings.

This finding of no significant impact (FONSI) and the Study/EA constitute the record of the environmental impact analysis and decision-making process associated with selecting and implementing the preferred alternative, which would return the Township Hall to its intended function; protect and enhance historic and cultural resources within the NHL with increased interpretation; and improve visitor access, use, and understanding with the construction of visitor facilities in the Townsite. The preferred alternative includes measures to protect cultural resources, improve visitor enjoyment, and provide long-term conditions necessary to sustain natural and cultural resources. The preferred alternative was selected after careful review of resource and visitor impacts and public comment.

This document records 1) a FONSI as required by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), and, 2) a determination of no impairment as required by the NPS Organic Act of 1916.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Alternative 1 – Townsite (Preferred Alternative)

The preferred alternative will include returning the Township Hall to its intended function and protect and enhance historic and cultural resources within the NHL with increased interpretation. The preferred alternative provides an approach for new NPS visitor, administration, and maintenance facilities, and will improve efficiency of park operations, provide visitor enjoyment, and protect park resources. Alternative 1–Townsite proposes to integrate new visitor facilities and all administrative and maintenance facilities within the Town of Nicodemus and the NHL boundary.

The preferred alternative will include visitor, administration, and maintenance facilities on ideally one property, and will use Roadside Park and several NHS buildings for orientation and interpretation. The site plan for the preferred alternative will include three buildings that will be situated to be compatible with the Nicodemus NHL and NHS buildings. The site development will emphasize a rectilinear layout, and a building setback that will reflect that of the Townsite and NHS buildings. The organization of the buildings will maintain the historic views between the NHS buildings, and parking will be screened from view. Specifics of the alternative include:

- (1) New NPS facilities will be located within 1 to 2 acres in the Townsite;
- (2) Facilities will occur on one property;
- (3) Orientation and information for visitors will occur at the visitor contact station, Roadside Park, and through exhibits and programs at the Nicodemus NHS buildings, which will be rehabilitated for visitor access;
- (4) Administration facilities will be located in a new separate building;
- (5) Maintenance facilities will be located in a new separate building and yard;

- (6) Building setbacks from each street will be similar to the setbacks of the Nicodemus NHS buildings;
- (7) A single parking area will be located on-site, screened from the NHS buildings and shared between the visitor contact station and administration building, which will include a total of twelve (12) spaces, one of which will be accessible;
- (8) Bus and recreational vehicle parking will be located on-street;
- (9) Three (3) parking spaces will be provided at the maintenance/storage facility;
- (10) Outdoor lighting will be limited to the amount necessary for security and safety.

Alternative 2 – Township

This alternative proposes to locate the new NPS facilities within the Nicodemus Township, outside the boundaries of the Nicodemus NHL, and on agricultural property adjacent to Highway 24. This approach acknowledges the importance of the entire Nicodemus Township to the community heritage and reinforces the connection between the Townsite and Township. The alternative proposes the use of a full visitor facility, combining visitor and administrative facilities into one building, with a separate building for maintenance facilities. All facilities would be located on one property of a minimum five acres, located near the Nicodemus Townsite with vehicular access from Highway 24. All NPS facilities would reside outside the NHL, and the NHS buildings would serve as part of the interpretive program.

Alternative 2 – Townsite is envisioned to occur on existing agricultural land near the Townsite and along Highway 24. This alternative proposes to create a park facility as a cohesive complex with two areas of site development — one for the visitor and administrative facilities, and the other for maintenance facilities. The complex would be accessed by a shared drive from Highway 24. The visitor facilities would accommodate parking, access and drop-off for visitors and administrative staff.

Alternative 3 – NHS Historic Buildings

Alternative 3 proposes a new building within the Townsite for visitor facilities and the rehabilitation of one of the NHS buildings for use as an administrative facility. Only one of the NHS buildings meets the requirements of the administrative program: the First Baptist Church. The rehabilitation and use of this NHS building would be entirely voluntary on the part of the First Baptist Church and contingent upon approval from the congregation. This alternative proposes either a new building for the maintenance facilities or retaining the existing facility at the Nicodemus Housing Authority complex. This alternative proposes to integrate a new visitor contact station within the Townsite. Interpretation would be provided at the new visitor contact station (actively) and at the Nicodemus School and Township Hall (passively). Alternative 3 draws on many of the same principles as Alternative 1 including contextual design and material selection. This alternative respects and maintains the historic uses of the Township Hall, A.M.E. Church, Nicodemus School, and St. Francis Hotel.

Alternative 4 – No Action Alternative

Under the no action alternative, NPS would continue to use existing buildings (historic and non-historic) to accommodate the visitor, administrative, and maintenance program. Township Hall would continue to provide visitor facilities, and the Nicodemus Housing Authority complex would continue to provide facilities for administrative and maintenance functions. Administrative and maintenance facilities would continue to expand as needed, and as space becomes available at the Nicodemus Housing Authority complex, recognizing that no long-term lease arrangements may be available.

Under the no-action alternative, the NPS, in consultation with the community, would develop a use strategy for the hall/center including improvements to the structure, stage, accessible restrooms, and interpretive exhibits. The hall/center would provide continued NPS presence and, consequently, ensure public access to one of the five NHS buildings in the park. The other four NHS buildings would be closed to the public, although plans would be in place for their stabilization and/or rehabilitation (recommended by the 2010 Historic Structure Report).

The park would need to consider whether current park offices in the Nicodemus Housing Authority complex would remain or if a new administrative facility would be identified or constructed. Because current park plans call for increased staffing including interpretative staff, additional space for park operations would be needed.

ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE ALTERNATIVE

The Park Service determined that the preferred alternative is also the environmentally preferable alternative because the preferred alternative surpasses the no-action alternative and action alternatives 2 and 3 in realizing the full range of national environmental policy goals as stated in Section 101 of NEPA. The goals are to:

- (1) Fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations;
- (2) Assure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings;
- (3) Attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk to health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences;
- (4) Preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage, and maintain, wherever possible, an environment which supports diversity and variety of individual choice;
- (5) Achieve a balance between population and resource use, which would permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities; and,
- (6) Enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.

The preferred alternative would include returning the Township Hall to its intended function and protect and enhance historic and cultural resources within the NHL with increased interpretation (goals 1, 4, and 5). The alternative would improve visitor access, use, and understanding with the

construction of visitor facilities in the Townsite (goals 1, 2, and 3). Alternative 1 meets the provisions of NEPA Section 101 goals for these reasons.

WHY THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE WOULD NOT HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

The intensity or severity of impacts resulting from implementing the preferred alternative is evaluated using the 10 criteria listed in 40 CFR § 1508.27. Key areas in which impacts were evaluated include archeological resources, historic structures and cultural landscapes, visual resources, visitor experience, transportation, public health and safety, park operations, socioeconomics, and museum collections. As defined in 40 CFR § 1508.27, significance is determined by examining the following criteria.

Impacts that May be Both Beneficial and Adverse; a Significant Effect May Exist Even if the Park Service Believes that on Balance the Effect would be Beneficial

The preferred alternative would result in both beneficial and adverse impacts. In general, the project provides long-term beneficial effects to historic structures; visitor experience; transportation; public health, safety; park operations; socioeconomics; and museum collections.

The benefits to historic structures would result from rehabilitating the NHS buildings. The benefits to visitor experience, public health and safety, park operations, and museum collections would result from construction of new visitor, administration, and maintenance facilities that would meet current building codes, provide a safe environment for visitors and park staff, and include new storage space that would improve conditions of artifacts. The benefits to transportation would result from the construction of additional visitor parking. The socioeconomics of the region would benefit from the addition of new visitor facilities which would support local businesses and tourism-related spending.

Adverse impacts to archeological resources, cultural landscapes, and visual resources would be minor to moderate long-term impacts from the construction of additional facilities within the Townsite. Mitigation measures, as listed in Table 1, would minimize adverse effects. A summary of resource effects is found in Table 4 of the Study/EA.

Degree of Effect on Public Health or Safety

Public health and safety would benefit from the construction of new visitor facilities by meeting current fire and electrical safety and building codes and compliance with Occupational Safety and Health Administration workplace safety standards. The new visitor facility would be built to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards for universal accessibility. The new visitor, administration, and maintenance facilities also would provide an improved work environment for park staff and is expected to have a positive effect on employee morale. In addition, a number of safety measures would be implemented during construction to protect visitors, park staff, and construction workers. Orange barricade fencing would be used to limit visitor access to construction areas. Staging and access areas would be located to avoid creating conflicts with ongoing park operations and visitor

access. Maintaining a safe environment for park staff, contractors, and visitors during and after construction would be a primary objective.

Unique Characteristics of the Geographic Area such as Proximity to Historic or Cultural Resources, Monument Lands, Prime Farmlands, Wetlands, Wild and Scenic Rivers, or Ecologically Critical Areas

As described in the Study/EA, the preferred alternative would not affect prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas. There may be minor adverse effects on archeological resources during excavation for construction of the visitor contact station, administrative building, and maintenance yard, which may expose previously unknown archeological resources. Monitoring for subsurface artifacts would be conducted during ground-disturbing activities in the properties. The preferred alternative would also have a minor adverse effect on cultural landscapes and visual resources from the construction of additional facilities within the Townsite. The preferred alternative will have beneficial effects on historic structures.

Degree to which Effects on the Quality of the Human Environment are Likely to be Highly Controversial

The preferred alternative is not highly controversial. No issues arose during the preparation of the Study/EA from park staff and no issue was brought to the park's attention during the public review period that indicated a dispute with either the methods or results of the analysis of topics.

Degree to which the Possible Effects on the Quality of the Human Environment are Highly Uncertain or Involve Unique or Unknown Risks

There were no highly uncertain, unique, or unknown risks identified during the preparation of the Study/EA or the public review period.

Degree to which the Action may Establish a Precedent for Future Actions with Significant Effects or Represents a Decision in Principle about a Future Consideration

The preferred alternative will not have a significant effect and does not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects. Furthermore, the level of development at this site proposed by the preferred alternative is within the guidelines set by the park's GMP.

Whether the Action is Related to Other Actions with Individually Insignificant but Cumulatively Significant Impacts

The Study/EA concluded that past, present, and future activities, when coupled with the preferred alternative, would have local long-term minor to moderate adverse and beneficial cumulative effects. No significant adverse cumulative effects were identified. Likely future actions taken individually or collectively under the GMP as currently written would not result in a cumulative impact to the human or natural environment.

Degree to which the Action may Adversely Affect Districts, Sites, Highways, Structures, or Objects Listed on the National Register of Historic Places; or May Cause Loss or Destruction of Significant Scientific, Cultural, or Historical Resources

The preferred alternative will have a minor to moderate adverse effect on cultural landscapes resulting from the construction of additional facilities within the NHL District boundaries; however, the alterations would not diminish the overall integrity of the cultural landscape. The preferred alternative will have beneficial effects on historic structures resulting from the relocation of the visitor facilities out of the Township Hall. NPS initiated consultation with the Kansas State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) on April 17, 2012, with submittal of the Study/EA. On April 19, 2012, SHPO determined the Study/EA to be acceptable and the project would not adversely affect any historic properties.

Degree to which the Action May Adversely Affect an Endangered or Threatened Species or its Critical Habitat

No federally listed plant or animal species are known within the boundaries of the park. Park staff sent a Section 7 coordination letter to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on June 28, 2011, requesting its concurrence with the park's determination that the preferred alternative would have no effect on federally listed or special status species or designated critical habitat. The Fish and Wildlife Service provided its concurrence with the no effect determination on July 28, 2011.

Whether the Action Threatens a Violation of Federal, State, or Local Environmental Protection Law

The preferred alternative violates no federal, state, or local environmental protection law.

MITIGATION MEASURES

A number of mitigation measures and best management practices (BMPs) would be incorporated into the project design for the preferred alternative to minimize the degree and/or severity of adverse environmental impacts (Table 1).

TABLE 1. MITIGATION MEASURES

Resource Area	Mitigation
General Considerations	<p>Where necessary for resource or visitor protection, work areas would be identified with construction fence, silt fence, or some similar material prior to any activity. The fencing would define the work zone and confine activity to the minimum area required. All protection measures would be clearly stated in the construction specifications, and workers would be instructed to avoid conducting activities beyond the work zone. Disturbances would be limited to areas inside the designated construction limits. No machinery or equipment would access areas outside the work limits.</p> <p>Construction equipment staging would occur within previously disturbed areas as much as possible. All staging and stockpiling areas would be returned to preconstruction conditions following construction.</p> <p>Contractors would be required to properly maintain construction equipment (i.e., mufflers and brakes) to minimize noise.</p> <p>All tools, equipment, barricades, signs, surplus materials, and rubbish would be removed from the project work limits upon project completion.</p>
Visitor Experience, Public Health, Safety, and Park Operations	<p>Visitors would be informed in advance of construction activities via the park website and visitor center. Visitor access to buildings would be prohibited during removal of hazardous materials.</p>
Visual Resources	<p>The facility would be designed to blend in with the landscape with minimal visual intrusion.</p>
Cultural Resources	<p>All activities would comply with the <i>Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation</i> (48 FR 44716, revised).</p> <p>Archeological resources in the vicinity of project activities would be identified and delineated for avoidance prior to project work.</p> <p>The park would continue to coordinate with the SHPO and the MWRO throughout the course of the project to protect and mitigate cultural resources affected by the preferred alternative.</p> <p>Should any archeological resources be uncovered during construction, as appropriate, work would be halted in the area and the park archeologist, SHPO, and appropriate Native American tribes would be contacted for further consultation.</p> <p>Park cultural resource staff would be available during construction to advise or take appropriate actions should any archeological resources be uncovered during construction. In the unlikely event that human remains are discovered during construction, provisions outlined in the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (1990) would be followed.</p> <p>NPS would ensure that all contractors and subcontractors are informed of the penalties for illegally collecting artifacts or intentionally damaging archeological sites or historic properties. Contractors and subcontractors also would be instructed on procedures to follow in case previously unknown archeological resources are uncovered during construction.</p> <p>Equipment and material staging areas would avoid known archeological resources.</p>

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

During preparation of the Study/EA, the Park Service made efforts to involve the public in the planning process, including soliciting information and data from regulatory agencies. Park staff conducted public open houses on February 11, 2012, and 14, 2012, and the Study/EA was made available on the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) website for public review and comment between February 11, 2012, and March 12, 2012. The park did not receive any comments from the public that resulted in substantive changes in the Study/EA.

IMPAIRMENT DETERMINATION

A determination of impairment is made for each of the park resource and values impact topics carried forward and analyzed in the Study/EA for the preferred alternative. The description of the park purpose and significance in the Study/EA was used as a basis for determining if a resource is:

- necessary to fulfill specific purposes identified in the establishing legislation or proclamation of the park, or
- key to the natural or cultural integrity of the park, or to opportunities for enjoyment of the park, or,
- identified in the park's GMP or other relevant NPS planning documents as being of significance.

Impairment determinations are not necessary for some impact topics such as visitor experience, transportation, socioeconomics, public health and safety, and park operations because impairment findings relate back to park resources and values. These impact areas are not generally considered park resources or values according to the Organic Act and cannot be impaired the same way that an action can impair park resources and values. The impact topics relevant to this impairment determination are archeological resources, historic structures and cultural landscapes, visual resources, and museum collections.

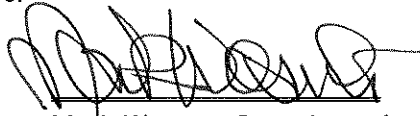
NPS determined that the preferred alternative would not impair resources relevant to the park's purpose or significance (Appendix A).

Finding of No Significant Impact

Based on my review of the facts and analysis contained in this environmental assessment, which is incorporated herein, I conclude that the preferred alternative for the EA at Nicodemus National Historic Site will not have a significant impact either by itself or in consideration of cumulative impacts. Accordingly, the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act, regulations promulgated by the President's Council on Environmental Quality, and provisions of NPS Director's Order-12 and Handbook (Conservation Planning and Environmental Impact Analysis and Decision-Making) have been fulfilled. Furthermore, the preferred alternative would not impair park resources or values and would not violate the NPS Organic Act. The preferred alternative supports the enabling

legislation establishing Nicodemus National Historic Site under the NPS Organic Act with the intended purpose of preserving the scientific and public interests for future generations. An environmental impact statement is not required and will not be prepared for implementation of the preferred alternative.

Recommended:


Mark Weaver, Superintendent

7 May '12.
Date

Approved:


Michael T. Reynolds, Regional Director

5.31.12

Date

NICODEMUS NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

VISITOR CENTER SITE SELECTION STUDY AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

IMPAIRMENT DETERMINATION

In addition to determining the environmental consequences of alternatives to proposed actions, NPS Management Policies 2006 and DO-12 require an analysis of potential effects to determine if actions would impair park resources. Impairment is an impact that would, in the professional judgment of the responsible NPS manager, harm the integrity of park resources or values, including opportunities that would otherwise be present for the enjoyment of those resources or values. A determination of impairment is made for particular resource impact topics carried forward and analyzed in the environmental assessment for the preferred alternative. The preferred alternative for meeting the objectives established in Nicodemus National Historic Site Visitor Center Site Selection Study and Environmental Assessment (Study/EA) is described in Chapter 4 of the Study/EA. The Study/EA also includes detailed information on existing conditions of resources (Study/EA Chapter 5) and the effects the preferred alternative would have on those resources (Study/EA Chapter 5). Existing conditions and effects are briefly summarized in this impairment determination.

The description of park significance in Chapter 1 of the Study/EA was used as a basis for determining if a resource is:

- Necessary to fulfill specific purposes identified in the establishing legislation or proclamation of the park, or,
- key to the natural or cultural integrity of the park, or to opportunities for enjoyment of the park, or,
- identified in the park's general management plan or other relevant National Park Service (NPS) planning documents as being of significance.

Impairment determinations are not necessary for some impact topics such as visitor experience, socioeconomics, public health and safety, environmental justice, land use, and park operations because impairment findings relate back to park resources and values. These impact areas are not generally considered park resources or values according to the Organic Act and cannot be impaired the same way that an action can impair park resources and values. The impact topics relevant to this impairment determination are archeological resources, historic structures and cultural landscapes, visual resources, and museum collections.

This impairment determination is based on current NPS guidance on determining impairment of park resources and values. The impairment determination for each resource and value includes:

- a brief description of the condition of the resource;
- whether the resource is necessary to fulfill the purposes for which the park was established;
- whether the resource is key to the natural or cultural integrity of the park or to the opportunity for enjoyment of the park;
- whether the resource is identified as a significant resource in the park's planning documents; and,
- a statement as to why the action will or will not result in impairment of the resource, including a discussion of the context, severity, duration, and timing of any impacts, and any mitigation measures, if applicable.

Based on the aforementioned guidelines and basis for determining impairment of park resources and values, a determination of impairment is made for each of the resource impact topics carried forward and analyzed in the environmental assessment for the preferred alternative.

ARCHEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

One known historic archeological site is in the Township (NPS 2003). The historic archeological site was identified in a 1992 Phase II archeological study along U.S. Highway 24 in the old Henry Williams place, which is currently owned by Mr. Veryl Switzer (Williams 1992). The site includes remains of a dugout and stone house ruin dating from the early Nicodemus Townsite development period (NPS 2003). The CLR documented several sites and properties that have potential for archeological resources and where surveys should be conducted within the Township. This includes a property that was listed as a potential resource because it has ruins on the property and was occupied as early as 1880–1900 by C. Reynolds. Another property in the Township was listed as a potential resource because it was occupied as early as 1880–1900 by J. Vaughn. The Townsite also contains properties listed as potential areas for future testing and as potential areas for miscellaneous outbuildings.

These known archeological resources are necessary to fulfill the purpose of the park, are key to the cultural integrity of the park, and are considered significant park resources.

Excavation would be required for construction of the visitor contact station, administrative building, and maintenance yard, which may expose previously unknown archeological resources (most likely artifacts associated with the NHL). No known archeological sites would be disturbed by the alternative.

To minimize potential adverse impacts, surveys for visible archeological resources would be conducted prior to ground-disturbing activities. Testing and monitoring for subsurface artifacts would be conducted during ground-disturbing activities in the properties. In the event archeological resources are encountered, work would be stopped immediately and the park cultural resource specialist would be contacted. If necessary, the SHPO would be consulted on potential adverse impacts and additional mitigation measures.

The preferred alternative would have local long-term minor adverse impacts on archeological resources. Because the effects would be local, long-term, and minor, the preferred alternative would not impair archeological resources.

HISTORIC STRUCTURES AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

The Nicodemus NHS is composed of five discontinuous historic buildings and parcels located within the Townsite. These five properties represent the five pillars of the African-American community: First Baptist Church (religion), Nicodemus District No.1 Schoolhouse (education), A.M.E. Church (religion), Fletcher-Switzer residence (family/home/business) and Township Hall (traditions of mutual assistance). All five of the NHS buildings in the park are listed on the National Register. Cultural landscapes with varying degrees of integrity are associated with the buildings and NHS.

The park's historic structures and cultural landscapes are necessary to fulfill the purpose of the park, are key to the cultural integrity of the park, and are considered significant park resources.

The emphasis of the preferred alternative is returning one of the historic NHS buildings to its traditional use. Relocation of the visitor facilities out of the Township Hall would improve the integrity of the structure. The construction of new visitor, administration, and maintenance facilities would alter the cultural landscape of the NHL; however, the alteration would not diminish the overall integrity of the cultural landscape.

Relocating the visitor center out of the Township Hall and into a new facility under the preferred alternative would have long-term beneficial impacts on historic structures and long-term minor-to-moderate adverse effects on cultural landscapes. Although impacts on cultural landscapes from the preferred alternative would be minor to moderate, they would not impair the resource.

VISUAL RESOURCES

The sights along U.S. Highway 24 are primarily open and provide long views of the countryside because of the open agricultural lands with little tree cover or other obstructions in the area. Geographical landforms such as knolls and plateaus are readily visible as well. The town is visible from U.S. Highway 24, approximately 0.25 mile from the edge of the town as travelers descend upon it from both the east and west. The water tower is the largest visible feature and can easily be seen because the town's surrounding landscape is primarily agricultural land. Currently, no structures, fences, or large vegetation block the views between the buildings that represent the five pillars of the African-American community. The overall views of the Townsite and Township include residential buildings and agricultural land.

Visual resources are necessary to fulfill the park's purpose of protecting and preserving the location that represents the history of the town of Nicodemus, a location that is key to the natural integrity of the park and is part of the significant "town experience" of Nicodemus.

The visual quality of the town would be temporarily impacted during construction from earthwork, vegetation removal, equipment, dust, and facility construction under the preferred alternative. The visitor facilities and administration and maintenance buildings would be designed to be compatible

with the existing landscape with minimal visual intrusion. Vegetative screening would be used where appropriate to aid in blending facilities into the landscape. The new buildings would be oriented to provide the best compromise between fitting the existing topography and optimizing views of the town, including the view of the NHS buildings. The presence of the new buildings would change the views in town and could change the view of the town from U.S. Highway 24 depending on building locations. The preferred alternative would result in park-wide, long-term moderate adverse effects on the visual resources; however these effects would not impair the resource.

MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

Currently, artifacts are kept in two non-climate-controlled metal storage containers behind the AME Church. The drastic changes in temperatures impact the artifacts. Other artifacts are in a closet in the administration offices, stored with clothing and supplies, and are being impacted by frequent staff access. Regional collections management staff have inspected the storage facilities and the artifacts and recommend immediate corrective action.

The artifacts are necessary to fulfill the purpose of the park, are key to the cultural integrity of the park, and are considered significant park resources.

Under the preferred alternative, the artifacts would be moved to the new administrative buildings or visitor contact station depending on the building layouts. The new buildings would have storage space available that would improve conditions of the artifacts by allowing for storage in a climate-controlled room, which would have a park-wide, long-term beneficial effect on museum collections. Because the effects would be long-term and beneficial, the preferred alternative would not impair museum collections.