

QUICK FACTS ABOUT NATIONAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS

What is the National Register of Historic Places?

The National Park Service administers the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register is the official Federal list of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture. National Register properties have significance to the history of their community state, or the nation. Nominations for listing historic properties come from State Historic Preservation Officers, from Federal Preservation Officers for properties owned or controlled by the United States Government, and from Tribal Historic Preservation Officers for properties on Tribal lands. Private individuals and organizations, local governments, and American Indian tribes often initiate this process and prepare the necessary documentation. A professional review board in each state considers each property proposed for listing and makes a recommendation on its eligibility. National Historic Landmarks are a separate designation, but upon designation, NHLs are listed in the National Register of Historic Places if not already listed.

You can find more information on the National Historic Landmarks program at their website.

<https://www.nps.gov/nhl/>

What are the results of listing?

In addition to honorific recognition, listing in the National Register has the following results for historic properties: Consideration in planning for Federal, Federally licensed, and Federally assisted projects: -- Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 requires that Federal agencies allow the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation an opportunity to comment on all projects affecting historic properties either listed in or determined eligible for listing in the National Register. The Advisory Council oversees and ensures the consideration of historic properties in the Federal Planning process.

Eligibility for certain tax provisions -- Owners of properties listed in the National Register may be eligible for a 20% investment tax credit for the certified rehabilitation of income-producing certified historic structures such as commercial, industrial, or rental residential buildings. This credit can be combined with a straight-line depreciation period of 27.5 years for residential property and 31.5 years for nonresidential property for the depreciable basis of the rehabilitated building reduced by the amount of the tax credit claimed. Federal tax deductions are also available for charitable contributions for conservation purposes of partial interests in historically important land areas or structures.

Consideration of historic values in the decision to issue a surface mining permit where coal is located in accordance with the Surface Mining Control Act of 1977; and

Qualification for Federal grants for historic preservation, when funds are available.

You can find more information on the results of being listed on our results page.

https://www.nps.gov/nr/national_register_fundamentals.htm

What are the restrictions, rules, regulations for historic property owners?

Under Federal Law, the listing of a property in the National Register places no restrictions on what a non-federal owner may do with their property up to and including destruction, unless the property is involved in a project that receives Federal assistance, usually funding or licensing/permitting.

<http://www.nps.gov/nr/regulations.htm>

There may be state or local preservation laws that a property owner should be aware of before they undertake a project with a historic property. We recommend you, or the property owner contact the State historic preservation office (SHPO) before an action with a listed property is taken. The SHPO is the state agency that oversees historic preservation efforts in their state.

You can find contact information for the SHPOs at:

<http://www.nps.gov/nr/shpolist.htm>

If Federal monies are attached to the property then any changes to the property have to allow the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (www.achp.gov) to comment on the project.

You can also read a copy of the National Register of Historic Places code of Federal regulations at:

<http://www.nps.gov/nr/regulations.htm>

You can also find general information for owners at:

http://www.nps.gov/nr/national_register_fundamentals.htm

Can I modify, remodel, or renovate, my historic house?

From the Federal perspective (the National Register of Historic Places is part of the National Park Service), a property owner can do whatever they want with their property as long as there are no Federal monies attached to the property. You can find this on our website at:

http://www.nps.gov/nr/national_register_fundamentals.htm

However, before this occurs, you can, or the property owner should contact the State historic preservation office (SHPO.) The SHPO is the state agency that oversees historic preservation efforts in their state. There may be state or local preservation laws that the owner should be aware of before they undertake a project with a historic property.

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How do I apply for grant money or tax credits?

The National Register of Historic Places does not have a grant program ourselves. However, Heritage Preservation Services (a different division of the National Park Service, Cultural Resources Program) does have a tax credit program that may be of assistance to you. The website for the tax credit program is:

<http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/tax/index.htm>

Additionally, sometimes State historic preservation offices may have state run programs that could help.

You can find contact information for the SHPOs at <http://www.nps.gov/nr/shpolist.htm>

Are there insurance regulation implications of a house being listed in the National Register?

Listing in the National Register places neither restrictions nor requirements on a private property owner. You may do with the property as you wish, within the framework of local laws or ordinances. You are not required to maintain the property in any specific way; you may demolish the property without federal permission. Should the property be demolished through accident (fire, storm, or other cause), you are not required to have insurance that mandates “replications” of the historic property; in fact, this would be discouraged. A replacement copy of the historic house is not historic—it is merely a new house that looks like a historic house. The historic property should be treated like any other house for insurance purposes.

We have also directed property owners to contact their state’s insurance commissioners for any policy or position paper regarding insuring National Register-listed properties. We have seen nothing from any state insurance commission that indicates refusal to underwrite properties listed in the National Register.

How do I get a plaque?

Many sites listed in the National Register arrange for a commemorative plaque. Unfortunately the National Register of Historic Places does not issue plaques as a result of listing; rather we leave it up to the individual owners if they are interested in having one. If you do not have a local trophy/plaque store that you prefer, we know of several companies that advertise in Preservation Magazine that offer the type of plaques that you may be interested in. We recommend that you contact your State historic preservation office to see if they have a preferred plaque style or wording. We are not endorsing, authorizing, recommending, or implying any connection to any one company over another, including any company not listed here. We are merely aware that these companies sell plaques. Properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places are not required to have plaques.

