



SURVEY AND DESIGNATION # 2 | APRIL 2022 | MICHIGAN.GOV/SHPO

National Register of Historic Places: The Basics

The National Register of Historic Places is the nation's official list of properties important in American history, architecture, engineering, archaeology, and/or culture. It was established in 1966 as part of the National Historic Preservation Act as a way to identify and encourage preservation of important historic places across the country. More than 95,000 properties representing nearly 2 million buildings, sites, structures, objects, and districts have been listed in the Register since its inception. In Michigan, the National Register program and associated designation process is administered by the State Historic Preservation Office in partnership with the National Park Service.

What Are the Benefits of Listing a Property?

The National Register provides honorary recognition of a property's significance to the local community, state, or nation. The National Register is also an important planning tool that can be used by local governments, state and federal agencies, Main Street organizations, property owners, and others to support preservation and continued use of heritage assets. Listing:

- Provides formal recognition of a property's significance to the community, state, and/or nation;
- Identifies important historic properties to be taken into account during project planning and development activities;
- Requires federal agencies to consider the impacts of their projects on the property;
- Provides property owners with access to financial incentives such as tax credits and grants for certain types of projects;
- Provides local building officials with latitude in enforcing conformance to certain code requirements under the Michigan Rehabilitation Code for Existing Buildings; and
- Supports community pride and captures information that can be used for educational and heritage tourism activities.

What Makes a Property Eligible for Listing?

Listing in the National Register is based on a consistent set of standards used in every state. At a basic level, these require that a property be old enough to be considered historic (generally at least 50 years old) and that it demonstrates significance under one or more of the following criteria:

- Criterion A: Association with important events or patterns of history
- Criterion B: Association with the life of a significant person or persons
- Criterion C: Possess distinctive qualities of a type, period, or style of design; represent the work of an important architect, builder, designer, or engineer; possess high artistic value; or represent a significant and distinguishable collection of resources
- Criterion D: Have the potential to yield information important to history or prehistory.

A property must also have integrity. That is, it must retain the key physical and associative characteristics that allow its history and significance to be understood. For more detailed discussion, see SHPO's National Register program materials at www.michigan.gov/nrhp.

What Types of Properties are Eligible for Listing?

A lot! While buildings are the most commonly listed type of property, the National Register also includes a wide variety of structures, objects, and sites. Bridges, signs, cemeteries, lighthouses, roads, statues, shipwrecks, locomotives, parks, battlefields, archaeological sites, and more have all been listed in the National Register.

The National Register also includes districts, which represent related groups of buildings, structures, objects, and/or sites that share a cohesive identity, such as a neighborhood, industrial complex, or downtown core.

How Does a Property Get Listed in the Register?

To demonstrate that a property meets the criteria for listing in the National Register, applicants follow a process through which they complete documentation and research of a property and prepare a formal nomination package meeting SHPO and National Park Service requirements. Links to forms and program guidance are available at www.michigan.gov/nrhp.

In short, this process includes (1) completing a preliminary questionnaire to get SHPO's determination whether a property meets the criteria for listing in the National Register; (2) completing the full nomination in coordination with SHPO; and (3) presenting the nomination to the State Historic Preservation Review Board for approval. Once approved by SHPO and the Review Board, the nomination is forwarded to the National Park Service for official listing.

Who Can Prepare the Necessary Materials?

The National Register is designed so that anyone can prepare a nomination and submit it to SHPO for consideration; however, interested parties often use a professional preservation consultant because of the required time and analysis.

Does a Property Owner Need to Approve the Listing?

Federal regulations only allow for listing of a property with owner consent. In instances where an owner objects to a listing, a property can still be determined eligible for listing but will not move forward in the nomination process. In the case of a historic district, listing is allowed as long as a majority of the property owners (greater than 50%) do not formally object to the listing.

How Can We Pay for a Nomination?

Nominations can be funded in various ways, including through municipal general funds or support from non-profits and other organizations. **CLGs also have exclusive access to grant funding from SHPO**, which is made available each year to support preservation activities such as National Register designation. Information on SHPO's CLG grant program is available at www.michigan.gov/CLGgrants.

CLGs can also access National Park Service grant programs, which are available annually. These grants support survey, designation, and rehabilitation of properties that meet certain funding priorities. Additional information on NPS grant programs and deadlines is available at www.nps.gov/orgs/1623/index.htm.

Can SHPO Recommend a Consultant?

While SHPO does not license, certify, endorse, or recommend specific consultants, a qualified professionals list is publicly available at www.michigan.gov/SHPO. This list identifies individuals and companies who have voluntarily submitted information to SHPO demonstrating that they have a certain level of professional experience in history, architectural history, historic architecture, and/or archaeology.

RUMORS, MYTHS, AND MISCONCEPTIONS—OH MY! UNDERSTANDING WHAT THE NATIONAL REGISTER DOES NOT DO

There is often a lot of misunderstanding about the National Register and its impact on properties, most commonly including myths about the National Register limiting what an owner can do with their property. The reality is that the National Register neither outright places restrictions on what a private property owner may do with their property nor requires review of changes to a property. The only exceptions are for projects receiving federal assistance (funding, permitting, or licensing) or where limitations are imposed as part of outside activities such as grant programs or review of projects receiving preservation tax credits.

It is important to understand that listing in the National Register **does not**:

- Require that properties be maintained, repaired, or restored
- Restrict the rights of private property owners to freely make changes to their properties
- Require property owners to follow certain standards
- Require property owners to seek permission prior to doing work on their property
- Prevent demolition or development of a property
- Require public access to a property
- Require installation of a sign or plaque at the property
- Impact or otherwise limit the use of a property
- Affect the sale of a property or require property owners to seek permission before selling a property
- Automatically invoke local historic district designation for a property
- Affect local property taxes or zoning
- Guarantee funding for preservation projects



The activity that is the subject of this project has been financed in part with Federal funds from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, through the Michigan Strategic Fund, State Historic Preservation Office. However, the contents and opinions herein do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of the Interior nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products herein constitute endorsement or recommendation by the Department of the Interior or the Michigan Strategic Fund, State Historic Preservation Office. This program receives Federal financial assistance for identification and protection of historic properties. Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, the U.S. Department of the Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex, marital status, or disability. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility as described above, or if you desire further information, please write to: Chief, Office of Equal Opportunity Programs, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1849 C Street, NW, MS-2740, Washington, D.C. 20240.