



SURVEY AND DESIGNATION # 3 | APRIL 2022 | MICHIGAN.GOV/SHPO

What's the Difference? National Register vs. Local Designation

While often confused, listing a property in the National Register of Historic Places and designation of a local historic district are not related. Both are effective preservation tools that help a community identify and plan for its historic resources, but they have different purposes, requirements, and benefits. In addition, while properties can be both listed in the National Register and locally designated, the two have no bearing on one another.

National Register of Historic Places

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 important historic properties across the country and encourage their preservation.

The National Register is **HONORARY**. It recognizes properties that tell stories important to our communities. Listing in the National Register neither protects a property nor places limitations on private property owners. Rather, it helps local governments, state and federal agencies, and others identify historic properties that should be considered in planning decisions. Listing also provides property owners with access to certain financial incentives.

Local Historic Districts

A local historic district is a historically significant area that is protected by a local historic district ordinance established under the state enabling legislation, Public Act 169 of 1970, as amended. A district may include one or more resources that are related by history, architecture, archaeology, and/or culture.

Local designation **PROVIDES LEGAL PROTECTION**. It requires that proposed new construction, demolition, and exterior work be reviewed and approved by the local historic district commission (HDC) before it is undertaken. This review is legally binding and helps to ensure that growth, development, and change respect the character of the district for the benefit of current and future generations. Local designation also provides property owners with access to certain financial incentives.

NATIONAL REGISTER AT-A-GLANCE

Purpose:	To recognize and honor important historic properties across the country and to aid local, state, and federal agencies in planning
Legal Authority:	National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended
Administrator:	U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service (NPS), in partnership with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
Designation Process:	An applicant starts by submitting a brief questionnaire to SHPO to determine if a property is eligible for listing. Upon consensus by SHPO, the applicant prepares a nomination package for review by SHPO and the State Historic Preservation Review Board. Once finalized, documentation is forwarded to the NPS for review and official listing.

LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS AT-A-GLANCE

Purpose:	To legally protect historic resources by requiring design review for proposed changes in designated areas
Legal Authority:	Michigan's Historic Districts Act Public Act 169 of 1970, as amended
Administrator:	Local government
Designation Process:	The local government appoints a committee to study the history of an area, get public input, and prepare a report. Based on the findings, the local government may either vote to establish the district or decide not to move forward with designation.

	National Register of Historic Places	Local Historic Districts
What types of properties can be designated?	Individual buildings, structures, objects, sites, and multi-resource districts are all eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and/or designation as local historic districts.	
What makes a property eligible for designation?	<p>A property must be historically significant under one or more criteria (Criteria for Evaluation):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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, style, or period 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 ability to yield information important to history or prehistory <p>Significance may be at the local, state, or national level.</p>	
Does designation protect the property?	<p>No, listing in the National Register affords no baseline protection to private property.</p> <p>Exception: Under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, federal agencies must take into consideration the effects of their activities (funding, permitting, or licensing) on properties listed in or eligible for the National Register. However, Section 106 does not guarantee protection or a specific outcome.</p>	<p>Yes, local historic district status provides legal protection. It requires that proposed work affecting the exterior appearance of a property be reviewed and approved by the local historic district commission. Work includes new construction, exterior alterations, and demolition. Through the review process, the work is evaluated using national preservation standards to determine its compatibility with the character of the property and district.</p>
Is a designated property eligible for preservation incentives?	<p>Owners of income-producing properties are eligible to apply for federal tax credits for qualified rehabilitation activities.</p> <p>Owners of private residential properties and income-producing properties are eligible to apply for state tax credits for qualified activities.</p> <p>Owners of certain types of properties may also be eligible to apply for NPS program grants and/or CLG grants from the SHPO.</p>	<p>Owners of private residential properties and income-producing properties are eligible to apply for state historic preservation tax credits for qualified rehabilitation activities.</p>
	<p>Owners might also have access to local incentives. Local incentives may be authorized by the local government at their discretion and may include, for example, tax abatement, access to façade grant programs, flexible zoning tools, and other such benefits.</p>	
Does a property owner need to have changes to the property reviewed?	<p>No, listing in the National Register does not restrict a property owner from making changes to the interior or exterior of their property. However, substantial changes to a property may lead to its removal from the Register.</p> <p>Exception: Projects receiving federal funding or other assistance as well as projects receiving preservation grants or tax credits will be subject to review for related activities.</p>	<p>Yes, an owner of a locally designated property must receive approval from the historic district commission prior to starting work that affects the exterior appearance of the property. Work cannot proceed until such approval is issued. Note that this does not include ordinary maintenance.</p> <p>If work is undertaken without approval, the property owner may have to revert the work, be subject to fines, and/or face other penalties.</p>
Can a property owner develop or demolish resources on their property?	<p>Yes, but substantial changes to a property may lead to its removal from the Register.</p> <p>Exception: Projects receiving federal funding or other assistance as well as projects receiving preservation grants or tax credits will be subject to review for related activities.</p>	<p>Yes, but demolition and new construction are subject to review by the historic district commission and must be approved prior to the start of work. Work cannot proceed until such approval is issued; otherwise, the property owner may be subject to stop work orders, fines, and/or other penalties.</p>
Is an owner required to provide public access?	<p>No, there are no public access requirements associated with local historic district designation or listing in the National Register. Likewise, there is no requirement that an owner install a sign, marker, or plaque recognizing the property.</p>	
Are use of a property or property taxes impacted?	<p>No, designation does not impact the use of a property. Use of a property is governed by local zoning. Likewise, designation does not in and of itself impact local property taxes.</p>	

What About the State Register of Historic Sites?

In Michigan, there's a third type of designation—the State Register of Historic Sites. Broadly speaking, the State Register is the list of sites that have received recognition through the Michigan Historical Marker Program, overseen by the Michigan Historical Commission. Markers and locations approved by the commission are added to the State Register.

Established in 1955, the Michigan Historical Marker Program tells the story of Michigan by providing a tangible connection between sites and the important persons, places, or events associated with them. Each marker serves as a reminder of that site's history and contributes to our collective community identity. In total, more than 1,700 markers have been issued through the program.

The Michigan Historical Marker Program is generally **HONORARY**, although there are expectations of property stewardship in accordance with accepted preservation standards. This helps to ensure that the sites commemorated by the markers continue to retain the physical characteristics that help us understand their history and significance.

HISTORICAL MARKER PROGRAM AT-A-GLANCE

Purpose:	To inform and educate the public about people, places, and events important to Michigan history; to promote historic preservation; and to support cultural tourism
Legal Authority:	Michigan Historical Markers Act Public Act 488 of 2002
Administrator:	Michigan Historical Commission in partnership with the Michigan History Center (MHC)
Application Process:	An applicant starts by submitting an application and support documentation to the MHC demonstrating that the site or topic is worthy of a Michigan Historical Marker. If approved, staff will work with you to verify research and draft text for a marker. Once finalized, a marker will be ordered and the site will be listed in the State Register of Historic Sites.

What types of properties can receive a marker?	Historically significant buildings and structures, National Register-listed districts, objects, and sites all meet the eligibility requirements, as do locations without historic resources that are associated with important persons, organizations, or events. Significance may be at the local, state, or national level.
What criteria is used to determine significance?	The criteria for the Michigan Historical Marker Program generally mirror those used by the National Register of Historic Places. A property must be historically significant under one or more criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be associated with important events or patterns of history • Be associated with the life of a significant person or persons • Possess distinctive qualities of a type, style, or period 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 • Have the ability to yield information important to history or prehistory
Is a marked property eligible for preservation incentives?	Owners of private residential properties and income-producing properties are eligible to apply for state historic preservation tax credits for qualified activities. Owners might also have access to local incentives. Local incentives may be authorized by the local government at their discretion and may include, for example, access to façade grant programs and other such benefits.
Can a property owner make changes to a site with a historical marker?	Property owners are expected to show a commitment to preserving the historic resource (where present) that is commemorated by a marker. Under Public Act 488 of 2002, owners must follow national preservation standards for any modifications to the exterior of a historic resource. Substantial changes to a marked resource may lead to its removal from the State Register and repossession of the historical marker.
Is assistance available to help make sure proposed changes are appropriate?	Yes, owners of a marked historic resource may ask the MHC to review work plans prior to the start of work to verify their appropriateness. SHPO staff are also available for consultation.
Is an owner required to provide public access to the property?	Historical markers must be located near the public right-of-way and generally accessible to the public; however, property owners are not required to provide public access to resources marked by the program. However, marker locations are made available in a publicly accessible database.
Are use of a property or property taxes impacted?	No, participation does not impact the use of a property. Use of a property is governed by local zoning. Likewise, inclusion in the program does not in and of itself impact local property taxes.



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.