



The National Register in Michigan: A Look at the Process

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Introduction

Thank you for your interest in the National Register of Historic Places program. This document is meant to provide an overview of the process and requirements for listing a place in the National Register. Just as each historic place is different, the process from initial inquiry to preliminary evaluation to listing in the National Register will vary from one degree to another. This document is not meant to address every variation in the process or every property type. Instead, it is meant to provide general information for the most common types of properties and experiences so that property owners, developers, officials, and preparers of nominations can better plan their projects. We encourage anyone with questions about listing a property in the National Register to contact State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) staff as early in the process as possible.

Overview

In general, the process of listing property in the National Register includes the following steps:

1. Completion of a *National Register of Historic Places Preliminary Questionnaire* (available at www.michigan.gov/nrhp), and evaluation of the property's eligibility for listing in the National Register by SHPO staff.
2. Preparation of a National Register nomination (NPS 10-900 *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*, maps, photographs, etc.) by the applicant, or a consultant hired by the applicant. This step also includes review and approval of the nomination materials by SHPO staff (please note that multiple drafts are typical for all nominations and historic districts often require more drafts than individual properties).
3. Presentation of the property to the State Historic Preservation Review Board for its approval, by the applicant, or a consultant hired by the applicant.
4. Approval by the State Historic Preservation Officer and submission of the nomination materials to the Keeper of the National Register by SHPO.
5. Listing of the property in the National Register of Historic Places by the Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places.

Each of these steps is explained in greater detail in the following pages. Please note that this document is not an exhaustive manual or guide to completing a National Register nomination in Michigan, it is meant simply as an overview of the process. For more information on completing a National Register nomination, please see *General Guidance and Requirements for National Register of Historic Places Nominations in Michigan* at the [National Register page of the SHPO website](#).

Timeframe

Listing a property in the National Register of Historic Places is not a quick process. Under the best circumstances, the process will take several months; typically, between 12 and 18 months. The length of time is affected by the complexity of the property, research complexity, the quality of submission materials, staff capacity, project backlog, and more.

Draft nominations that meet SHPO and NPS requirements help to create a more efficient review process. Several guidance documents are listed in *Step 2: Preparing a National Register Nomination* section that follows and can be found at the [National Register program page of the SHPO website](#).

Preliminary questionnaires and draft nominations are generally reviewed in the order in which they are received. In some cases project backlog, staff capacity, and other considerations necessitate reviewing projects with funding or other deadlines before those that are honorific in nature.

Preliminary Reviews

SHPO staff is always glad to hear from preparers and welcomes questions at any point during the preliminary questionnaire or nomination phases.

Because of the volume of submissions, our early reviews focus on confirming completeness. Detailed feedback on narrative descriptions and statements of significance is provided during the formal review process and cannot be offered in advance.

To support applicants as they prepare their materials, we encourage the use of the *National Register of Historic Places Nomination Pre-Submission Self-Review Checklist*, available on the [National Register program web page](#). This checklist closely reflects the type of review SHPO staff conduct for a preliminary review and may help address many common questions.

Step 1: Preparing a National Register of Historic Places Preliminary Questionnaire

If SHPO has not evaluated the property previously, the process begins with the *National Register of Historic Places Preliminary Questionnaire*, found at [the National Register page of the SHPO website](#).

In some cases, SHPO staff evaluated a property some ten, twenty, or thirty or more years ago. When SHPO opinions (sometimes referred to as “determinations”) are ten or more years old, a *National Register of Historic Places Preliminary Questionnaire* is required for a current opinion. SHPO also recommends a preliminary questionnaire when circumstances since the last documented evaluation have changed. In some communities, circumstances change year to year, which may affect eligibility. Current evaluations and opinions create certainty in the process and often answer important questions about eligibility that may not have been answered in previous opinions.

Once the necessary materials have been gathered and the preliminary questionnaire has been completed, please send it to SHPO (see Submission of Materials to SHPO at the end of this document for more information). Materials must be labeled and organized clearly. Please note that organized materials cannot be accepted and will be returned to the applicant for revision.

While SHPO staff will make every effort to review preliminary questionnaires as soon as possible, workloads, resources, and project complexity may result in additional review time.

After we have reviewed the questionnaire, we will provide our formal opinion by letter. In some cases, we may request additional information before completing an evaluation. In that case, review of the questionnaire will continue once additional information has been received.

If we evaluate the property as appearing to meet one or more of the criteria for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, we will encourage you to proceed with preparing a full *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (NPS Form 10-900) and accompanying documentation needed to nominate the property.

Step 2: Preparing a National Register of Historic Places Nomination

National Park Service Guidance

Preparing a National Register of Historic Places nomination requires completing an NPS Form 10-900, *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*, and submitting photographs, maps, and, sometimes, other documentation.

Please visit [the National Park Service \(NPS\) National Register website](#), for the following basic tools:

- NPS Form 10-900, *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* template (available only in Microsoft Word)
- National Register Bulletin 16A, *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form* – the basic NPS “how-to” manual for preparing a nomination
- National Register Bulletin 15, *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*
- National Register Bulletins 12 and 21, *Defining Boundaries for National Register Properties* (with Appendix, *Definition of National Register Boundaries for Archeological Properties*)
- National Register Bulletin 39, *Researching a Historic Property*

Preparers are also encouraged to review the additional, relevant bulletins and guidance and sample nominations found on the NPS website. SHPO may also be able to provide sample registration forms, maps, and so on that can assist in the preparation of a new nomination.

SHPO Guidance

In addition to NPS requirements, Michigan has its own requirements, which are provided in SHPO guidance, available at [the National Register page of the SHPO website](#). These documents include:

- *General Guidance and Requirements for National Register of Historic Places Nominations in Michigan*
- *Photograph Requirements for National Register Nominations in Michigan*
- *Map Requirements for National Register Nominations in Michigan*
- *Michigan State Historic Preservation Office Style Guide*
- *National Register of Historic Places Nomination Pre-Submission Self-Review Checklist*
- *National Register of Historic Places Nomination Package Checklist*

- *National Register of Historic Places Nomination Deadline Calendar*

Reviewing these documents before beginning, and referencing these documents throughout, helps make the process more efficient. If something is unclear, please reach out to us. We would much rather help you early than return a draft later.

Sample Nominations

Sample nominations can help preparers understand expectations (e.g., level of detail, history vs. context, how to organize the text), and be useful in illustrating the kind of information needed.

Sample nominations are available at the National Register page of the National Park Service website and through SHPO. SHPO staff may provide samples that illustrate strong historic context or comparative analysis, even if they represent different property types. For example, an applicant may be preparing a nomination for a bank building, but we may send a completed nomination for an apartment building because it demonstrates concepts like historic context and comparative analysis better than existing bank building nominations.

Thematic Nominations and Context Documents

Historic context is essential to demonstrating significance. This concept is explained in detail in NPS and SHPO documentation described previously.

The [Michigan Thematic Historic Contexts page of the SHPO website](#) contains several thematic nominations and context documents that may aid in completing a preliminary questionnaire or a nomination.

Who Prepares the National Register Nomination?

Due to workload and resources, SHPO staff does not prepare nominations in-house, typically. It is the responsibility of the interested party to complete the necessary research and prepare the nomination package. In some cases, it is advantageous to hire a professional historic preservation consultant.

SHPO cannot proceed with the process of nominating a property to the National Register until the nomination (i.e., registration form, maps, photographs, etc.) is complete and in final form. See the list of required items to complete the National Register nomination package under the *Before We Place Your Property on the Agenda for a State Historic Preservation Review Board Meeting* section that follows.

Property owners interested in hiring a professional consultant may refer to, [Consultants Meeting Federal Qualifications for Archaeology, History, and Architectural History](#), the SHPO list of consultants who meet federal qualifications for these disciplines. Please note that inclusion in this list does **not** constitute endorsement, approval, or certification of any firm or individual by SHPO, the State of Michigan or any agency thereof, or the federal government and its agencies. It is a list of individuals who meet minimum federal professional qualifications as described in 36 CFR Part 61. When selecting a consultant, we recommend soliciting multiple quotations, checking references, and reviewing work samples, as experience and expertise vary. The SHPO list of consultants is also available at the bottom of [the National Register page of the SHPO website](#).

Submitting a First Draft of the Nomination

Once a first draft of the nomination has been completed, we recommend preparers review the materials against the [National Register of Historic Places Nomination Pre-Submission Self-Review Checklist found on our website](#). This checklist is not required and does not need to be submitted with the nomination materials. The checklist is a tool that addresses many of the general aspects of a nomination that SHPO staff considers during their review. Please note, the checklist is not a complete set of requirements, nor does use of the checklist constitute a completed or approved nomination, nor does it mean that the property will be listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The first draft of a nomination must include: a completed *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*, a draft set of photographs, draft locational maps, a resource map (if applicable), and all other items noted in the *National Register of Historic Places Nomination Package Checklist*, found at [the National Register page of the SHPO website](#).

SHPO staff will review the nomination materials and respond to you with our comments, questions, and advice. Due to the number of preliminary questionnaires and nominations we receive and SHPO capacity, we may not be able to review all projects as quickly as we would all like. We fully understand delays are frustrating, and SHPO staff will make every effort to review questionnaires and nominations within a reasonable amount of time, but delays are likely.

Notes about the Review Process

SHPO staff uses the Track Changes feature of Microsoft Word and often provides a separate review letter that provides additional comments, questions, and guidance. Once SHPO has reviewed the draft nomination materials, the reviewed nomination form and letter will be sent to the preparer by email. Once the preparer has addressed the revisions, the revised draft nomination is sent to SHPO for review. This process repeats until the nomination is complete.

Site Visits

Unless SHPO staff is familiar with the property, a site visit may be necessary during the nomination process as it may facilitate review of the preliminary questionnaire and the nomination.

Before We Place Your Property on the Agenda for a State Historic Preservation Review Board Meeting

We recommend that all applicants review the following documents:

- [National Register Nomination Pre-Submission Self-Review Checklist](#)
- [National Register of Historic Places Nomination Package Checklist](#)
- [National Register of Historic Places Nomination Deadline Calendar](#)

The **self-review checklist** is a tool that preparers can use to help ensure a nomination package is complete. The **submission checklist** enumerates all of the materials that are needed before a nomination package is considered **complete and in final form**. "Complete and in final form" means that the nomination makes a sufficient argument for significance and is "adequately documented" and "technically and professionally correct and sufficient," as noted in 36 CFR 60.3. The **deadline calendar** provides useful dates for developing a timeframe for your project.

Step 3: Presentation to the State Historic Preservation Review Board

The process of nominating a property to the National Register of Historic Places includes review and consideration of the property and the nomination package by the [State Historic Preservation Review Board](#). Part of this review includes the presentation of the property and nomination to the Review Board at one of its meetings, which are currently held three times per year.

The presentation to the board (and by extension, the public) is made by the property owner or their consultant through a short presentation using electronic

images in a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation. SHPO staff does not present nominations to the board. Presentations of individual properties are limited to no more than seven (7) minutes. Presentations of historic districts are limited to no more than ten (10) minutes.

Guidelines on preparing a presentation for the review board are available upon request.

Notification Requirements for Nominations

Prior to the meeting of the State Historic Preservation Review Board, SHPO must notify certain individuals that we intend to nominate the property for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. For all nominations, preparers must provide correct mailing information for:

- each full or partial property owner
- the chief elected official of the municipality in which the property is located (note, this is the legal or taxing authority, not the mailing location)
- the chief elected official of the county

Preparers may also include information for the chief municipal planning official, or city council or county commission officials for the specific district in which the property is located.

For individual property nominations contact information must include: the salutation, first name, last name, title, organization, and mailing address for each individual. Email addresses and telephone numbers are **not** needed.

For **historic district** nominations preparers must provide mailing information in Microsoft Excel .xlsx format. For each party noted and for each property owner in the district (including noncontributing buildings and vacant parcels) the list must include **individual columns** for:

- the appropriate salutation (Mr., Mrs., Dr., Rev., and so on)
- property owner first name
- property owner last name
- title
- organization
- the mailing address street number
- the mailing address street name
- state
- zip code
- street address of affected property

Telephone numbers, email addresses, and tax parcel identification numbers are **not** needed for historic district nominations.

Notification

For most properties, SHPO will provide written notification to property owners, local elected officials, and other interested parties. This notice includes a statement of our intent to nominate the property as well as the date, time, and place of the Review Board meeting. Recipients are invited to attend the meeting and submit comments relative to the nomination of the property. Notifications also include a list of property owner rights and the results of listing a property in the National Register.

For large historic districts (more than 50 property owners), notification may be provided by general newspaper notice instead of individual mailing. **We recommend that sponsors of historic district nominations should include the cost of a newspaper notice in their project planning.** Newspaper notices are placed in a newspaper of general circulation (specialty newspapers may not be used).

For properties in non-Certified Local Government communities, notification is sent between 30 and 75 days prior to the Review Board meeting date.

Nomination of Properties in Certified Local Government Communities

Properties located in Certified Local Government (CLG) Communities are also presented to the Historic District Commission (or similarly named entity) in the respective community. Each community has its own process for presenting the nomination to its commission. It is the responsibility of SHPO to transmit the completed nomination to the municipality. It is the responsibility of the preparer to determine if they or municipal staff will present the nomination to the local commission.

For properties in CLG communities, SHPO sends notification between 60 and 120 days prior to the Review Board meeting date. For a list of CLG communities in Michigan, please visit [the Certified Local Government webpage of the SHPO website](#).

Step 4: Approval by the State Historic Preservation Officer and submission of the nomination materials to the Keeper of the National Register by SHPO.

Once the nomination materials have been approved by the Review Board and State Historic Preservation Officer, they are transmitted to the Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior.

Nominations are typically submitted to NPS approximately 30 days after the Review Board meeting at which they were presented, unless the Review Board has comments or questions that require additional information.

If the Review Board has comments or questions that require additional information, the preparer is responsible for providing that information. The nomination will then be reviewed by SHPO staff and the State Historic Preservation Officer before the nomination is transmitted to NPS.

Step 5: Listing of the property in the National Register of Historic Places by the Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places

NPS historians review and act on nominations within 45 days of receipt, and may: approve the nomination, return it for revision, or return it as not eligible.

If the nomination is approved that means the property has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places. SHPO is informed of new National Register listings weekly by email, and notifies the property owner, preparer, and the parties noted above by letter as soon thereafter as possible.

If the nomination is returned for revision, clarification, or additional information, this means the property is eligible for listing, but a sufficient argument has not been made, the argument(s) for significance require clarification or modification, or some technical revision is required. In this case, NPS staff will explain by letter why the nomination has been returned. SHPO staff will contact the preparer to discuss NPS comments and the required revisions. Returned nominations are revised by the preparer.

If a nomination is returned because the property is not eligible for listing in the National Register, NPS staff will explain why the nomination has been returned. SHPO staff will contact the preparer to discuss the property.

Other Information

File Types

The State of Michigan utilizes the Microsoft Office suite of applications. The *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* must be submitted in Microsoft Word .doc or .docx format. Registration forms submitted in PDF, or another, format cannot be accepted and will be returned to the applicant.

Photographs may be submitted in JPEG, TIFF, or RAW format. Other formats cannot be accepted and will be returned to the applicant.

Maps may be submitted in JPG or PDF format. Other formats are not accepted. Other formats cannot be accepted and will be returned to the applicant.

Historical Images, Illustrations, and Figures

Figures, like historical images, may be included with a nomination. When used, preparers must have permission to include historical images that are not in the public domain or that are not owned by the preparer or property owner. Figures must be inserted into a blank Microsoft Word page or an NPS Form 10-900a Continuation Sheet. A full caption and alternative text (Alt Text) must be included for each figure.

Review Board presentations must be submitted in Microsoft PowerPoint .pptx format. Other formats cannot be accepted.

Deadlines

Please see the [Nomination Deadline Calendar](#), found on the National Register page of the SHPO website for a list of dates and prospective dates of upcoming meetings of the State Historic Preservation Review Board as well as a list of deadline dates for complete nominations.

Submission of Materials to SHPO

Preliminary questionnaires, first drafts, and final materials may be submitted to SHPO on either a USB drive (also referred to as a “flash” or “thumb” drive) or a CD or DVD. Other forms of submission are not accepted at this time. SHPO Staff will generally communicate with applicants via email during the nomination process on the best way of transmitting nomination materials.

All photographs, materials, and media (CDs, USB drives, etc.) submitted to the SHPO become the property of SHPO and will not be returned. Additionally, submitted materials, including photographs, may be used in printed or digital promotional materials.

Please send the completed questionnaire or nomination package to:

National Register Coordinator
State Historic Preservation Office
300 North Washington Square
Lansing, Michigan 48913.

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