



# Instructions for Completing the National Register of Historic Places Preliminary Questionnaire in Michigan

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Thank you for your interest in the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register is the official list of the nation's historic places worthy of preservation. Listing in the National Register brings honor and recognition to a property and community and is used to celebrate our shared history as Michiganders. Listing in the National Register can facilitate investment through rehabilitation projects and tourism and support some grant funding. It also plays an important role in the planning activities of federal, state, tribal, and local governments as well as private organizations.

The process for listing a property in the National Register in Michigan typically begins with the National Register of Historic Places Preliminary Questionnaire (NRPQ). This is not a National Register nomination, but a preliminary evaluation by State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) staff to assess whether the property meets the criteria for listing in the National Register so that you can move forward with the formal nomination process in greater confidence. After SHPO staff evaluates the property, they will notify the applicant by emailed letter.

This document provides instructions and clarifications for completing the NRPQ and submitting the required materials. If this is your first time preparing an NRPQ, or if it's been a while, please see the **If This is Your First Time** section at the end of this document before you begin.

To begin the preliminary questionnaire, please visit the [National Register of Historic Places Preliminary Questionnaire Smartsheet portal](#).

Please note this portal is an interim solution while a permanent solution is under development. There is no expected date for the permanent portal at this time.

## Property Information

### Historic Name

Enter the formal, historical name of the property as it was known during its period of significance. Do not enter names of recent or current owners, businesses, or organizations. If more than one name is applicable, choose one and explain any other historic names in the supporting documentation.

### Other Name(s)

Enter any other names under which the subject property was known throughout history. Do not enter names of recent or current owners, businesses, or organizations, unless they have been associated with the property through the historic period.

### Street Address

Enter the complete street address of the subject property (e.g., 123 East Smith Street). If the NRPQ is for a district or landscape, enter the general boundaries of the proposed district (e.g., Elm Street between 3rd and 10th Streets).

### Municipal Unit

Enter the name of the legal or taxing municipal unit in which the property is located. This may differ from the mailing address. For example, a farm may have a mailing address of the nearest incorporated city, but is legally located in a township. The township name should be entered. Enter only one municipal name. If the property crosses municipal borders, enter one municipality and explain the location in the narrative text.

### ZIP Code

Enter the ZIP code for the subject property.

### County

Enter the county in which the subject property is located. If the property crosses county borders, enter one county and explain the location in the narrative text.

## Applicant Information

Enter the contact information of the applicant here. The applicant may be the property owner, a consultant, an interested party, etc. Provide information for **one** person only.

### Applicant Name

Enter the name of the person who is primarily responsible for preparing the NRPQ.

#### Applicant Organization

If the person primarily responsible for preparing the NRPQ is affiliated with an organization such as an ownership organization, consulting firm, governmental entity, university, etc., enter the name of the organization.

#### Applicant Mailing Address

Enter the complete mailing address for the applicant. Include the street or mailing address or Post Office box, the municipal unit, state, and ZIP code.

#### Applicant Telephone Number

Enter one telephone number of the person primarily responsible for completing the NRPQ.

#### Applicant Email Address

Enter the email of the person primarily responsible for completing the NRPQ.

### **PROPERTY OWNER INFORMATION**

#### Applicant Same as Property Owner

If the property owner is the same as the applicant, select "Yes" from the dropdown box. If the applicant is different from the Property Owner, select "No" from the dropdown box and complete following sections that appear.

#### Property Owner Name

For individual places, enter the name of the property owner, according to tax records.

If the property is owned by multiple people, enter the name of the owner who is the primary contact for the applicant.

If the property is owned by an organization, enter the name of the applicant's primary contact for that organization.

#### Property Owner Organization

If the property is owned by an organization, enter the formal name of the organization. Otherwise leave blank.

#### Property Owner Street Address

Enter the complete street address of the property owner (e.g., 123 East Smith Street), even if it is the same as the address provided in the Property Information section.

#### Property Owner Municipality

Enter the municipality in which property owner is located, even if it is the same as the address provided in the Property Information section.

#### Property Owner State

Enter the state in which the property owner is located, even if it is the same as the address provided in the Property Information section.

#### Property Owner ZIP Code

Enter the ZIP code in which the property owner is located.

#### Property Owner Telephone

Enter the telephone number of the property owner. Enter only one telephone number.

#### Property Owner Email Address

Enter the email address of the property owner. Enter only one email address.

*Note:* when there is more than one property owner, enter the information of the individual who is primarily responsible for completing the NRPQ or working with the consultant.

### **Identification Forms**

The Michigan SHPO uses specific identification forms for different property types. These forms help us collect information necessary to evaluate a place for eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. While these forms collect some of the same information, each form also collects information specific to its property type. Select and complete one form. All sections must be completed to the extent possible. If some information is not known (e.g., the name of the architect), it is ok to leave that field blank.

It is recommended that applicants review the following documents before completing one of the identification forms. These documents provide useful information for understanding the type of information that is required for a National Register Nomination and the structure of how that information is provided:

- [\*General Guidance and Requirements for National Register of Historic Places Nominations in Michigan\*](#). This is the basic, how-to guide published by SHPO. This guide is meant for a full National Register nomination, but the terms, concepts, and information apply to the National Register

program as a whole and understanding them will also aid in preparing an NRPQ.

- [National Register Bulletin 15, How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation](#). This guide published by NPS explains the requirements of each National Register Criteria.

All identification forms are available at the [Forms Library on the SHPO website](#), here.

#### Architectural Properties Identification Form

**Use this form to provide information for places like individual houses, schools, churches, and factory buildings.** It is ok if the property has multiple resources, such as a house with a garage; a church and a rectory; or a factory with a warehouse. If the property contains several buildings or structures, however, the *District or Complex Identification Form* may be more appropriate.

#### District or Complex Identification Form

**Use this form for places like a commercial area or residential neighborhood, a factory complex, a farm, or an educational campus.** A complex or district inventory must be completed with the NRPQ. There is no defined division between a group of buildings and a complex, but in general, a complex would consist of several related buildings rather than a couple or a few. A draft map of the proposed boundaries and all resources must also be included.

#### Cultural Landscape Identification Form

**Use this form for places like cemeteries, fairgrounds, parks, natural sites, and all other “sites,”** as defined by National Park Service guidance. A detailed site plan or map that identifies the boundary of the place and important features must be included. Note that a cemetery by itself is a site, but a cemetery with a religious building is addressed with either the *Architectural Properties* or *District or Complex* form.

#### Infrastructure Identification Form

**Use this form for structures like vehicular or rail bridges, dams, or roadways.**

## **Additional Documentation**

### Comparable Places

As part of evaluating properties within their historic context, a National Register nomination must typically compare the property to be nominated with other, similar properties. It is important and often necessary to consider other properties of the same or similar architectural style, the same historical associations, the same historical functions, etc. Think of this much like a real estate appraisal, but with historical information instead of sales information. Much like an appraisal, every nearby or related property is not considered, but enough examples must be provided that makes the particular significance of the subject property apparent. The rationale for why certain examples were chosen and others excluded must be made clear.

Include with the NRPQ a separate document that identifies known places associated with the same time periods and areas of historical significance as the subject property. The geographic scope of comparison must be the same as the level of significance (local, state, or national). In some cases, "local" may mean a broader area than a small town or village or an unincorporated community.

For example, a locally important fire station in Reed City need not be compared to fire stations in Wisconsin or California or even fire stations in the Upper Peninsula. Instead, the comparison might look at fire stations in Richmond Township or take a broader look at adjacent townships or even look at all of Osceola County or parts of Lake, Mecosta, or Newaygo Counties, all of which abut the southwest part of Osceola County.

### Maps

#### *Individual Property*

This includes places like a house and garage, hotels, and religious buildings as well as bridges, power plants, or bandstands, and monuments or fountains. One current aerial map with the property and all associated resources clearly identified. If the property contains more than one resource, a map that clearly depicts all resources should be included.

#### *Complex*

This includes places like farmsteads or industrial sites. Include one or more current aerial map(s) that depict the property in its location and setting, and one line drawing or annotated aerial map that identifies the contributing and

noncontributing resources, locations of lost resources, and locations of important natural features. The line map should also provide the construction date of each resource or substantial addition to a resource.

### *Historic District*

This includes places like a downtown commercial area, a neighborhood, an educational campus, or a large farm. Include one current aerial map showing the location of the district within the community, and one line drawing or annotated aerial map that identifies the potential boundaries and all contributing and noncontributing resources.

### *Site*

This includes places like parks and designed landscapes, areas having cultural significance, and ruins of historic buildings. Include one current aerial map showing the location of the site within the broader area, and one or more line drawings or annotated aerial maps that identify the potential boundaries, all contributing and noncontributing resources, and major natural and man-made features.

*Tip:* Be sure to submit maps in PDF or JPEG format.

For information on the purpose and content of National Register maps see [Map Requirements for National Register Nominations in Michigan](#).

### Photographs

Include a set of **current** photographs that provide a comprehensive overview of the property and its important features. The number and type of views required to adequately portray the property will vary based on the complexity of the property, its history, and its significance, but should convey as much information about the property and its features in as few views as possible.

Photographs must be accompanied by a brief description of what is depicted in each view, or a photo key (a map of where each photograph was taken) must be included.

For individual properties like a house, school, or store, include both exterior **and** interior photographs. Interior views should focus on spaces (e.g., rooms and corridors) and spatial relationships and not details.

Detail or close-up views are generally unnecessary for an NRPQ.

Note that photographs for an NRPQ may be different for those of a full National Register nomination. The goal for the NRPQ is to convey information for an initial evaluation while the goal for a nomination photograph is to create a durable, historical record of a historically significant place.

*Tip:* Be sure to submit photographs in JPEG or TIFF format only, but note that TIFF format creates larger file sizes and will likely result in multiple uploads. We recommend uploading JPEG format photographs with the NRPQ.

For information on the purpose and content of National Register photographs see [\*Photograph Requirements for National Register Nominations in Michigan\*](#).

#### Research Documentation

Preparers are encouraged to read the National Register Bulletins [\*How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation\*](#) (Bulletin 15), [\*How to Complete the National Register Registration Form\*](#) (Bulletin 16A), [\*Researching a Historic Property\*](#) (Bulletin 39), and other applicable bulletins prior to beginning an NRPQ. As stated in Bulletin 39, “researching a historic property for National Register nomination **differs from researching a property for other purposes. Information collected must be directed at determining the property's historical significance**” [emphasis added]. Significance is determined by evaluating a property in its **historic context** and a property must possess **historic integrity**.

To aid in an accurate and efficient evaluation, an NRPQ should include historical maps, historical photographs (including historical postcards), and historical documentation that supports and illustrates the significance of the property.

When submitting copies of historical materials, be certain to annotate or highlight the relevant items to your application. For example, when submitting a copy of a page from a city directory to show occupancy and use of the property, be certain to highlight the relevant property and information.

Historical maps may include plat maps, Sanborn fire insurance maps, bird's eye views, and any other historical maps that depict the property and its environs.

When no historical maps are available, current maps must note the location of lost resources, additions, features, etc. Likewise, the former and current location of moved resources must also be identified.

Historical photographs may include historical postcards and historical views from newspapers and other publications. Please include as much of the date of the photograph as known in the file name. The preferred format is YYYYMMDD\_File

Name. For example: 19190302\_Smith Hotel, 19360400\_Smith Hotel, or 19100000\_Smith Hotel.

Oftentimes, a series of historical maps or line drawings are needed to accurately convey changes over time. Submit as many maps as is needed to accurately illustrate the history of the property.

Historical newspapers and other periodicals may also be useful in supporting the history and significance of a place. When submitting newspaper articles, it is recommended that the file names be organized consistently and use the following format: YYYYMMDD\_Publication\_Property Name. For example: 19360219\_Bay City Times\_Smith Hotel or 19450200\_Billboard\_Smith Hotel.

## **Upload Documents**

All materials are submitted through the NRPQ portal. Please assemble the identification form, comparable places document, maps, photographs, and any research documentation before beginning, so that everything can be uploaded in one session. This portal does not allow a user to save and return to complete an upload. Partial submissions cannot be accepted.

### File Names

Use underscores to separate the components of a file name. Spaces within a component are acceptable. Do not use other punctuation — no commas, apostrophes, ampersands, parentheses, slashes, or pound signs. The only period should be the one before the file extension, as in nrpqfile.pdf.

For example, a newspaper article is named by date, publication, and property, with underscores between those three components:

19360219\_Bay City Times\_Smith Hotel.pdf

Clear, consistent file names help SHPO staff review the NRPQ efficiently. We suggest naming files so that both the property and the contents are apparent:

Smith Hotel\_Identification Form.pdf  
Smith Hotel\_Comparable Places.pdf  
Smith Hotel\_Maps.pdf

### File Size

Each submission is limited to 30 megabytes (MB) in total. There is no limit on the number of individual files within that 30 MB.

If your materials exceed 30 MB, divide them into groups and submit each group separately. When multiple submissions are needed, enter only the historic name of the property in the Property Information section and attach the next batch of files. Add a note to the file name (e.g., 2 of 3) to indicate the number of batches to be expected.

Tip: Photographs are usually the largest files in an NRPQ package. Submitting photographs in JPEG rather than TIFF format will keep most packages under the 30 MB limit.

#### Photos of Interior/Exterior & Application Attached?

Check this box to confirm that you have attached both your photographs and your completed identification form.

For individual properties such as a house, school, or store, photographs should include both exterior and interior views. Some properties — cemeteries, parks, bridges, and dams, for example — have no interior to photograph; in those cases, exterior and setting views are sufficient and the box may be checked.

#### Map Attached?

Check this box to confirm that you have attached the map or set of maps described under Additional Documentation above.

#### Comparable Places Document Uploaded?

Check this box to confirm that you have attached the separate comparable places document described under Additional Documentation above.

#### File Upload — Application & Formal Documents

Upload all NRPQ materials here: the completed identification form, the comparable places document, maps, photographs, and any research or historical documentation. Use the Browse button or drag your files into the upload area.

#### Send me a copy of my responses

We recommend checking this box. The emailed copy is your record of what you submitted and when.

#### Submit

Once a complete NRPQ is received, it is placed in the queue for review. Incomplete NRPQ are not placed in the queue until all necessary information has been received. SHPO staff will notify the applicant of the outcome by emailed letter.

## If This Is Your First Time

**If you haven't worked with the National Register before, or if it has been a while, read this page before you begin.** It explains what SHPO is evaluating and what you'll need to gather.

### What SHPO is evaluating

Two things: significance and integrity.

A place is **significant** if it is important for one of the reasons the National Register recognizes — an association with historical events or patterns, an association with an important person, its architecture or design, or its potential to yield important archaeological information. Being old or attractive is not by itself significance.

Importance is evaluated against a **historic context**: the larger pattern of history the place belongs to, such as the growth of a particular industry, community, or neighborhood. The **period of significance** is the span of years during which the place gained its importance. The **level of significance** is the geographic scale at which it matters — local, state, or national. Most Michigan places are locally significant. It is also important to note that the level of significance is not a hierarchy or ranking. A place listed at the local level of significance is listed in the National Register just as a place listed at the national level of significance.

A place has **integrity** if it still looks and feels enough like it did during its period of significance to convey that significance. Substantial alteration can disqualify an otherwise important place.

You are not expected to have settled these questions before submitting. Answering them is what the questionnaire is for. But the fields will make more sense if you know that this is what SHPO is asking.

### What you'll need to gather

A complete NRPQ includes a completed identification form, a separate comparable places document, maps, current exterior and interior photographs, and historical documentation. For most people this is a matter of weeks, not an afternoon, and usually involves a visit to a library or archive and some internet research. Assemble everything before you open the portal, which does not save partial work.

### Where to look

Local library local-history rooms, county historical societies, local historic district commissions, the Archives of Michigan, the Library of Michigan, and university archives are some usual starting points. Sanborn fire insurance maps and historical newspapers are widely available online. Please note that deed research is often not needed for an NRPQ or a National Register nomination.

For comparable places, this usually begins with a knowledge of the local area. Connecting with local history experts may also be useful. The National Park Service maintains a searchable database of listed properties, and SHPO can point you toward Michigan survey records and may have other important information.

Common internet sources include Central Michigan University Clarke Historical Library Digital Michigan Newspapers collection, Google Books, Google News Archive, Hathi Trust, Library of Congress Chronicling American digital newspaper collection, and the Library of Congress Sanborn Map Collection. There are many other sources, of course, some paid and some free. What you will need will depend to some extent on the property, its history, and its significance.

When compiling your source material, be sure to consider both the property and the applicable historic context(s).

### What to read first

SHPO recommends that preparers read all relevant guidance provided by the National Park Service (NPS) and SHPO prior to beginning an NRPQ or a nomination. Understanding the requirements of the program from the outset will facilitate an efficient nomination process. Guidance and instructions can be found at the [National Register page of the SHPO website](#) and the [National Park Service National Register website](#).

For this form, the National Register program, and what it all requires, start with the *General Guidance and Requirements for National Register Nominations in Michigan*. National Register Bulletin 15 explains the criteria and is worth reading before you write anything about why the place matters. Bulletins 16A and 39 are more useful at the nomination stage than at this one.

For historic context, start with the broad history of the theme or place. County histories, for example, are a great place to start to learn about the development of a community. Architectural histories are helpful for understanding how styles evolved and when they were prominent.

#### What happens next

SHPO staff will review a complete NRPQ and notify you by emailed letter. If your property is eligible for listing in the National Register, you may choose to continue the nomination process or not. You are not obligated to continue, and you may do so at your own pace. If we evaluate the property as not eligible, we will explain why. If we need more information to complete our evaluation, we will request additional information.

#### A few practical notes

If you are not the property owner, talk with the owner before submitting. Owner consent matters later in the process, and SHPO will be collecting the owner's contact information.

You do not have to hire a consultant to submit an NRPQ. Consultants can be a great benefit and can provide expertise and familiarity with the particular requirements of the National Register program, but the choice to work with one is up to the property owner.

#### Questions

Please contact SHPO with questions at any point. It is often easier to answer a question early than to revise a questionnaire later.