

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION IN HISTORIC PRESERVATION



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Telling Michigan's Full Story

Historic preservation is a way of understanding history through the very places where events happened, and people stood. A place-based program, it provides the framework that enables us to actually experience the sights, sounds, and feelings associated with America's history rather than just reading words in a book.

Historic preservation began in 1858 as a grassroots movement. By the 1960s a number of, mostly White, preservation groups began organizing to protect their neighborhoods from demolition for urban renewal and the federal highway system. However, most of the demolitions associated with these programs targeted "slums," areas where underrepresented populations had been segregated by redlining, racial housing covenants, and discriminatory lending practices resulting in overcrowded living conditions. Since the residents had not yet developed much political power, their rich culture and sense of community were rarely considered and their neighborhoods were demolished.

In 1966, Congress passed the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), which gave the National Park Service (NPS) authority to oversee the establishment of state historic preservation offices (SHPO). The mission of a SHPO is to assist local communities to identify, document, and preserve their historic resources. The NHPA established other preservation programs including the National Register of Historic Places, the list of America's historic places that are worthy of preserving. When the National Register program started, historic resources were identified mainly for their architecture. In the late 1990s, the NPS acknowledged that its preservation programs were not inclusive and did not fully represent the full range of cultural diversity found in America's population. Too often the histories

of underrepresented communities have been marginalized in National Register nominations or completely left out. Since that time, the NPS has been working to broaden the types of nominations that are submitted to the National Register. Today, new emphasis is placed on recognizing historic sites that represent the nation's ethnic heritage and social history. Through its *Telling All Americans' Stories* initiative, the NPS has published theme studies that will make it easier for underrepresented communities to list their resources in the National Register and recognize the places that are important to their histories. <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/tellingallamericansstories/>. Congress enacted legislation in 1996 establishing Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPO) to assist in the identification and preservation of Native American cultural heritage. Twelve federally recognized Tribes in Michigan have THPOs. A contact list is available on SHPO website at www.michigan.gov/shpo.

How Can Historic Preservation Benefit Underrepresented Communities?

- Honoring significant places associated with their heritage is validating and inspirational to younger generations.
- Historic resources can enhance teaching and education programs or be used in cultural tourism initiatives.
- Designated historic sites often receive special consideration in local, state, and federal agency planning efforts.
- Listing a resource in the National Register of Historic Places is often a requirement for application to preservation grant and incentive programs.

Photo: The Birwood Wall in northwest Detroit was built in 1941 to separate a newly constructed White neighborhood from an existing Black one to enable the developer to qualify for federal loans. The six-foot high, half-mile long concrete wall is a symbol of racial housing segregation, which was as common in Northern cities as it was in the South.

Historic Preservation Programs

The Michigan SHPO is committed to recognizing the history of the state's underrepresented communities, growing the number of diverse nominations submitted to the National Register, and connecting individuals, non-profits, and local groups with preservation incentives and resources. The SHPO provides guidance to all communities interested in identifying, designating, reusing, and protecting their historic resources. To learn more visit www.michigan.gov/shpo.

Historic Resource Survey. Identifying significant historic places is the first step in any preservation program. A reconnaissance survey is a "quick look" at properties to document their basic character and condition.

National Register of Historic Places. The nation's official list of significant historic resources, this honorary designation raises awareness but provides no protection. Listing is typically a requirement for property owners to utilize preservation tax incentives and grant programs. The National Register criteria are the foundation of most historic preservation programs. <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/publications.htm>

Local Historic Districts. Public Act 169 of 1970 enables legal protection of historic resources through local historic district ordinances. A community with a historic district ordinance can apply to become a **Certified Local Government (CLG)**, a program that offers special services and grants.

Preservation Tax Incentives. Federal tax credits are available to qualifying historic resources for commercial rehabilitation projects. Michigan's new state tax credit, established in 2020, can be used for the rehabilitation of both residential and commercial properties. Work completed using these incentives must meet the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. <https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/rehabilitation/rehab/stand.htm>

Cultural Resource Management (CRM). Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 requires a review when federal funding, licensing or other actions are part of a project in order to determine how it will affect eligible historic resources. CRM includes the state's **Archaeology** program that documents and protects over 14,000 years of heritage.

The Michigan Civil Rights Project

In 2016, the SHPO received an NPS African American Civil Rights (AACR) grant to identify twentieth century African American Civil Rights sites in Detroit. The Civil Rights Project was expanded to include all of Michigan when the SHPO received NPS AACR grants to identify Civil Rights sites in Muskegon County and in the city of Inkster.

Between 2016 and 2021 Michigan projects received more than \$3.5 million in federal Civil Rights grants, of which the SHPO directly received \$694,500. For a summary table of the Michigan projects and information on the SHPO's Civil Rights project visit the SHPO's Civil Rights web page at www.michigan.gov/shpo.

Underrepresented Communities Grants

For more information on **National Park Service (NPS)** underrepresented community grants visit the Historic Preservation Fund website at <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/historicpreservationfund/index.htm>. For a complete list of available federal grants visit <https://www.grants.gov/>.

Underrepresented Communities Grants (URC), NPS https://www.nps.gov/subjects/historicpreservationfund/underrepresented-community-grants.htm	Grants for historic resource survey and National Register nominations for African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans, Native Americans, women, and LGBTQ Americans. Up to \$50,000. No match required.
History of Equal Rights Preservation Grants (HER), NPS https://www.nps.gov/subjects/historicpreservationfund/history-of-equal-rights.htm	Grants fund the physical rehabilitation of sites related to all people who struggle to achieve equal rights in America. Planning & pre-preservation work grants range from \$15,000 to \$50,000. Rehabilitation work grants range from \$75,000 to \$500,000. No match required.
African American Civil Rights Grants (AACR), NPS https://www.nps.gov/subjects/historicpreservationfund/african-american-civil-rights.htm	Limited to 19 th & 20 th century African American Civil Rights sites, the grant funds survey, National Register nominations, oral histories, and rehabilitation projects. \$15,000 to \$50,000 for history projects. \$50,000 to \$500,000 for rehabilitation work. No match required.
Tribal Heritage Grants, NPS https://www.nps.gov/subjects/historicpreservationfund/tribal-heritage-grants.htm	The grant program was authorized in 1996 to fund projects that preserve the history and cultural traditions of Native Americans. Twelve recognized Tribes in Michigan have designated THPOs, the first point of contact for these grants..
Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), NPS https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nagpra/grants.htm	This grant funds consultation/documentation and repatriation grants. Grants are available to museums and Tribes.
African American Culture Heritage Action Fund, National Trust https://savingplaces.org/african-american-cultural-heritage#_YVMM-fKhPY	The National Trust for Historic Preservation is a preservation non-profit organization. These grants preserve sites associated with African American activism, achievement, and resilience. No match is required.
Telling the Full History Fund, National Trust https://forum.savingplaces.org/build/funding/grant-seekers/specialprograms/tellingthefullhistoryfund	Funds are available for interpretation programs, National Register nominations, pre-planning activities for preservation projects, and preservation training workshops. Grants range from \$25,000 to \$50,000. No match required.