

HERITAGE BULLETIN

Tips, Ideas & More to Help Preserve Oregon's Heritage

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NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICTS

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A historic district is an area or neighborhood that has a concentration of buildings and associated landscape and streetscape features (50 years or older) that retain a high degree of historic character and integrity, and represent an important aspect of an area's history.

What is required for documenting a historic district?

A historic district is treated as one property by the National Register. A district nomination is prepared using the same National Register Bulletins (instructions), form and continuation sheets that one would use to document an individual property, and processed in generally the same manner as an individual property, but there are some additional considerations:

Survey documentation is required for proposed districts. This involves photographing and describing all buildings and related features in the district, recording their basic characteristics, and assessing whether or not they contribute to the historic character of the district. Contributing properties retain and exhibit sufficient integrity (materials, design, setting) to convey a sense of history. In those cases where a jurisdiction already has an updated survey of the proposed district area, a list of the buildings that includes their addresses, pertinent descriptive information, and contributing status may be substituted for detailed survey information.

A historical overview of the entire district based on the survey of the district, the individual property histories, and other local history information is required. This narrative statement of significance provides a basic background history of the area and justifies the significance of the district.

A historic district is an area that has a high concentration of buildings and landscape and streetscape features that:

- *retain a high degree of historic integrity and*
- *represent an important aspect of the area's history.*

Please contact the staff of the Oregon National Register program for more information on how to document potential historic districts.



The National Register requires a map showing the boundaries of the district and each building and structure in the district, with the contributing properties distinguished from the non-contributing properties. Mapping requirements are described in more detailed in National Register Bulletin #16A, “How to Complete the National Register Registration Form.” Having a map completed early in the process will often help in determining district boundaries, since you can see at a glance where the contributing buildings are concentrated.

What are the implications of historic district designation?

One of the primary benefits of National Register designation is the fostering of community awareness and pride in one’s heritage and the neighborhood. Designation tends to help stabilize a neighborhood, stimulate increased owner-occupancy by making it a more distinct and desirable place to live and work, and generate increased property values as buildings are rehabilitated. These beneficial effects vary, of course, depending on the area and the economy at the time. Overall, however, historic district designation has produced positive results both in Oregon and throughout the country.

Historic designation provides financial benefits for qualifying properties. Under provisions of the Economic Recovery Tax Act, owners of listed properties may qualify for a 20% investment tax credit for the certified rehabilitation of income-producing property such as commercial, industrial, or rental residential buildings. In Oregon, under state law, owners of listed properties may apply for a property tax benefit – a “freeze” of the assessed value of the property for a 10-year period, provided the property is in need of rehabilitation. There are also limited funds available annually on a competitive basis to owners of listed properties through the Oregon SHPO’s Preserving Oregon grant program. In historic districts, these financial incentives are only available to contributing properties in the district. If your house is considered non-contributing, you still have to comply with the local preservation ordinance, even though you do not qualify for the financial benefits mentioned above.

Buildings listed in the National Register can be given more leniency in complying with building code requirements in order to protect the qualities of the historic resource. They can often qualify more easily for

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There are no restrictions imposed by federal or state regulations on private property owners in a historic district, provided the property is not benefitting from state or federal grants or tax incentives. money.

conditional use permits or other code exemptions or variances. Restrictions and controls in a historic district are set forth by the local jurisdiction. Contact your local planning office for a copy of its preservation ordinance and for details about any regulations that may be imposed on district property owners. There are no restrictions imposed by federal or state regulations on private property owners in a historic district, provided the property is not benefiting from federal money through federally funded projects or tax incentive programs.

Can a property owner object to a listing?

Owners of private property within a proposed historic district may object to the listing by submitting to the SHPO a notarized statement certifying that the party is the sole or partial owner of the property and objects to the listing. The National Register will not list a district if the majority of property owners object.

Each owner of private property in a district has one “vote” regardless of how many properties or what part of the one property that party owns and regardless of whether the property contributes to the significance of the district. An owner is defined as an entity (individual, partnership, corporation or public agency) holding fee simple title to property. The right to object is described more fully in the federal regulations governing the National Register program, 36 CFR 60.6.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

State Historic Preservation Office
 Oregon Parks and Recreation Department
 725 Summer Street, N.E., Suite C
 Salem, OR 97301

Oregon SHPO website: www.oregonheritage.org
 National Register website: www.cr.nps.gov/nr/index.htm

For general information about the National Register of Historic Places, contact Kimarie Lamb, Heritage Programs Administrative Specialist, at 503-986-0690.

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