

HERITAGE BULLETIN

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

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PLANNING A NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT

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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.



Palmer Brothers Building, Baker County

What is required for documenting an 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 the area's 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 new survey information.

An historical overview of the entire district based on the survey of the district, its history, and its architectural and urban design character is required. This narrative historic context statement provides a basic background history of the area and justifies the significance of the district.

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 detail in National Register Bulletin #16A, "How to Complete the National Register Registration Form." Having the properties mapped early in the process will often help determine district boundaries, since concentrations of contributing buildings can be seen at a glance.

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





Oak Hills Historic District, Washington County

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 percent investment tax credit for the certified rehabilitation of income-producing property such as commercial, industrial, or rental residential buildings.

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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 will be rehabilitated. 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 building is considered non-contributing, you must still comply with local preservation ordinances, even though you do not qualify for the financial benefits mentioned above.

may often qualify more easily for conditional use permits or other code exemptions or variances.

Buildings listed in the National Register may be given more leniency in complying with building code requirements in order to protect their historic qualities. Listed buildings

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.

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 in place for property owners in historic districts. 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 a property. The right to object is described more fully in the federal regulations governing the National Register program, 36 CFR 60.6.



Irvington Historic District, Multnomah County

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Salem Pioneer Cemetery, Marion County

To learn more about planning an outreach process for creating National Register historic districts, see [Heritage Bulletin 26: Outreach for National Register Historic Districts](#). To learn more about the National Register, see [Heritage Bulletin 4: National Register of Historic Places](#). And to learn more about the benefits of being listed in a National Register historic district, see [Heritage Bulletin 5: National Register Benefits and Restrictions](#).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

State Historic Preservation Office

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

Oregon Heritage website: www.oregonheritage.org

National Register website: www.nps.gov/nr

For **general information** about the National Register of Historic Places, contact Tracy Zeller by calling (503) 986-0690 or by emailing tracy.zeller@oregon.gov.

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