

# Planning a National Register Historic District

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 an historic district?

A district nomination is prepared using the same National Register Bulletins (instructions) and nomination form that one would use to document an individual property, but there are some additional considerations.



Palmer Brothers Building, Baker County

**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

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

concentrations of contributing buildings can be seen at a glance.

## 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,



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[www.OregonHeritage.org](http://www.OregonHeritage.org)

[oregon.heritage@opr.d.oregon.gov](mailto:oregon.heritage@opr.d.oregon.gov)

(503) 986-0690

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.



*Oak Hills Historic District,  
Washington County*

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. In Oregon, under state law, owners of listed properties may apply for a property tax benefit

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– a special assessment 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.**

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

Owners of properties listed in the National Register choosing to take advantage of federal and state tax benefits and grant programs must comply with federal standards. Oregon State law requires local governments to review proposals to demolish or relocate properties listed in the National Register. Local governments have the authority to form local historic districts and landmarks, and may also create additional protections for properties listed in the National Register through a separate local process.

To find out more about how your local government may regulate National Register listed properties, contact your local planning office.

### **Can a property owner object to a listing?**

Private property owners holding fee

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simple absolute or fee simple defeasible estate title to real property within the historic district may object to listing a district in the National Register by submitting a statement during the public comment period on a form provided by the SHPO. The proposed district will not be listed if a majority of the property owners object.



*Irvington Historic District,  
Multnomah County*

Each owner of private property in a district has one opportunity to object regardless of how many properties or what part of the one property they own, and regardless of whether the property contributes to the historic significance of the proposed district.



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Each owner of private property in a district has one opportunity to object regardless of how many properties or what part of the one property that individual owns, and regardless of whether the property contributes to the historic significance of the proposed district.

and Oregon Administrative Rules 736-050-0250.

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](#).

An owner is a person possessing fee simple or fee simple defeasible estate title to real property within the district, including, but not limited to, trusts, limited liability corporations, and any other legal entity that can hold fee simple absolute or fee simple defeasible title to real property within the State of Oregon. Per federal rules, objections by divisions of government, including schools and fire districts are not counted toward the total needed to prevent listing a district in the National Register.



*Salem Pioneer Cemetery, Marion County*

The opportunity to object is described more fully in the federal regulations (Chapter 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Section 60)

### Additional Information

- State Historic Preservation Office, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department  
725 Summer Street NE, Suite C  
Salem, Oregon 97301
- Oregon Heritage website:  
[www.oregonheritage.org](http://www.oregonheritage.org)
- National Register website:  
[www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister](http://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister)
- For general information about the National Register of Historic Places contact Kellie Mingus:  
(503) 986-0690  
[kellie.mingus@oprds.oregon.gov](mailto:kellie.mingus@oprds.oregon.gov)
- National Register Program Staff:  
Robert Olguin, National Register Program Coordinator  
(503) 602-2468  
[Robert.Olguin@oprds.oregon.gov](mailto:Robert.Olguin@oprds.oregon.gov)



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