Heritage Bulletin

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

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Outreach for National Register Historic Districts

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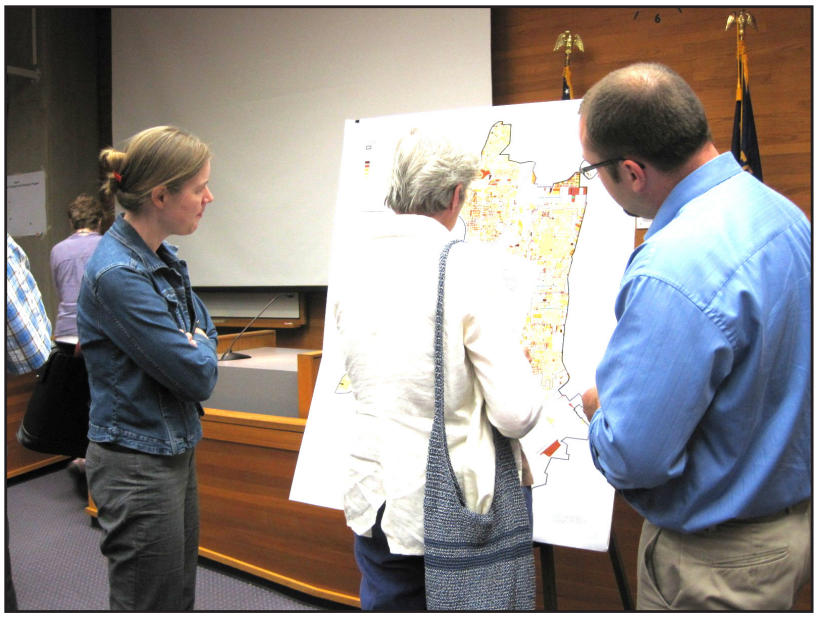
Creating a National Register historic district involves gathering information about the history and appearance of your community, neighborhood or downtown, and using this documentation to assess its eligibility and begin writing a National Register nomination. At the same time, to ensure that the process is successful, it is equally important to develop a community outreach program that will, from the beginning, engage your neighbors in the planning process.



Benefits of a district

The benefits of creating a National Register historic district include eligibility for tax benefit programs and grants. The listing process can bring a neighborhood together and have a positive effect on its identity and self-image. An unsuccessful process can result in contention within a community or neighborhood and costly delays in the nomination process. For these reasons, it is important to craft an effective outreach program and engage the public and partners from the beginning.

Talk to the city or county

Listing is honorific. 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, please contact the local planning office.

Talk to the State Historic Preservation Office

The National Register listing process is administered by the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) on behalf of the National Park Service. The SHPO works directly with historic district proponents, providing advice and guidance for evaluating a district and preparing a nomination. The SHPO can help district proponents plan an effective outreach process, which is critical for a successful nomination. The SHPO is also available to provide information to opponents about objecting to National Register listing, according to National Park Serice guidelines. The process of planning a historic district, from developing an outreach plan to conducting a survey and developing the nomination, can take several years, hundreds of volunteer hours, and possibly require funding for a professional consultant. To ensure a successful outcome, it is important to consult the SHPO early in the planning process.

Get the word out

Begin planning for a historic district by holding an informational meeting or open house for neighborhood residents and/or business owners. This can help gauge the community's interest in a potential district. An informational meeting can also educate the public about the pros and cons of adopting a historic district, provide information about the steps involved, and explain the public process. This will help build support for the district. Correspondingly, an informational meeting may also help ensure that the planning process closely reflects community goals.

There are many ways to get the word out, and communities should consider which are most appropriate for them. Below are some questions to help develop an outreach plan tailored to your neighborhood.

- Are your supporters media savvy internet users? A listserv is a good way to keep everyone informed about the planning process. A webpage or blog can also provide information on the process, and include links to additional resources. A Facebook page allows community members to post their own comments and concerns.
- Is there a community newspaper that many residents read? Placing feature articles and posting news items in newspapers may also be an effective way to reach the neighborhood. If there is not a widely read local newspaper, consider creating a newsletter.
- Do many people walk in your neighborhood? Is there a community bulletin board? Creating and posting flyers may also be a good way to advertise meetings. Flyers may also be distributed door-to-door.
- Do your community members prefer to get notices by mail? Postcards can be a good way to advertise meetings and other events and keep people informed.
- What about radio or TV? Is there a cable or public access channel that serves the community? Taped interviews and other informational programs can reach local audiences.
- Is your community engaged in local activities and events? Information about the historic district planning process can be provided at farmers markets, fairs, school activities, and public meetings.
- Do you need to gauge community support? At a key point in the process it may be helpful to conduct an opinion survey to gauge support, either online, by mail, or in person.

Raise awareness of your community's history

Another strategy for planning a historic district is to raise awareness of your community's history, architecture and landmarks. Activities that promote historic preservation can also help build support for your historic district. Goals here are to learn more about the neighborhood and actively engage the community.

- Create or sponsor a walking tour, either a digital tour or paper brochure.
- Place interviews with local historians or profiles of long-time residents in the newspaper, on social media outlets, or on local public access TV channels.
- Create features on local history with historic photos or "then and now" photos.
- Publish reprints of older newspaper articles on key events.
- Create a speakers bureau, featuring engaging and informed speakers.
- Develop or sponsor workshops on building rehabilitation and related issues.
- Sponsor lectures on topics of local interest.
- Create an exhibit about the neighborhood that can be displayed at places like the local library, community center, or city hall.
- Create a traveling exhibit about the neighborhood and the planning process that can "go on the road" to local community events.

Create relationships with other organizations

Other organizations can assist with planning and/or promoting a historic district. Possibilities include a local advocacy group, a neighborhood or homeowner's association, and/or a local historical society. These relationships can be important in the planning process and on an on-going basis.

Additional tips and ideas

- Publicize every step in the planning process and celebrate successes (remember to write press releases!).
- Invite advocates to meetings, such as city staff, elected officials, SHPO staff, or representatives of the local non-profit historic advocacy group.
- Hold meetings in a neutral, easily accessible location.
- Create a Frequently Asked Questions or "Top Ten Myths" piece about historic districts to distribute along with other information about your planning process.
- Create comment cards to distribute at meetings, so those who do not want to speak in public can submit comments later.
- Make information about the process multi-lingual, if this is relevant.

To learn more about the National Register, see **Heritage Bulletin 4: National Register of Historic Places**. To learn more about the benefits of being listed in a National Register historic district, see **Heritage Bulletin 5: National Register Benefits and Restrictions**. And for guidance on the technical process of developing a National Register historic district, see **Heritage Bulletin 6: Planning a National Register Historic District**. For additional help with outreach planning see **Heritage Bulletin 2: How to Spread the News**.

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 Collis by calling (503) 986-0690 or by emailing **tracy.collis@oregon.gov**.

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