



Oregon

Theodore R. Kulongoski, Governor

Parks and Recreation Department

State Historic Preservation Office

725 Summer St. NE, Suite C

Salem, OR 97301-1266

(503) 986-0707

FAX (503) 986-0793

www.hcd.state.or.us



Siskiyou Smokejumper Base, Josephine County

Common Questions Regarding National Register Historic Districts

What is the National Register of Historic Places?

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of historically significant buildings, structures, sites, objects, and districts that are considered worthy of preservation by the Secretary of the Interior. The National Register is part of a nation-wide program that supports public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect our historic and archaeological resources. The register is maintained by the National Park Service and administered by the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). A Governor appointed advisory body, known as the State Advisory Commission on Historic Preservation aids Oregon SHPO in evaluating nominations to the National Register and vote to recommend nominations to the National Park Service for official listing.

What is a National Register Historic District?

A National Register Historic District is an area or neighborhood that has a concentration of buildings, sites, and/or objects united historically by plan, association, architecture, or physical development. Districts may represent an important aspect in history locally, regionally, or nationally.

How does a Historic District get listed in the National Register of Historic Places?

The first step in creating a Historic District is to complete an extensive survey of the area. In-depth research is conducted to determine building dates, original occupants, and early uses of the property. The survey is then evaluated to determine the District's boundaries. This material is then condensed and compiled on a National Register nomination form that also describes the overall history of the area, details on individual resources, reasons why the area is significant, maps, and photographs. Once completed, the nomination is forwarded to the Oregon SHPO in Salem, Oregon. The SHPO staff and the State Advisory Committee on Historic Preservation then review the nomination. If the State Advisory Committee approves the nomination and a majority of the property owners within the District boundaries do not object to the listing, then the State Historic Preservation Officer signs the nomination and forwards it to the Keeper of the National Register in Washington, D.C. who makes the final determination.

How long can the listing process take?

The entire process usually takes nine months to a year to complete.



Are all individual properties within the District considered of equal significance?

No. Properties are classified within a Historic District according to their building date, physical integrity, and the period of significance. Each one of the properties within the District is assigned one of the following classifications:

- Contributing: A property that retains and exhibits sufficient integrity (materials, designs, and setting) to convey a sense of history.
- Historic Non-Contributing: A property which dates from the District's historic period of significance but has been altered extensively and does not convey the sense of history in its present state. Properties in this category have the potential to be "upgraded" to contributing status if the incompatible alterations are reversed. They also include buildings that lie outside of the period of significance and do not meet the "50" year rule.

What are the benefits of listing a property or District on the National Register?

Federal and state financial incentives have been developed to encourage National Register property owners to preserve these significant historic resources. Less tangible benefits include neighborhood and community pride, economic development as a result of heritage tourism and a strong community foundation, and special recognition and attention. In the State of Oregon, properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places or contributing properties in a Historic District can be considered for:

- The Federal Investment Tax Credit (ITCs) program for income producing properties (20% tax credit);
- Consideration in the planning for federal projects that might impact historic properties or Districts. These projects, however, must use federal funds, require federal licenses or permits for the impacts to be evaluated;
- Waivers of certain normal building code requirements (UBC Section 3403.5) in the interest of preserving the integrity of the historic property.
- Eligibility for the Preserving Oregon Grant Program.

Will the District restrict my legal ownership of my property or my ability to sell it?

No. The District does not affect in any way the legal ownership or selling of the property.

Is a Historic District a taxing district?

No. A historic district is not a taxing district like a school or recreation district. A historic district might more appropriately be called a "historic" area or zone. The District does not have the power to levy taxes or assessments.

Will property owners be required to rehabilitate their buildings?

No. There is no requirement that a building within a historic district be rehabilitated. Only property owners who choose to take advantage of State and Federal tax programs are required to rehabilitate their buildings.

If I want to make exterior changes to my building within the District, will the alterations have to be reviewed by the Oregon SHPO?

No. The property owners of National Register buildings are under no obligation to have the State or Federal government review alterations to their individual properties. However, if the property owner takes advantage of any State or Federal historic preservation tax incentive programs, the State and Federal agencies would review the planned project. In Oregon, however, local jurisdictions are required to review alterations to historic buildings. Consult your local planning official to determine the nature and extent of those regulations.

Can I build on my vacant property within the District?

Yes. The District does not restrict use of the property. Depending upon your jurisdiction, however, new construction may be reviewed for design compatibility. Again, consult with your local planning official to determine the nature and extent of that review.



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