

# FAQs about the National Register and State Register of Historic Places

Property owners often have questions about what happens when a property is listed in the State Register of Historic Places and the National Register of Historic Places. These are some of the most frequently asked questions about any benefits or regulations on private or public property listed in the National Register and State Register of Historic Places. If you have other questions, please contact Peggy Veregin, Wisconsin's National Register Coordinator, at 608-264-6501 or [peggy.veregin@wisconsinhistory.org](mailto:peggy.veregin@wisconsinhistory.org).

## **What are the National Register of Historic Places and the State Register of Historic Places?**

The National Register is the official national list of historic properties in America worthy of preservation. It is maintained by the National Park Service in the U.S. Department of the Interior. The State Register is Wisconsin's official listing of state properties determined to be significant to Wisconsin's heritage and is maintained by the Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office at the Wisconsin Historical Society. Both the National Register and State Register include sites, buildings, structures, objects and districts that are significant in national, state or local history, architecture, archaeology, engineering and culture.

## **How are properties nominated to the State Register and the National Register?**

One process is used to nominate properties to both registers at the same time. Generally, the nomination process requires two steps:

1. Submission of a preliminary Questionnaire that provides basic information about the property for the State Historic Preservation Office staff to determine if the property appears to be eligible for listing in the State and National Registers.
2. Submission of a National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form that is completed according to state and federal standards. Any person or organization may nominate properties to the registers, but because it is a complex process, private consultants are often hired. The owner of the property is informed of the nomination.

## **How much time does it take to nominate a property to the registers?**

The length of time depends on many factors including the type of property and its location. The nominator must research and photograph the property and complete and submit the required forms. Historic Preservation staff review the nomination forms and schedule the property for review and approval by the State Historic Preservation Review Board, which meets quarterly. State Register nominations are approved at the state level by the review board. National Register nominations approved by the State Historic Preservation Review Board are forwarded to the National Park Service in Washington, D.C. for final approval. The process can take about one and a half years.

**If my private property, such as my home, is listed in the State Register and the National Register, am I restricted in what I can do with the property?**

No.

**What does "contributing or non-contributing property to a historic district" mean?**

A National Register or State Register historic district listing includes the individual properties within that district. The individual properties are classified as either contributing or non-contributing.

- A contributing classification means the property adds to the historic association, architectural importance or archaeological value for which the district is important. It must have been present during the district's historic period and must physically retain the features representing that era. The property can be a building, structure, site or object.
- A non-contributing classification means the property is most likely newer or altered, and has lost many of its historic features.

**Am I required to restore or preserve my private property if it is listed in the State Register and the National Register?**

No. Of course, because the property is historically significant, you are encouraged to preserve it.

**Do I automatically receive funds or other financial assistance when my property is listed in the registers?**

No. However, an owner of a listed property is eligible to apply for [state or federal income tax credits](#) for the rehabilitation of the historic property.

**Is the property protected from demolition because it is listed in the registers?**

No. Listing a property in the registers does not automatically protect it from demolition or other alterations. However, listing a property in the registers does trigger state and federal preservation laws that require federal, state and local government agencies to take into consideration the effect of their plans or projects on the listed property.

**What are the benefits of having a property listed in the National Register and the State Register?**

The principal benefit is the knowledge that you are helping to preserve your local, state and national heritage. The state and federal governments provide several more tangible benefits:

- Eligibility for [state and federal income tax](#) credits for rehabilitating listed historic properties
- Eligibility for federal grants, when available

- Consideration in the planning of [federally assisted and state assisted projects](#), as well as projects of local governments and school boards, when those projects affect the property
- Eligibility to use the state's Historic Building Code, which may facilitate rehabilitation
- Qualification for state and federal charitable income tax deductions for the donation of historic preservation easements
- Eligibility for official State Register of Historic Places plaques

**What are the disadvantages of having a property listed in the National Register and State Register?**

Listing a property in the registers does not impose restrictions on the private property owner. The private owner is free to sell, alter or demolish the property. Of course, if the property owner is utilizing any federal or state funding or assistance, the proposed project is reviewed to ensure that the historic values of the property are taken into consideration.

**Do I automatically receive a plaque to place on my property when it is listed?**

No, but you may purchase an official State Register of Historic Places plaque or other appropriate plaques of your choosing.

**If the property is owned by the local or state government and is listed in the State Register and the National Register, are there any special responsibilities for state agencies and local governments?**

Yes. Because these are publicly owned historic properties, the state agencies or local governments, including school boards, must [consult with the State Historic Preservation Officer](#) at the Wisconsin Historical Society regarding any plans or proposed actions that will affect any listed property. The State Historic Preservation Officer may require negotiations to reduce or avoid adverse effects to the property.

Please note that the state and federal historic preservation programs involve a number of statutes, regulations, rules and guidelines. For further information or details about these preservation programs contact Chip Brown by phone at 608-264-6508 or [chip.brown@wisconsinhistory.org](mailto:chip.brown@wisconsinhistory.org). Local historic preservation programs are often established by local government ordinances, and property owners are advised to contact their local governments for information about local regulations.