



---

## **Frequently Asked Questions about the State and National Registers of Historic Places in New York State**

***What are the State and National Registers of Historic Places?*** The State and National Registers are the official lists of properties significant in history, architecture, engineering, landscape design, archeology, and culture. Properties may be significant in local, state and/or national contexts. More than 120,000 properties in New York have received this prestigious recognition.

***What qualifies a property for listing on the registers?*** The registers recognize all aspects of New York's diverse history and culture. Eligible properties must represent a significant historic theme (e.g., architecture, agriculture, industry, transportation) and they must be intact enough to illustrate their association with that theme. Properties must usually be more than 50 years of age to be considered for listing.

***What are the benefits of being listed on the registers?*** The State and National Registers are a recognized and visible component of public and private planning. The registers promote heritage tourism, economic development and appreciation of historic resources. Benefits include:

- Official recognition that a property is significant to the nation, the state, or the local community.
- Eligibility to apply for the state homeowner tax credit and/or the state and federal commercial historic rehabilitation tax credits.
- Eligibility (not-for-profit organizations and municipalities only) to apply for New York State historic preservation grants. Other grants, also requiring listing, may be available through other public and private sources.
- Properties that meet the criteria for registers listing receive a measure of protection from state and federal undertakings regardless of their listing status. State and federal agencies must consult with the SHPO to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects to listed or eligible properties.

***Will State and National Registers listing restrict the use of a property?*** If you are not using *federal or state funds* to complete your project (e.g. a grant or tax credit, CD funds, a Main Street Grant) and you do not require a *state or federal permit* to undertake it (e.g. DEC permit) , you are free to remodel, alter, paint, manage, subdivide, sell, or even demolish a National or State Register listed property (as long as you comply with local zoning). If state or federal funds are used or if a state or federal permit is required, proposed alterations may be reviewed by SHPO staff if the property is either listed or determined eligible for listing.

***What kinds of properties can be included in the registers?*** Buildings and structures such as residences, churches, commercial buildings and bridges; sites such as cemeteries, landscapes and archaeological sites; districts, including groups of buildings, structures or sites that are significant as a whole, such as farmsteads, residential neighborhoods, industrial complexes and cultural landscapes; and objects, such as fountains and monuments.

***What is a historic district?*** A historic district is a group of buildings, structures, and sites that are significant for their historical and physical relationships to each other. Properties in districts are not usually significant individually but gain meaning from their proximity and association with each other. A district may include any number of properties.

***What is the process for listing a property on the registers?*** To begin, an application must be submitted to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) for evaluation. If the property is determined eligible for listing, the nomination sponsor is responsible for providing documentation that describes the property's setting and physical characteristics, documents its history, conveys its significance in terms of its historic context, and demonstrates how it meets the register criteria. The New York State Board for Historic Preservation reviews completed nominations. If the board recommends the nomination, the New York State Historic Preservation Officer (Commissioner of the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation) lists the property on the State Register and forwards it to the National Park Service for review and listing on the National Register.

***Can an owner object to having his or her property listed on the registers?*** Yes. Private property owners may object to National Register listing. If the property has *one owner*, that owner's objection will prevent the listing. If the property has *multiple owners*, the *majority* of the owners must object in order to prevent listing. For properties with multiple owners, such as districts, objections only count toward the listing of the district as a whole. No one owner can exempt himself or herself from listing in a district by means of an objection. Although the State Register does not recognize owner objections, it is the policy of the SHPO to avoid listings with significant objections and to work with nomination sponsors and communities to provide information and education about the registers program.

***How long does it take to get a property listed?*** The length of time required for the preparation and review of an individual nomination is typically six to twelve months, depending on the quality of the application and staff workloads. Historic districts generally require at least a year to account for their greater complexity and the additional need for public comment.

***How do the State and National Registers differ from local landmark designation?*** State and National Registers listing should not be confused with local landmark designation. Many communities have enacted local landmark ordinances that establish commissions with the authority to review proposed work on locally designated properties. These commissions are established and operated independently from the State and National Registers, which do not regulate the actions of private property owners unless state or federal funds are used or a state or federal permit is required. National Register listing does not automatically lead to local landmark designation, and local districts often differ from those listed on the registers.

***Must owners of listed buildings open their buildings to the public?*** No. There is absolutely no requirement to open register-listed properties to the public.

***Will a property owner be able to leave his property to his children or anyone else he/she wishes?*** Yes. Listing on the registers in no way affects the transfer of property from one owner to another.

***Will listing on the State and National Registers, either individually or in a historic district, affect local property taxes or zoning?*** No. Listing has no direct bearing on any of these local actions.

***How can an owner get a State and National Registers plaque to display on his or her building?*** Although the SHPO does not provide plaques, a list of manufacturers is available upon request.

***How does listing protect a building and its surroundings?*** The registers are a valuable tool in the planning of publicly funded, licensed or permitted projects. Government agencies are responsible for avoiding or reducing the effects of projects on properties that are eligible for or listed on the registers. Listing raises awareness of the significance of properties, helping to ensure that preservation issues are considered early and effectively in the planning process.

***Where can I find out more about the State and National Registers?*** Contact the Division for Historic Preservation at (518) 237-8643, visit our website at [www.nysparks.state.ny.us/shpo/register/index.htm](http://www.nysparks.state.ny.us/shpo/register/index.htm) or see the National Park Service website at [www.nps.gov/history/nr/](http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/).



---

## **National and State Registers Criteria for Evaluation**

The following criteria are used to evaluate properties (other than areas of the National Park Service and National Historic Landmarks) for listing on the National and State Registers of Historic Places.

The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association and

- A. that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. that are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C. that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Ordinarily cemeteries, birthplaces, or graves of historical figures, properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes, structures that have been moved from their original locations, reconstructed historic buildings, properties primarily commemorative in nature, and properties that have achieved significance within the past 50 years shall not be considered eligible for the State and National Registers. However, such properties will qualify if they are integral parts of districts that do meet the criteria or if they fall within the following categories:

- A. a religious property deriving primary significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance; or
- B. a building or structure removed from its original location but which is significant primarily for architectural value, or which is the surviving structure most importantly associated with a historic person or event; or
- C. a birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance if there is no other appropriate site or building directly associated with his productive life; or
- D. a cemetery that derives its primary significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, from age, from distinctive design features, or from association with historic events; or
- E. a reconstructed building when accurately executed in a suitable environment and presented as part of a restoration master plan, and when no other building or structure with the same association has survived; or
- F. a property primarily commemorative in intent if design, age, tradition, or symbolic value has invested it with its own historical significance; or
- G. a property achieving significance within the past 50 years if it is of exceptional importance.