

## A historic district is a particularly special place!

These neighborhoods or areas have a concentration of historic buildings (50 years or older). These buildings still have their architectural integrity, and they represent an important aspect of a place's history.

State History can provide guidance for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places.

A local community can also designate its own historic districts. A property can be listed on both the National Register and on a local register.

## What are the implications of historic district designation?

National Register designation can certainly increase neighborhood pride.

But there may be financial benefits as well. Building owners may also be able to get tax credits for rehabilitating properties listed on the Register.

Contrary to popular belief, National Register listing does not restrict property owners in any way. Property owners and developers keep their rights to alter, demolish, or preserve their buildings as they see fit.

## What is required for designating a historic district?

Documentation within the Reconnaissance Level Survey is required for all proposed districts. This involves:

- photographing and mapping all buildings in the district,
- recording their basic characteristics (such as style, materials, plan, and estimated age), and
- assessing whether or not they contribute to the historic character of the district.

Professional architectural historians must conduct these surveys, usually at the direction of a Certified Local Government. We will enter the information collected into our Historic Sites Database.

**A map.** Show the boundaries of the district and location of each building in the district. Shade the contributing buildings to distinguish them from the noncontributing buildings. The reconnaissance survey will generate this type of map.

Having the map completed early in the process will often help you determine district boundaries, since you can see at a glance where the concentrations of contributing buildings are.

**Historical research.** We recommend that you research each of the “contributing” buildings in the district, following our Intensive Level Survey guidelines

If it is impractical to research all of the contributing buildings, then you should at least research a reasonable sample of buildings in the district. Include buildings that represent the various periods of construction, architectural styles, and historic themes embodied by the district.

**An historical overview of the entire district.** Base the overview on the architectural survey of the district (reconnaissance survey), the individual building histories (intensive level surveys), and other local historic information.

The purpose of the overview is (1) to provide a basic background history of the area and (2) to justify the significance of the district. You must prove that this neighborhood significantly represents the community’s past in order to qualify it for listing on the National Register.

Use a **National Register** form for nominations. We recommend that cities use the same or a similar form for local register districts.

## What about local registers?

Cities can designate their own local historical registers. Although listing on the National Register does not tie an owner’s hands in any way, listing on a local register might impose restrictions and controls on what an owner can do with his or her building.

Most smaller cities have few if any restrictions or regulations regarding their historic districts. Some cities require pre-approval by their historic preservation commissions (or “landmark committees”) of changes made to the exterior of any buildings in the district. They often have printed design guidelines to help building owners understand in advance what types of exterior work is acceptable. These cities may also have the power to delay or even prevent the demolition of historic properties.

Sites designated to a local register can be given more leniency in complying with certain building code requirements (Uniform Building Code, Chapter 34 [1994 version]) and can often qualify more easily for conditional use permits.

Contact your city planning department for details regarding the local register.

## In summary

Historic district designation is usually a positive step for an area. It tends to help stabilize a neighborhood, stimulate increased owner occupancy by making it a more distinct and desirable place to live, and generate increased property values as buildings are rehabilitated. These beneficial effects vary, of course, depending on the area and the economy at the time. Overall, however, historic district designation has produced positive results both in Utah and throughout the country.