



DHR | Virginia Department of Historic Resources

Facts Regarding Historic Districts Listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register and National Register of Historic Places

Historic District Designation Summary:

1. Increases public awareness of a community's historic resources and encourages preservation.
2. Places NO restrictions or obligations on private property owners using private funds.
3. Provides for careful review of the negative impacts of federal government-funded or permitted projects.
4. May provide financial benefits such as tax incentives.

1. Listing a historic district in the Virginia Landmarks Register and National Register of Historic Places officially recognizes the cultural, architectural, and landscape features of a historically significant area, bringing them to the attention of the community, state, and nation. Ideally, listing furthers community efforts to preserve the area's historic and natural features.
2. Listing a historic district in the Registers does not restrict an owner's use of his or her property in any way as long as private, non-government funds are used. It does not, for example, prohibit any owner from altering or demolishing any buildings, nor does it restrict subdivision or sale. Register listing does not require a property to be open to the public.
3. Register listing can help lessen the negative impact on a historic property from federal government projects. By law, environmental review is required for any federally funded, licensed, or permitted projects – such as road building, utility installation, and public housing projects. Also, certain state projects are reviewed for their impact on historic resources. If any project is deemed to have an adverse effect on historic buildings, archaeological sites, or landscape features within a historic district, those impacts must be considered and mitigated to the extent possible.
4. Register listing confers potential financial benefits on historic district property owners. First, it allows owners of contributing buildings within historic districts to claim Virginia state income tax credits – dollar-for-dollar reductions in income tax liability– for certified rehabilitations of historic buildings. Owners of income-producing historic buildings also may apply for federal tax credits. Additionally, non-profit owners of Register-listed properties may be eligible for certain federal grants and programs designated for historic preservation, when available. Properties listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register also are eligible for DHR's historic preservation easement program.

Additional information is available at the Department of Historic Resources Register program webpage, <https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/programs/historic-registers/>

Further information about the National Register of Historic Places is available at <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/index.htm>

See reverse

What National Register Historic District Designation Does Not Do

- It does not prevent an owner from making changes to their property.
- It does not prevent an owner from demolishing their property.
- It does not require an owner to restore or renovate their property.
- It does not restrict an owner's use of his or her property.
- It does not automatically keep a property from being demolished.
- Historic designation typically has only minor influence on property values or taxes. To the extent that historic preservation encourages revitalization and benefits the local economy, designation can contribute to long-term effects.

Selecting Boundaries for Historic Districts

A historic district is a collection of resources (buildings, sites, structures, objects) that share a common history or similar period of development and physical character. Using guidelines set forth by National Park Service, the boundaries for historic districts are delineated by evaluating the following elements:

- Physical, natural boundaries – rivers, lakes, hills, valleys, etc.
- Manmade features – roads, highways, etc.
- Political boundaries – corporation lines, wards, etc.
- Development plats and documents
- Age of the resources (generally at least fifty years old).
- Architectural style of the buildings
- Historical integrity of buildings, sites, and structures
- Associations with significant persons, cultural groups, or historical events.
- Overall Integrity – how much has been lost to demolition or incompatible development.

Contributing vs Non-contributing Definitions

- *Contributing* buildings, structures and sites existed during the district's historic period and are sufficiently well preserved to convey historic significance.
- *Non-contributing* buildings and structures typically were constructed after the district's historic period, or have been modified too much to convey historic significance. Resources that are less than 50 years old are typically considered non-contributing. In some cases, non-contributing resources can later be made contributing through restoration, or removal of modern substitute materials that obscure historic-character-defining materials or features.