State Historic Preservation Office

South Carolina Department of Archives and History
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National Register: Frequently Asked Questions

What is the National Register of Historic Places?

The National Register, which is maintained by the National Park Service, was designed to identify and document historic places across the country whose preservation should be encouraged. It is a list of buildings, sites, structures, objects, and districts significant in our nation's past. National Register listed properties must retain their historic character and be important in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, or culture at the local, state, or national level.

How do I find out if a property is listed in the National Register?

There are several ways to find National Register properties in South Carolina. If you have only an address, SC ArchSite provides a searchable map of National Register listed and eligible resources. If you know the name of the property or historic district, you can search for it online using the South Carolina Historic Properties Record (SCHPR). You may also contact the National Register staff at the SHPO to verify a property's status.

Who can nominate a property for listing in the National Register?

Anyone may nominate a property for listing, however, there are several factors to consider before undertaking a nomination. First, if you are not the owner of the property, consult with the owner to make sure he or she supports the nomination. The owner (or a majority of owners) have the ability to block National Register listings. Second, the preparation of a National Register nomination is a time intensive process involving extensive research, analysis, and writing. For this reason, those interested in listing a property often hire a professional consultant to complete the nomination.

Is there a fee for listing in the National Register?

Neither the National Park Service nor the State Historic Preservation Office charge any fees as part of the National Register listing process.

Can I object to a National Register listing?

Owners are notified of the nomination of a property thirty days in advance of the State Review Board meeting. Owners of nominated properties may object to listing through a notarized letter sent to the Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer by the date of the applicable Review Board meeting. If a majority of owners object to a listing, the property or historic district will not be listed in the National Register but may be forwarded to the National Park Service for a Determination of Eligibility.

How do I list a property in the National Register?

Please see Listing a Property.

How long does it take to list a property in the National Register?

From the time a substantially complete draft nomination is received by the SHPO, approximately six to nine months. This does not account for the time is takes to prepare the draft nomination, which will vary depending on each preparer's individual circumstance.

How does National Register listing affect my property rights?

The National Register does not impose limits or restrictions on private owners of listed properties. Owners enjoy the same rights after listing as they did before and they do not need permission from the Federal government to make alterations or additions to listed properties. Owners of listed properties who wish to utilize tax incentives or grants to help with rehabilitation or preservation will have their plans subject to review and approval by the appropriate state and/or federal agencies involved.

If listing in the National Register doesn't affect property rights, why does my local government review work on historic properties?

In some communities, local ordinances provide protections for historic properties, but these ordinances are established by local governments; they are **not** part of the National Register program. South Carolina local governments can designate historic properties and protect them with ordinances whether or not they are listed in the National Register.

Can properties listed in the National Register be demolished or altered?

The National Register does not prevent demolition or destruction of listed properties. The National Register is an honorific designation that provides incentives to preserve properties, but does not control the actions of private owners. The Federal government is required to consult with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) regarding their undertakings that may effect listed and eligible properties. Local governments may afford some protection for listed properties via historic preservation zoning. Owners of listed properties who wish to utilize tax incentives or grants to help with rehabilitation or preservation will have their plans subject to review and approval by the appropriate state and/or federal agencies involved.

Is my property considered listed if it is within a National Register historic district?

Properties within National Register historic districts are considered listed if they contribute to the significance of the district. Contributing properties are those that fit within the period(s) and area(s) of significance for the district and retain their exterior historic integrity. Contributing status is not fixed and may change if a building is altered. A contributing building may become non-contributing if alterations to it result in a loss of historic integrity. Conversely, the restoration of a building's historic appearance may allow a non-contributing building to become contributing. Contributing properties are eligible for the same financial incentives and limited protections afforded properties that are individually listed in the National Register. Owners of contributing properties can also purchase and display National Register plaques.

Who do I contact if I have additional questions?

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