

# **National Register of Historic Places Frequently Asked Questions for Property Owners**

## **What is the National Register of Historic Places?**

- The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the nation's historic places worthy of preservation. Properties listed in the National Register include districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture. These historic places can be significant at the national, state, or local level. The National Register was created through the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and is maintained by the National Park Service.

## **What are the criteria for listing a property on the National Register?**

- Your property may be eligible for the National Register if it represents the work of a master architect or is characteristic of a significant architectural movement, like Modernism.
- Your property may also be eligible if it is associated with significant events or persons in local, regional, or national history.
- Properties must typically be greater than 50 years old to be listed on the National Register, unless they are exceptionally significant.
- Modern resources are underrepresented on the National Register. Listing your historic Modern property would help preserve this important era of history and architecture in the United States.

## **What are the benefits of listing my historic property?**

- A National Register listing is an honor that signifies that your property is an important part of America's cultural heritage and worthy of preservation.
- Listed properties may qualify for grants, tax deductions for donation of protective easements, or tax credits for qualified rehabilitation activities (see below).
- Consideration of impacts to your property from federally funded or licensed undertakings, as well as a mandate to minimize, avoid, or mitigate impacts to your property per the provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act.
- In California, owners of National Register properties enjoy additional benefits:
  - Review of potential project impacts to National Register properties is required through the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).
  - The State of California also maintains a Register of Historical Resources. Properties listed on the National Register are automatically listed on the California Register.
  - Listed properties may use the State Historic Building Code instead of the Uniform Building Code. This is a more lenient code and gives homeowners more flexibility when making repairs or rehabilitating their National Register property.

- National Register property owners may be eligible for local property tax reductions through the Mills Act.

### **What are the restrictions of listing my historic property?**

- The National Register does not restrict a property owner's private property rights. Owners of National Register properties can remodel, renovate, sell, or even demolish their property with no restrictions. However, significant modifications may result in removal from the National Register.
- The federal government does regulate alterations to historic properties where federal funds have been invested. If you have not received federal grant funds or federally sponsored tax benefits (grants, tax credits, etc.) then you have no federal restrictions as a homeowner.
- The same applies at the state and local level. If you have received state or local funds or tax benefits to preserve your historic home, then you may be subject to design review for any alterations.
- Your city government may regulate National Register properties through a local historic preservation ordinance or zoning. Please consult your local government for potential restrictions.

### **Can I apply for grant money or tax credits?**

- Income-producing properties (including rentals) may be eligible for a 20% federal income investment tax credit through the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program. To qualify, properties must undergo rehabilitation according to set preservation standards.
- In California, National Register property owners may be eligible for local property tax reductions through the Mills Act.
- Owners of listed properties may apply for federal, state, and local historic preservation grants, when available.

### **How will listing on the National Register affect my property value?**

- Listing on the National Register generally does not decrease property value and, in some cases, may actually increase the value or marketability of a property.

### **Can I still modify, remodel, or renovate my historic property after listing?**

- Yes. Unless your home is subject to the above restrictions (receiving federal tax credits, protected under a local historic preservation ordinance, etc.), listing on the National Register does not restrict your right to modify your home. Severe alterations may, however, result in removal from the National Register.
- Sustainability and historic preservation can work hand in hand. You may still upgrade your home's energy efficiency or incorporate other green design ideas.
- Even if your property is subject to a local design review process, solutions can generally be reached to allow you to meet your needs within historic design guidelines.
- Design review processes generally do not regulate paint color or aspects of a historic property not visible from a public way.

### **Where can I go for additional information?**

- National Register of Historic Places: <http://www.nps.gov/nr/>
- Historic Preservation Tax Incentives: <http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/tax/>
- California Office of Historic Preservation: <http://ohp.parks.ca.gov/>
- National Trust for Historic Preservation: <http://www.preservationnation.org/>
- California Preservation Foundation: <http://www.californiapreservation.org/>

*"A listing on the National Register of Historic Places is an honor. A source of pride for you and your family, this special recognition from the federal government can only give your old house the prestige it deserves as an important part of our American past."*

*– Bob Vila, host of This Old House, in "All About The National Register," Popular Mechanics, December 1989.*