

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING HISTORIC PRESERVATION



WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A NATIONAL REGISTER DISTRICT AND A LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT?

National Register District

Identifies significant properties and districts for general planning purposes and analyzes and assesses the historic character and quality of the district.

Designates historic areas based on uniform national criteria and procedures.

Set district boundaries tightly, based on the actual distribution pattern of intact historic properties in the area.

Makes available specific federal and state tax incentives for preservation purposes.

Qualifies property owners for federal and state grants for preservation purposes, when funds are available.

Does not restrict the use or disposition of property or obligate private property owners in any way.

Does not require conformance to design guidelines or preservation standards when property is rehabilitated unless specific preservation incentives (tax credits, grants) are involved.

Does not prevent the demolition of historic buildings and structures within designated areas.

Local Historic District

Protects a community's historic properties and areas through a design review process.

Protects the historic character and quality of the district with specific design controls.

Designates historic areas on the basis of local criteria and local procedures.

Set district boundaries based on the distribution pattern of historic resources plus other preservation and community planning considerations.

Provides no tax incentives for preservation purposes unless such are provided by local tax law.

Provides no additional protection from the effects of federally assisted undertakings.

Does not qualify property owners for federal or state grants for preservation purposes.

Requires local historic preservation commissions or boards to review and approve, based on conformance to local design guidelines, before a building permit is issued for any exterior changes of appearance.

National Register District

A National Register historic district is a historic district that is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register is the country's official list of historic places worthy of preservation. It includes individual buildings, structures, sites, and objects, as well as historic districts that are historically, architecturally, or archaeologically significant.

National Register listing recognizes the significance of properties and districts. By doing so, it identifies significant historic resources in a community. Boundaries of National Register districts are tightly drawn to encompass only concentrated areas of historic properties. Information compiled to nominate a historic district can be used in a variety of planning and development activities. National Register listing also makes available specific preservation incentives and provides a limited degree of protection from the effects of federally funded, licensed, or permitted activities.

The National Register is maintained by the U.S. Department of the Interior. In Virginia, the National Register program is administered by the Department of Historic Resources. Districts and other properties are listed in National Register through a process that involves identification, documentation, and evaluation. National Register historic districts most commonly encompass central business districts, residential neighborhoods, industrial areas, rural areas, and occasionally, entire communities.

Local Historic District

A local historic district is a district designated by a local ordinance, which falls under the jurisdiction of a local historic preservation review board or commission. A local historic district is generally "overlaid" on the existing zoning classifications in a community. Therefore, a local district commission deals only with the appearance of the district, not with the uses of those properties found in the district.

The designation of a local district protects the properties and the historic character of the district. It provides communities with the means to make sure that growth, development, and changes take place in ways that respect the important architectural, historical, and environmental characteristics within a district.

Local designation encourages sensitive development in the district and discourages unsympathetic changes from occurring. This happens through a process called design review, whereby the historic preservation commission or board approves changes to the exterior that are visible from a public right-of-way, and issues Certificates of Appropriateness.