



Living in a National Register Historic District: What Does it Mean for Portland?*

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Will properties in a historic district be subject to demolition review and possible denial?

If a property is designated as contributing to a National Register Historic District, demolition is technically possible, but the process is difficult, lengthy, and expensive. The process requires multiple meetings with city staff and public hearings before the Portland Historic Landmarks Commission and City Council and has an total application fee of no less than \$14,405. (These combined fees include a Type IV review (\$8,902), a mandatory pre-application conference (\$5,253), and a land use review fee for the replacement structure (min. \$250)). Applications to demolish National Register listed properties are rare.

If a property is listed as non-contributing within a historic district, the owner can demolish it without demolition review, but a regular demolition permit would still be required.

2. How does the city regulate modifications to properties in a historic district?

Alterations which are not tantamount to demolition are not subject to any additional design review upon a property's listing in the National Register. That said, the City of Portland has policies which encourage the application of design review to National Register Historic Districts.

It is expected that design review for alterations, additions, and new construction will be proposed in the future if the district is listed. The adoption of design review would only happen following an extensive City of Portland process which would include notice, community involvement, public hearings, and a decision to apply design review to the district.

The standard citywide permitting process for all residential projects, and any typical fees associated with those projects, would still be required, as they are today, after listing and before adoption of design review.

3. Can I remodel the interior of my home without a city review?

The city never applies design review to the interior of a National Register listed property.

4. Does a historic district prevent density?

No. Per the City of Portland's zoning allowances, any residential property can have one accessory dwelling unit (ADU); either attached or detached. Where zoning allows duplexes and triplexes, such housing types are permissible in historic districts, subject to review of demolitions as noted above and, if adopted, design review.

5. If warranted, can the contributing status of a property be changed to non-contributing after listing in the National Register?

The National Park Service considers contributing status change requests at any time, free of charge.

6. Are there any "open house" requirements for houses in a historic district?

No.

7. How many Portland properties are listed in National Register Historic Districts?

There are 3751 contributing properties in 17 National Register Historic Districts in Portland. Historic districts make up less than 2% of the City of Portland's land area.

[*If a property was listed in the National Register prior to 2017, it is subject to the City of Portland's design review. This handout and our other FAQs handout can be found at \[restoreoregon.org/FAQ\]\(http://restoreoregon.org/FAQ\).](http://restoreoregon.org/FAQ)

Financial Incentives for Living in a Historic District

Property Tax Assessment Program: This state program specially assesses a contributing property's value for 10 years. This allows the owner to restore or improve the condition of the property and not pay additional property taxes on the resulting increase in the property's value until the ten year benefit period has expired. Additional information is available at the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office: (503) 986-0690

Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit: This program is overseen by the National Park Service and allows for a 20% tax credit for substantially rehabilitating income producing properties listed in the National Register. This could be applied to contributing homes which are internally converted into multiple rental units. Additional information is available at the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office:(503) 986-0690

Local Historic & Conservation Districts

Portland has the option to designate local historic and conservation districts. The city will not have a viable local and conservation district program in place until 2018 due to policy and code language changes which will need to be crafted, vetted, and adopted by the City Council. In the meantime, National Register listing is the only mechanism to offer demolition review to older neighborhoods. There is no information as to if local historic and conservation districts will offer demolition review.

Glossary

Contributing Structure: A building or structure in a historic district that contributes to the district's historic associations or historic architectural qualities. Its presence adds to the historic look and feel or architectural qualities that make the district historically important. Contributing buildings in most districts fall within certain construction dates specific to the district and outlined in the district's nomination.

Non-contributing Structure: A building or structure in a historic district that falls outside the district's time period when the area gained its historic significance. Or, a building or structure in a historic district that has been significantly and irrevocably altered from its original construction.

Design Review: Detailed, written criteria governing new structures and alterations to existing structures in a historic district. Design review does not automatically apply to new National Register Historic Districts created after January 2017. The implementation of design review will follow an extensive process which includes notice, community involvement, public hearings, and a decision to apply design review to the district. Design review may take two forms: generalized design review criteria or district-specific design guidelines.

Historic District: An area designated as historically significant. It includes within its boundaries a concentration of properties linked by architectural style, historical development, or a past event. A district may be designated at the local level, or nationally through listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Demolition: Any act that destroys, removes, or relocates, in whole or part, a significant historic resource such that its historic, cultural, or architectural character and significance is lost. The Bureau of Development Services implements demolition review for contributing properties in National Register districts, with the City Council making the final decision.

About Restore Oregon

Preserve, reuse, and pass forward the historic places that make our communities livable and sustainable.

Since 1977, Restore Oregon has evolved over the years, we've always focused on taking care of the places that make Oregon, OREGON: the historic homes and neighborhoods, bridges and barns, churches and Main Streets that make this place so authentic and livable. Our work depends on support from people like you. Please join or donate today.

