

Evaluation Process for listing Historic Districts in the National Register of Historic Places

Overview

The National Register of Historic Places is the nation's official list of properties worthy of preservation. The National Register includes buildings, structures, sites, objects, and historic districts. This packet focuses on the information required for evaluating historic districts. Individual Properties are assessed through a separate [Information Packet](#).

To be listed in the National Register, a property or district must have:

- **Significance** – Properties must be significant for their history, design, association with a significant person, and/or for their ability to yield data.
- **Integrity** – Properties must retain their important physical features from the time when they were important. Properties that have experienced too many changes and have lost their important historic features will not be eligible for listing. Integrity includes 7 aspects: location, setting, materials, design, workmanship, feeling, and association.
- **50 years of age or older**, generally

More information on the requirements for significance and integrity can be found in [National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation](#)

A district “possesses a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of sites, buildings, structures, or objects united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development.” A historic district may be located on one property (such as a farm) or consist of several properties. A historic district may contain resources related to one function (e.g., a residential neighborhood; a commercial downtown; or a mill or factory complex) but may also include resources that encompass several interrelated activities (an area that includes industrial, residential, and/or commercial resources).

A historic district evaluation must consider the individual components as well as how those components relate to each other. Considerations should include spatial layout, land use patterns, transportation systems (roads, paths, sidewalks, etc.), associated infrastructure (culverts, street furniture, historic lighting), and other built environment resources such as buildings or structures. Keep in mind that open land can be an important characteristic of a district, particularly in rural historic districts.

Requirements for Evaluating Eligibility of Historic Districts

The following information should be gathered and sent to National Register staff at the Tennessee Historical Commission.

Required:

- A history of the district from establishment to current day
- Explanation of how the district meets the requirements for significance

- Current photos of the district (ideally every resource and streetscapes). Include captions describing what is shown in each photo OR key them to a map.
- Information on the resources proposed to be within the district. For each resource, we need to know construction date and when any changes occurred on the visible exterior sides. Interior information is not typically required but may be requested by staff, if needed. Consider not only buildings but also any historic road patterns; street features like retaining walls; bridges; culverts; or other historic non-building structures.
- A map showing the proposed district boundaries and where the resources are located. Include information identifying the resources, such as address numbers or labels.

Optional/Helpful:

- Historic Photos – Strongly recommended to include, if available
- Individual building histories

Digital submission is preferred to National.Register@tn.gov. The state e-mail system only accepts attachments smaller than 25 mb so please ensure materials do not exceed 25 mb per e-mail. Multiple e-mails with attachments may be submitted, if needed. Please request confirmation that materials have been received by staff. If you do not receive confirmation, please follow up with a separate e-mail.

Upon receipt, staff will evaluate whether the potential district meets National Register criteria. They may request additional information or a site visit. A written eligibility opinion will be provided. Districts that are found to be eligible are encouraged to proceed to the nomination phase.