

# Test Your National Register Knowledge: Program Staff Respond to Frequently Asked Questions

Chances are, you've seen plenty of metal plaques and references throughout Texas with the words "Listed in the National Register of Historic Places." But beyond designating a property as historically significant, do you have a firm grasp on the impact of a National Register listing? Not all preservationists do, so here are commonly asked questions and answers regularly processed by the Texas Historical Commission's (THC) National Register staff:

## What is the National Register of Historic Places?

The National Register of Historic Places is a federal program administered in our state by the THC in coordination with the National Park Service (NPS). Listing in the National Register provides recognition of a property's historical or architectural significance and helps promote preservation.

## What makes a property eligible for listing in the National Register?

Buildings, sites, objects, structures and districts are eligible for this designation if they retain a good degree of historic integrity and meet at least one of the following four criteria at the local, state or national levels of significance:

- ➔ The property is associated with significant historical trends or events.
- ➔ The property is associated with the lives of significant persons.
- ➔ The property represents distinctive design or construction.
- ➔ The property has potential to reveal important archeological data.



*The Eagle Lake Historic District was recently listed in the National Register. Communities must initially submit photos, maps and historical information to determine eligibility.*

Certain property types may be considered for listing in the National Register only under special circumstances. These include cemeteries, birthplaces or graves of historical figures, buildings or structures moved from their original locations, reconstructed buildings, properties primarily commemorative in nature, and properties that have achieved significance within the past 50 years.

## What is the first step in nominating a property to the National Register?

Applicants must first submit preliminary information — including a brief history, photographs, maps, plans and construction dates — to the THC for a determination of eligibility. Hard copies of all materials are preferred. If THC staff determines the property eligible, the applicant will receive nomination forms and instructions. This preliminary review

is not binding, but it facilitates requests and discourages the investment of time and money in properties that fall short of the federal criteria. For districts or multiple property nominations, THC staff will make a site visit once the preliminary application has been reviewed.

## How do I list my property in the National Register?

The process of listing a property in the National Register is coordinated between the applicant and/or a professional consultant, the THC and the NPS. Information and documentation required by NPS is very specific, and includes:

- ➔ The National Register form
- ➔ A written description of the property
- ➔ A statement of significance that includes a chronological history of the property and the reasons



Two recently listed National Register properties are (top) the Limerick-Frazier House in Austin, and the USS Stewart in Galveston.

why it meets the criteria

- ➔ Black and white photographic prints (digital images may be submitted only after approval by THC staff, to ensure that NPS guidelines for archival stability are met)
- ➔ Current and historic maps and plans
- ➔ Copies of historic photos
- ➔ For districts, the preliminary documentation should include photos of representative properties

### Who decides if my property's nomination to the National Register is successful?

The Keeper of the National Register at the NPS approves all nominations, but the State Board of Review addresses nominations in Texas before submission to the NPS. The board is an advisory committee of experts in

the fields of Texas architecture, history, archeology and related disciplines, and it reviews all nominations and provides comment to the State Historic Preservation Officer (in Texas, the executive director of the THC). The board assesses each nomination and determines if the property meets the criteria and whether or not the documentation supports listing. The board may recommend forwarding the nomination to the NPS or request additional information.

### Why should I list my property in the National Register? What are the benefits?

Listing in the National Register helps identify properties in Texas that deserve protection from federal activities, and it can be used to assist government and private groups planning new development. National Register designation is also integral in the development of local heritage tourism and education initiatives. Rehabilitation of historic properties for commercial use may qualify for grant funding or tax incentives once a property has been determined eligible for listing in the National Register. Owners of properties listed in the National Register also receive priority access to technical assistance from THC staff about maintenance and restoration issues. Owners of individually listed properties, or properties that contribute to listed districts, may purchase a National Register plaque from the THC.

### What are the differences between the federal National Register designation and the

### state historic designations administered by the THC?

- ➔ The Recorded Texas Historic Landmark designation is part of the Official Texas Historical Marker program and requires the purchase of a marker. Eligible buildings must retain a good degree of integrity and be historically and architecturally significant. The designation also provides for THC review of proposed changes to the structure.
- ➔ State Archeological Landmarks (SAL) are designated by the THC and receive legal protection under the Antiquities Code of Texas. Listing in the National Register and owner approval is a prerequisite for SAL designation of a building.
- ➔ The Historic Texas Cemetery designation is an official recognition of family and community graveyards and encourages preservation of historic cemeteries.

For more information about these designations visit [www.thc.state.tx.us/markerdesigns/maddefault.html](http://www.thc.state.tx.us/markerdesigns/maddefault.html)

### What are local designations?

In addition to these federal and state designations, some municipalities allow designations of local historic landmarks or districts. These may convey certain restrictions upon property owners to maintain the integrity of the community's historic areas and significant properties. The THC does not administer local designations; check with your city planning office for more information. ⑨