

New York State and National Registers of Historic Places

HELP FOR HISTORIC DISTRICT SPONSORS



Greetings!

Thank you for contacting New York's State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). We appreciate your commitment to preserving your community's heritage and welcome your interest in sponsoring a historic district nomination. Hundreds of historic districts have been listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places in New York, ranging from small rural hamlets to large urban neighborhoods. Registers listing benefits historic properties in various ways, providing recognition and honor, inclusion in local planning efforts and, in some cases, by allowing owners to apply for preservation incentives, such as grants and tax credits.

The National Register program was established under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and its counterpart, the State Register, was established under the New York State Historic Preservation Act of 1980. Since that time, preparing historic district nominations has become more specialized, requiring, for example, precise descriptions of resources, exact parcel numbers, and the names and addresses of every legal property owner. At the same time, some local officials and property owners have become skeptical of registers listing, even though it generally carries no restrictions on private property owners, while others confuse registers-listed districts with locally designated historic districts, which may carry some restrictions. As a result, sponsoring a historic district nomination is a substantial commitment, involving active community outreach, such as soliciting the support of local officials, providing information to district owners early in the nomination process, and working closely with the SHPO to compile accurate information.

Sponsoring a district nomination is both challenging and rewarding. Our job is to help and guide you every step of the way. The most successful districts are those that result from an informed partnership among the SHPO, the sponsor and the local community. To help you get started, we have compiled this guide, which explains the steps involved, outlines both your responsibilities and ours, provides ideas and samples that you can adapt for your own needs, and offers general information that we felt might be useful.

Please let us know if you have any questions. For information and assistance, visit nysparks.com/shpo or call 518-237-8643. Your National Register (NR) representative will be your primary point of contact for the project.

We look forward to working with you!



New York State Historic Preservation Office • nysparks.com/shpo



**Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation**

GETTING STARTED

Large historic districts are usually identified through comprehensive historic resources surveys, often using grant funding. The SHPO's Survey Unit is responsible for guiding you through the survey process. Once you have completed a survey and identified a potential historic district, you may choose to use it as local planning tool or you may wish to nominate the district for registers listing. Contact the National Register Unit for nomination assistance. Please note that small districts or those that have been previously inventoried do not always require an updated survey.

The first step is discussing your project with the NR representative for your county. Be prepared to discuss your goals, research, available resources, the size and complexity of the district, local issues and project schedule. The staff will need to review documentation about the proposed district and schedule a visit to review the district and discuss its proposed boundaries. Once everyone concurs with the district's eligibility and boundaries, you may begin preparing the nomination and promoting the district in the community as outlined below. There is no set time in which a district must be completed. It will depend upon how long it takes to complete the documentation and reach out to the community about the nomination as well as the number of other projects that the NR representative is working on. Each staff person has a full workload and must assess current commitments and priorities when scheduling a date for review by the New York State Board for Historic Preservation (state review board). We are providing these instructions so that you are better informed as you begin the process, leaving fewer surprises that might cause problems or delays during the project.

Canajoharie Historic District



The State and National Registers nomination project for the Canajoharie Historic District was funded under the Preservation League of New York State's Preserve New York Program (preservenys.org). The district encompasses most of the village, which is located on the south bank of the Mohawk River. Most of the buildings predate World War II, including numerous residential properties, brick and stone commercial buildings, various civic landmarks and several churches. The district nomination documents the settlement, development and growth of the community, from a small trading post on the Canajoharie Creek to a prosperous commercial and industrial center during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The district is also significant for its association with Beech-Nut Foods, a company that played an important role in the ways in which food was processed and marketed in the United States from the 1800s into the mid-twentieth century.

SPONSOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Preparation of the Nomination: Most district nominations are prepared by professional consultants. The SHPO does not recommend that volunteers prepare district nominations due to the complexity of the nomination requirements. Professional consultants will save you considerable time because they know the requirements and have experience preparing nominations. When hiring a consultant, always ask for and consult references. Find out if the consultant has successfully and independently completed a district nomination. There are several grant programs that fund the preparation of surveys and nominations, including the Preservation League of New York State's Preserve New York program (preservenys.org/grants) and the SHPO's Certified Local Government (CLG) grant program, available to CLG communities (nysparks.com/shpo/certified-local-governments/).

Outreach: Historic district sponsors are responsible for community outreach, which can make or break a project. It is your responsibility to gain the support of local leaders and property owners within the district. For ideas, see the **Outreach Examples** section. The

SHPO will not bring a project to the State Review Board for consideration without demonstrated community support from local government and property owners.

Owner Information: It is your responsibility to provide the SHPO with an accurate list of all property owners in the district (See **Owner Notification**).

Public Meeting: It is also your responsibility to organize at least one public informational meeting (not a hearing) and invite the project partners and/or consultant, SHPO staff and local officials (as appropriate) to make brief presentations and answer questions about the district proposal. The primary purpose of the public meeting is to provide accurate information and to allow owners time to ask questions.

Celebrate: After the district is listed, plan to celebrate its official recognition. You should publicize the listing in various ways, including through the local media and on the web. Some project sponsors organize celebrations to coincide with community events, while others identify the district with roadside signage.

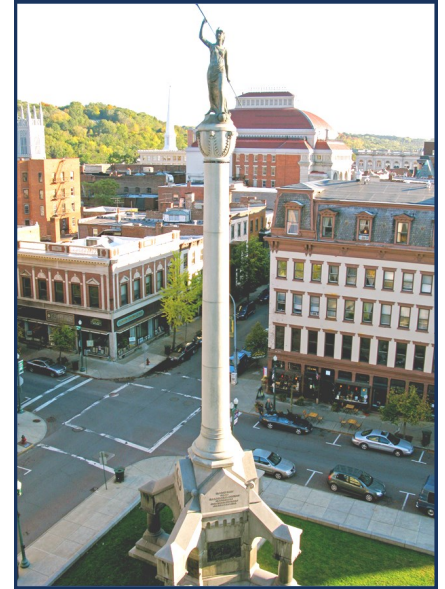


Over the past few years, the SHPO has helped Buffalo list some of the city's largest neighborhoods on the State and National Registers. The nominations, which include thousands of properties, were initiated by a variety of local sponsors who were interested in making the preservation tax credits available to as many residents as possible. Hundreds of homes have been rehabilitated using historic homeowner tax credits, totaling millions of dollars in project expenditures. The listings include the **Allentown Historic District Expansion**, **University Park Historic District**, **Elmwood Historic District West**, **Hamlin Park Historic District**, and a survey in the **Black Rock** neighborhood identified hundreds of historic properties and led to several registers listings.

SHPO RESPONSIBILITIES

Establish Boundaries and Themes: Your NR representative will work with you or your consultant early in the process to help you establish the most appropriate boundaries for the district and to identify the criteria and areas of significance that are best illustrated by your district.

Identify Contributing and Non-contributing Properties: Your NR representative will help you or your consultant establish a methodology for determining the district's contributing and non-contributing resources. The methodology will guide you or your consultant in the identification and evaluation of all the district's features, including but not limited to buildings, structures, landscapes, etc. Once you have finalized your list of district resources, your representative will review it with you.



Review Nomination Standards: Your NR representative will review with you or your consultant the nomination requirements, including nomination text, mapping and photography—and provide nomination samples.

Review of Draft Nomination: It is your responsibility to prepare the nomination, but the SHPO is responsible for ensuring that all nominations meet established standards. Nominations must be well written, address the registers criteria and follow standard grammatical and bibliographic guidelines. And, citations must follow the *Chicago Manual of Style* guidelines. Your NR representative can provide you with samples of approved nominations, research materials if available, prepared contexts and/or suggestions of topics to cover. Your representative will also review nomination drafts, advise you of strengths or deficiencies, and perhaps ask for clarification of certain points or request additional information. Nominations will sometimes be returned for revisions and they will most likely be edited to some degree.

Schedule Official Review: When the draft is nearing completion, your NR representative will work with you to identify a date for review by the State Review Board. Typically, the review date will be about six months after the completion of the draft to allow plenty of time for community outreach. The State Review Board meets four times a year, so timing for every project will vary. About two months before the State Review Board meeting, the SHPO will notify property owners and local officials (See **Owner Notification**). Your NR representative will discuss the district proposal and answer questions about it at a local public informational meeting (see **Public Meeting** above). Depending on the needs of the sponsor, this meeting can be held before or after the district notification letters go out. Your NR representative will also answer phone calls from property owners, so please direct people with specific questions to them. They are always ready to take calls and help answer questions.

State Review Board: Your NR representative will present the nomination at a scheduled meeting of the New York State Board for Historic Preservation, which reviews and recommends all of New York's State and National Registers nominations. Sponsors and consultants are welcome, but not required, to attend. If it is approved, your NR representative will prepare the nomination for final submission to the State Historic Preservation Officer, who is also the commissioner of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, who approves recommended nominations and confers State Register status. Approved nominations are then sent to the National Park Service for final review and listing on the National Register.

Celebrate: Once the historic district is listed, we will be happy to be involved in your celebrations! We can send a framed registers certificate or present it in person at a district listing ceremony.

OWNER NOTIFICATION

It is important that district sponsors be familiar with the owner notification process. Owners are often confused by the process and misinformed about its consequences—some complaints include: “why doesn’t everyone get to vote,” “I should get more votes because I own more property,” “it’s unfair to make us notarize our objections,” and “your letter looked like junk mail so I threw it away.” That is why it is so important to lay the ground work through active outreach in your community. Part of that includes your ability to answer questions about notification and program procedures before rumors get started that may disrupt your efforts. Remember that the notice requirements are required by federal law and the SHPO cannot change them.

National Register program regulations require that State Historic Preservation Offices follow specific legal notification procedures. SHPO staff relies on the assistance of district sponsors in order to gather accurate information and meet the notification deadlines.

Each property owner within the proposed district and the chief elected local official of the local municipality must be notified in writing that the state intends to bring a nomination to the New York State Board for Historic Preservation and must be given an opportunity to comment on the proposal. The list of owners within the district must be obtained from either official land or tax records no more than 90 days before the letters go out to owners. The sponsor is responsible for obtaining this list within the appropriate time period—your NR representative will provide an appropriate deadline. If there are multiple owners for a single property, EACH of them must be listed individually (i.e., married/unmarried couples, multiple family members, etc.). Corporate owners (LLC’s, partnerships, etc.) are listed once under the corporate name. Owner lists should be submitted in EXCEL spread sheet format. The SHPO is required to send these notification letters between 30 and 75 days in advance of the State Review Board meeting. Typically, we send letters out approximately 60 days in advance.

If the nomination is approved by the board and signed by the State Historic Preservation Officer, property owners and elected officials will receive a letter notifying them that it has been listed on the State Register. If the nomination is approved by the National Park Service, a third letter will be sent informing owners and local officials that the district has been listed on the National Register.

Crown Heights North Historic District



The SHPO has been helping the Crown Heights North Association, a nonprofit neighborhood improvement organization, to recognize the Crown Heights North community by listing the Crown Heights North Historic District on the State and National Registers so that owners in the district will be eligible for preservation tax credits. The district is located in the northwest section of Crown Heights and illustrates the development of this community as it spread southward and eastward during the 19th and

20th centuries in response to mass transit improvements. The district contains more than 1,000 historic properties, including a large concentration of houses and apartment buildings as well as various institutional and commercial buildings. The district’s listing promises to encourage building rehabilitation and neighborhood reinvestment, stimulate economic development, create more jobs and improve the quality of local community life.

Owner Objections

Under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (amended 1980), private property owners must be given the opportunity to comment on the proposed nomination and, if so inclined, to object to it. No owner is required to comment, and no “vote” on the district is taken. Rather, owners who object to the listing may submit a notarized statement stating that they are the owner of the subject property (give address) and that they object. Notarization is a requirement of the federal government and cannot be waived.

If a majority of the private property owners in the district file notarized objections, the district cannot be listed on the National Register. In determining a majority, each owner is counted once, regardless of how much or how little property they own. [This is why we need to record all owners of record.] Objections are only counted toward the listing of the district as a whole. If a majority does not object, no one owner can exempt themselves from the district by means of a notarized objection.

If a district cannot be listed because of owner objections, it will be determined officially eligible for listing. This means that all applicable review responsibilities for projects using state or federal funds will apply, but no one will be able to take advantage of grant or tax incentive programs. The State Register does not have an owner objection clause. The decision to proceed with State but not National Register listing is made on a case by case basis.

Certified Local Governments

For municipalities with Certified Local Government status, local historic preservation commissions and chief elected officials must be given an opportunity to review the final draft nomination at least 30 days before the State Review Board meeting. After doing so, they report to the SHPO whether or not they believe the property should be nominated. If both the local commission and the chief elected official find that the property is not eligible for listing, the SPHO cannot proceed with the district nomination.

Barge Canal Historic District



The Barge Canal Historic District was prepared by the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, National Park Service Heritage Documentation Program and the New York State Canal Corporation in cooperation with the SHPO. The canal is a nationally significant work of early twentieth century engineering and construction that affected transportation and commerce across the eastern half of the continent for nearly half a century. The district extends 450 miles over 18 counties. It includes a network of canals, canalized rivers, and lakes that allows vessels to travel from the Atlantic Ocean to the Great Lakes. Constructed between 1905 and 1918, these waterways are the successors to the canals that New York State built during the nineteenth century, including the Erie Canal, the Champlain Canal (connecting to Lake Champlain), the Oswego Canal (connecting to Lake Ontario), and the Cayuga-Seneca Canal (connecting to Cayuga and Seneca Lakes).