THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

The National Register of Historic Places was established by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended in 1980. It is the Nation's official listing of prehistoric and historic properties worthy of preservation. It affords recognition and protection for districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture. This significance can also be at the local, state or national level. The National Register serves both as a planning tool and as a means of identifying buildings, sites, and districts that are of special significance to a community and worthy of preservation.

WHAT THE NATIONAL REGISTER DOES

Listing of a building, site or district affords it a certain prestige which can enhance the value of the property and raise community awareness and pride.

Income-producing (depreciable) properties which are listed in the National Register may be aided by the tax incentive provisions of the Tax Reform Act of 1976 and Economic Recovery Act of 1981 which encourage rehabilitation and discourage demolition.

In Arizona, the Arizona State Historic Preservation Act of 1982 authorizes a reduction in property tax assessment for non-income producing properties listed on the National Register. There is also a property tax incentive program for rehabilitations of listed income-producing properties.

Listing in the National Register provides a measure of protection from demolition or other negative effects by federally funded or licensed projects through comment by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation as stated in Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and Executive Order 11593. A stewardship and management program of state owned properties outlined in the Arizona State Historic Preservation Act of 1982 has established a similar review process for state agencies. This review procedure is part of the planning process for all federal and state assisted projects.

WHAT THE NATIONAL REGISTER DOES NOT DO

It does not prevent the owner of a listed property from remodeling, repairing, altering, selling, or even demolishing a building listed in the National Register with other than federal or state funds. It also does not obligate an owner to make any repairs or improvements to the property. Owners of income-producing (depreciable) property may not be able to deduct the cost of demolition.

It does not prevent the use of city or private funds for demolition or other adverse effects to a property on the National Register.

It does not provide assurance that a federal or state project cannot adversely affect a listed property under any circumstance. It only assures a federal/state-level review of all federal/state funded or licensed projects which may have an adverse effect.

For further information on what it means to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places and about historic preservation programs, call the State Historic Preservation Office at (602) 542-4009.

Arizona State Parks

State Historic Preservation Office
1300W Washington
Phoenix, AZ 85007
(602) 542-4009

NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORIC DESIGNATION PROCESS

Determining if a neighborhood is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places includes several steps:

1. Research about the neighborhood itself - how and when it was developed, what architectural styles are present, who the important architects and builders were, what prominent people might have lived (or still live) in the neighborhood, the layout and landscaping in the neighborhood if it is special or difference from most areas. Historic photographs are very useful in this part of the process. This forms the historical background section of the historic resource survey.
2. Information about each and every property in the neighborhood. This is put on a Property Inventory Form and includes construction date, architectural style, details about construction materials and windows, doors, roofs, etc. The form has one or more photographs of the property and describes how it contributes to the visual or architectural character of the neighborhood.
3. A base map showing every property and designating "contributing" and "non-contributing" properties. More than 50% of the properties in the proposed historic district must be contributing properties to have a district which will be recognized by the National Register.
4. A statement of significance for the neighborhood is developed explaining how it meets the National Register criteria and designating a period of significance which is generally when most of the development in the neighborhood took place.

These elements are organized into a formal nomination and submitted to the State Historic Preservation Office. This must be done by qualified consultants hired by either the City or the neighborhood. City staff can work with neighborhoods to apply for grants to offset part of the cost of nomination preparation. The nomination is reviewed by the Historic Sites Review Committee and forwarded on to the National Register of Historic Places, administered by the National Park Service, for listing.

The City Of Tucson has developed a training program with the Arizona Historical Society and the University of Arizona College of Architecture to show neighborhood residents how to do much of the historical research needed for a National Register nomination. Tasks such as reviewing newspaper microfilm, research in City directories to match people with addresses at different times, searching through photo files, etc., are the types of things residents can do well and things that cost a lot if a consultant is paid to do them. Oral history interviews can also be handled by volunteers. Some basic information about architectural styles is also provided as part of the training, and residents can assist with filling out Property Inventory Forms. These tasks can also generate excitement for property owners as they uncover information about their homes and their neighborhoods.

The City Historic Preservation Office has several examples of National Register nominations and other publications relating to historic preservation. They are located on the 4th floor of the at 149 N. Stone Ave. They can be reached at 791-4505.