

Benefits, Opportunities, and Responsibilities Associated with Historic Designation

There are different types and levels of historic designations made by different government agencies and organizations. Each designation has its own process and requirements and provides different benefits and, in some cases, places certain requirements on property owners. This chart provides a brief summary of these programs and is a quick reference guide to the differences between them.

National Historic Landmark (NHL)

- Highest level of historic designation in U.S.
- Reserved for properties of national significance
- Designation is made by the Secretary of the Interior
- There are approximately 2,500 NHLs in U.S.; 176 NHLs in Pennsylvania (2019)

National Register of Historic Places (NR)

- List of buildings, sites, structures, objects, and districts significant to local, state, and national history
- Maintained by National Park Service (NPS) with support from State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPO)
- **NR Listed** – Listed properties are those that have gone through the formal review and listing process with the SHPO and NPS.
- **NR Keeper Eligible** – Properties have been evaluated by the Keeper of the National Register (NPS) and determined to be eligible for listing but have not gone through the formal listing process. Keeper Eligibility has the same practical effects and benefits as listing.
- **NR Eligible** – Properties have been evaluated by SHPO staff and determined that they meet the National Register criteria but have not been formally nominated or gone through the listing process. Determinations of Eligibility are typically made in connection with a Federal or State assisted project, or at the request of a property owner or other interested party.

Local Designation

- Local governments may enact ordinances that require owners to receive approvals for certain projects if their properties are designated as historic by the municipality. There are different types of local historic designations in Pennsylvania, including historic districts and zoning overlays for historic properties.
- **Local Historic Districts** – A local historic district is created by a municipal ordinance under the Historic District Act, the state enabling law. Municipalities appoint Historic Architectural Review Boards to review changes to properties within these districts.
- **Historic Resource Overlays/Inventories/Other Designation** – Some municipalities use their zoning code to create historic preservation incentives and protections, often for individual properties rather than districts. These properties are often referred to as being on a local “inventory” and the community may have a Historical Commission or similar board/commission.

PA SHPO
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✓ = Benefit or requirement is associated with this designation

? = Benefit or requirement may be associated under certain circumstances

	National Historic Landmark	NR Listed	NR Keeper Eligible	NR Eligible	Local Designation
Federal Historic Tax Credits (income-producing properties only)	✓	✓	✓		?
State Historic Tax Credits (income-producing properties only)	✓	✓	✓		
Keystone Historic Preservation Grants	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Federal income tax deduction for donation of preservation easement	✓	✓	✓		?
Building code flexibility for historic buildings (International Existing Building Code)	✓	✓	✓	✓	?
Opportunities for alternative compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)	✓	✓	✓	✓	?
Relief from floodplain management requirements of the National Flood Insurance Program	✓	✓	✓	✓	?
Consideration in planning of projects receiving Federal permits, licenses, or funding	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Consideration in planning of projects receiving State permits, licenses, or funding	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Approval required for demolition of privately-owned properties using private funds					✓
Approval required for alteration of privately-owned properties using private funds					✓
Opportunities for development incentives from the municipality					✓