

# The National Register of Historic Places

MISCONCEPTIONS

ELIGIBILITY

NOMINATING

RESOURCES

THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC Places recognizes properties the federal government considers worthy of preservation because of their significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, or culture.

In Indiana, National Register listings range from the prehistoric Angel Mounds in Vanderburgh County to a mid-twentieth-century neighborhood in Carmel. The list includes private homes and courthouses, commercial buildings and factories—to date nearly 2,000 individual sites and 400 historic districts.

A program of the National Park Service of the U.S. Department of the Interior, the National Register is administered on the state level by the Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology (DHPA) of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources.

The primary benefit of listing in the National Register is the honor conferred by official federal recognition. When a site is added, the listing appears in the Federal Register, and the owner receives a letter and certificate.

Owners of income-producing National Register properties are eligible to pursue tax credits for restoration, and not-for-profit owners may be eligible for grants awarded in a competitive annual process.

National Register status does NOT limit a private owner's freedom to alter the property nor impose an approval process. Limitations occur only if a project involving federal funding or licensing would in any way affect a National Register site. In such a case,

DHPA acting as an agent of the National Register conducts an analysis—a process called Section 106 review—that can result in measures protective of the site.

## Common Misconceptions

THERE ARE NO RESTRICTIONS ON WHAT A private owner can do with or to a National Register property, providing no federal or state money is being used. Listing does not mean the federal government wants to buy the property, nor does it allow the public access to the property. Using strictly private funds, an owner can alter a National Register site—including demolishing it without permission or notification. Restrictions on the treatment of landmarks come from local or city ordinances, not as a result of National Register status.

## Is the Property Eligible?

ANYONE WILLING TO UNDERTAKE THE research and fill out the forms can nominate a structure to the National Register. However, the site must meet demanding criteria, and preparing a nomination is complex and requires specialized knowledge that can be difficult for a novice to master. Among other elements, the nomination must substantiate that the property possesses significance, integrity, and age.



Indiana Landmarks teamed up with the Indiana Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology (DHPA) to nominate 16 previously unlisted courthouses to the National Register, including the Vermillion County Courthouse in Newport. Though listing does not offer complete protection, it brings practical benefits: publicly-owned properties become eligible for preservation grants, and owners of private properties may qualify for tax credits for restoration.

LEE LEWELLEN



Residents sought National Register listing for the Traders Point Rural Historic District in Marion County to recognize and protect the area's agrarian character from destructive thoroughfare development.

**Significance:** The nomination must show that a property has been associated with important national, state, or local events or people, or displays the distinctive characteristics of an architectural type, period or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses artistic value. Sites that promise to help in the discovery of important information about prehistory or history—mainly archaeological sites—also hold significance.

**Integrity:** To possess historical and architectural value, a property must still display the qualities that make it significant. From the National Register perspective, this visual connection to the sources of significance is called integrity. Integrity relies on the presence of original design, building materials, context and other factors.

**Age:** As a rule, a building must be more than 50 years old for National Register consideration, or the events that lend a structure its significance must have occurred more than 50 years ago. However, there are exceptions to this rule for modern structures of pre-eminent importance.

**Warning:** Some places are more difficult to list than others. Cemeteries, birthplaces and graves of historical figures, structures that have been moved, historic buildings that have been substantially rebuilt (as opposed to restored), and commemorative properties are generally—but not always—ineligible for the National Register. If you're interested in landmark status for a site that falls into one of these categories, check with DHPA before pursuing a nomination.

## Nominating a Property to the National Register

**A single-site National Register nomination involves seven steps:**

- Submit a request to DHPA for a preliminary determination of eligibility. This will save you and DHPA time and possibly expense. In the request, include the property's street address, city, township, and county; the site number if it appears in your county's **Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory**; approximately 10 jpeg images of the building(s); a sketched site plan of the property; historical background on the site. Response from DHPA to requests for determination of eligibility may take several weeks.

- If DHPA determines that the property is eligible, decide if you will attempt to prepare the nomination yourself or hire a professional for the task. Indiana Landmarks' regional office staff (see "Resources" on following page) can provide advice.
- Complete the nomination forms obtained from DHPA. The form requires a detailed architectural description of the property in its current state and a digest of alterations from its original appearance, a boundary description using USGS coordinates, digital photographs of the property, and a narrative substantiating the property's significance. DHPA also provides instruction sheets on completing the forms. If the do-it-yourself approach does not interest you, you can hire a consultant to do research and/or prepare the entire nomination (see "Resources" on following page).
- Return the completed form to DHPA.
- DHPA reviews the nomination for completeness and accuracy, communicating questions and deficiencies and giving the preparer the opportunity to revise. At the conclusion of this process, DHPA forwards the nomination with a staff recommendation to the Indiana Historic Preservation Review Board, which meets quarterly. Owners of properties under consideration are notified of the meeting, which is open to the public. In cases where someone other than the property owner nominates a site, the owner can attend the meeting to offer support or to object. If an owner formally objects, DHPA may forward the nomination to the National Register staff at the federal level for a determination of eligibility, rather than an official listing.
- The State Review Board approves or denies the nomination. Approval triggers automatic listing in the State Register and submission to the federal level for National Register consideration.
- Federal officials who administer the National Register approve or deny the nomination.

Single-site nominations can take up to a year to achieve listing, while complex nominations involving multiple sites can take longer.

## Nominating More Than One Property

The National Register accepts two kinds of nominations: individual structures, a house for example; and multiple properties that are related to each other. Multiple-site listings can be grouped by geographic boundaries—most historic districts fall into this category—or by property type, such as the covered bridges of Rush County.

## Resources

**The National Park Service** includes a searchable database of properties listed in the National Register and a wealth of other information on its website: [www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/index.htm)

**The Indiana Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology** offers a variety of resources online, including:

- Application forms and instructions
- Research guidelines
- Sample nominations

- Definitions of architectural styles
- A list of consultants qualified to research and prepare National Register nominations

Visit [www.in.gov/dnr/historic/3654.htm](http://www.in.gov/dnr/historic/3654.htm) or contact DHPA:

### **Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology**

Indiana Department of Natural Resources  
402 West Washington Street, W274  
Indianapolis, IN 46204  
317-232-1646  
[www.in.gov/dnr/historic/](http://www.in.gov/dnr/historic/)

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## INDIANA LANDMARKS

Indiana Landmarks provides free professional advice to anyone considering rehabbing or nominating a historic building to the National Register. Call the regional office nearest you, or our state headquarters, to enlist Indiana Landmarks' help:

### **Central Regional Office**

Indianapolis  
317-639-4534 or 800-450-4534  
[central@indianalandmarks.org](mailto:central@indianalandmarks.org)

### **Eastern Regional Office**

Cambridge City  
765-478-3172  
[east@indianalandmarks.org](mailto:east@indianalandmarks.org)

### **Northeast Field Office**

Wabash  
260-563-7094  
[northeast@indianalandmarks.org](mailto:northeast@indianalandmarks.org)

### **Northern Regional Office**

South Bend  
574-232-4534  
[north@indianalandmarks.org](mailto:north@indianalandmarks.org)

### **Northwest Field Office**

Gary-Miller Beach  
219-947-2657  
[northwest@indianalandmarks.org](mailto:northwest@indianalandmarks.org)

### **Southeast Field Office**

Aurora  
812-926-0983  
[southeast@indianalandmarks.org](mailto:southeast@indianalandmarks.org)

### **Southern Regional Office**

New Albany  
812-284-4534  
[south@indianalandmarks.org](mailto:south@indianalandmarks.org)

### **Southwest Field Office**

Evansville  
812-423-2988  
[southwest@indianalandmarks.org](mailto:southwest@indianalandmarks.org)

### **Western Regional Office**

Terre Haute  
812-232-4534  
[west@indianalandmarks.org](mailto:west@indianalandmarks.org)