

**California Office of Historic Preservation
Technical Assistance Series #6**

**California Register and National Register: A Comparison
(for purposes of determining eligibility for the
California Register)**

This handout compares the California Register of Historical Resources and the National Register of Historic Places. Because the California Register was consciously designed on the model of the National Register, the two programs are extremely similar. However, it is important to be aware of the areas in which these programs differ. Herein is offered information about eligibility criteria, integrity requirements, special (criteria) considerations, and the nomination process.

When trying to determine if a resource is eligible for the California Register, you may find it easier to first determine a resource's eligibility for the National Register. Then, if you find it ineligible for the National Register--and keeping in mind the differences between the two programs--move on to determine if it may in fact be eligible for the California Register as a result of these differences.

The information in this handout is taken from the implementing regulations for the California Register of Historical Resources (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 11.5, Section 4850 et seq), which can be accessed on the internet at <http://ohp.cal-parks.ca.gov/careqs/title14.PDF>, and *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (National Register Bulletin 15), which can be accessed on the internet at http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/bulletins/nr15_toc.html. It is advised that you consult these two publications for more specific information. The back of this handout contains a listing of and request form for other publications you may find helpful.

Eligibility Criteria

California Register

An historical resource must be significant at the local, state, or national level, under one or more of the following four criteria:

1. It is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history, or the cultural heritage of California or the United States; or
2. It is associated with the lives of persons important to local, California, or national history; or
3. It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method or construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values; or
4. It has yielded, or has the potential to yield, information important to the prehistory or history of the local area, California, or the nation.

National Register

An historical resource must be significant at the local, state, or national level, under one or more of the following four criteria:

- A. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. That are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or

- C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. That have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Integrity

California Register

Integrity is the authenticity of an historical resource's physical identity evidenced by the survival of characteristics that existed during the resource's period of significance. Historical resources eligible for listing in the California Register must meet one of the criteria of significance described above and retain enough of their historic character or appearance to be recognizable as historical resources and to convey the reasons for their significance. Historical resources that have been rehabilitated or restored may be evaluated for listing.

Integrity is evaluated with regard to the retention of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. It must also be judged with reference to the particular criteria under which a resource is proposed for eligibility. Alterations over time to a resource or historic changes in its use may themselves have historical, cultural, or architectural significance.

It is possible that historical resources may not retain sufficient integrity to meet the criteria for listing in the National Register, but they may still be eligible for listing in the California Register. A resource that has lost its historic character or appearance may still have sufficient integrity for the California Register if it maintains the potential to yield significant scientific or historical information or specific data.

National Register

Integrity is the ability of a property to convey its significance. To be listed in the National Register of Historic Places, a property must not only be shown to be significant under the National Register criteria, but it also must have integrity. The evaluation of integrity is sometimes a subjective judgement, but it must always be grounded in an understanding of a property's physical features and how they relate to its significance.

Historic properties either retain integrity (that is, convey their significance) or they do not. Within the concept of integrity, the National Register criteria recognize seven aspects or qualities that, in various combinations, define integrity. These are location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

To retain historic integrity a property will always possess several, and usually most, of the aspects. The retention of specific aspects of integrity is paramount for a property to convey its significance. Determining which of these aspects are most important to a particular property requires knowing why, where, and when the property is significant.

Special (Criteria) Considerations

California Register

Moved buildings, structures, or objects. The State Historical Resources Commission (SHRC) encourages the retention of historical resources on site and discourages the non-historic grouping of historic buildings into parks or districts. However, it is recognized that moving an historic building, structure, or object is sometimes necessary to prevent its destruction. Therefore, a moved building, structure, or object that is otherwise eligible may be listed in the California Register if it was moved to prevent its demolition at its former location and if the new location is

compatible with the original character and use of the historical resource. An historical resource should retain its historic features and compatibility in orientation, setting, and general environment.

Historical resources achieving significance within the past fifty years. In order to understand the historic importance of a resource, sufficient time must have passed to obtain a scholarly perspective on the events or individuals associated with the resource. A resource less than fifty years old may be considered for listing in the California Register if it can be demonstrated that sufficient time has passed to understand its historical importance.

Reconstructed buildings. Reconstructed buildings are those buildings not listed in the California Register under the criteria stated above. A reconstructed building less than fifty years old may be eligible if it embodies traditional building methods and techniques that play an important role in a community's historically rooted beliefs, customs, and practices; e.g., a Native American roundhouse.

National Register

Ordinarily cemeteries, birthplaces, or graves of historical figures, properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes, structures that have been moved from their original locations, reconstructed historic buildings, properties primarily commemorative in nature, and properties that have achieved significance within the past fifty years shall not be considered eligible for the National Register. However, such properties will qualify if they are integral parts of districts that do meet the criteria or if they fall within the following categories:

A religious property deriving primary significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance; or

A building or structure removed from its original location but which is significant primarily for architectural value, or which is the surviving structure most importantly associated with a historic person or event; or

A birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance if there is no appropriate site or building directly associated with his or her productive life; or

A cemetery which derives its primary significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, from age, from distinctive design features, or from association with historic events; or

A reconstructed building when accurately executed in a suitable environment and presented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan, and when no other building or structure with the same association has survived; or

A property primarily commemorative in intent if design, age, tradition, or symbolic value has invested it with its own exceptional significance; or

A property achieving significance within the past fifty years if it is of exceptional importance.

Nomination Process

California Register

1. Obtain nomination packet from the Office of Historic Preservation (OHP).
2. Complete application, including all necessary supplemental forms, according to instructions.
3. Notify the clerk of the local government in whose jurisdiction the resource is located by certified mail that an application will be filed with OHP and request that the local government provide written comments. The notification must include a copy of the application.
4. Upon receiving written comments from the local government or ninety days after sending notification to the local government (whichever is sooner), the applicant forwards the completed application and any comments to OHP.
5. Within 30 days, OHP staff will ensure that the application is complete and will send notification to the property owner (if the applicant is not the property owner). When the application is complete and the property owner has been notified, the application will be scheduled on an agenda of the SHRC for action.

Note: A nomination does not require owner consent in order for the resource to be listed, but it cannot be listed over an owner's objections. The State Historical Resources Commission can, however, formally determine a property eligible for the California Register if the resource owner objects.

National Register

1. Obtain nomination packet from OHP. Read National Register criteria and *How to Complete the National Register Forms* (Bulletin 16A) and follow these guidelines exactly when preparing application form.
2. If you are not the owner of the property you are submitting for registration, please inform the owner of your intention to apply for registration. The property or district may not be listed over the objection of the owner or majority of owners.
3. If the area is proposed for registration as an historic district, please follow the SHRC district policy prior to submission of the application. OHP staff is available to assist district applicants and should be contacted in the early stages of the process.
4. Submit completed forms, photographs and maps to OHP for review. If the property is endangered or the applicant is requesting rehabilitation incentives under the Tax Reform Act or Revenue Act of 1978, this must be stated clearly in the cover letter.
5. Applications will be reviewed by the OHP. Those which are inadequate or are not prepared in accordance with the guidelines published in Bulletin 16A will be returned to the applicant for further work.
6. OHP notifies all applicants, property owners and appropriate governmental jurisdictions of the time and place of the SHRC meeting.
7. If approved by the SHRC, the application is sent to the State Historic Preservation Officer for nomination to the National Register. The final determination is made 45 days after receipt by the Keeper of the National Register in Washington, D.C.