



Massachusetts Avenue Historic District, Worcester, both a Local and National Register Historic District

*Can a property be designated both as part of a National Register District and as a part of a Local Historic District?*

Yes, in this case property owners receive all the benefits from the federal listing and the assurance that the local bylaw or ordinance will protect the historic area from inappropriate alteration.

*If my property is within a National Register District, will it eventually be designated a Local Historic District as well?*

Not necessarily. An M.G.L. Chapter 40C Local Historic District is established only by a two-thirds majority vote of your city council or town meeting. It is a completely separate local process.

## State Register of Historic Places

Properties within Local Historic Districts and National Register Districts are automatically included in the State Register of Historic Places.

### *Listing in the State Register:*

- provides limited protection from adverse effects by state-involved projects.
- when available, provides owners of municipal or private non-profit properties opportunity to apply for 50% matching state grants through the Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund.

If you would like more information on historic district designation, contact either your local historical commission or the Massachusetts Historical Commission, 220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, MA 02125 (617) 727-8470, [www.state.ma.us/mhc](http://www.state.ma.us/mhc)

# There's a Difference!



## Local Historic District

Granby Local Historic District

## National Register District

Sumner Hill Historic District, Jamaica Plain:  
a National Register Historic District



MASSACHUSETTS  
HISTORICAL COMMISSION

William Francis Galvin  
Secretary of the Commonwealth

# There is a difference...

There are substantial differences between a Local Historic District and a National Register District. This brochure has been prepared by the Massachusetts Historical Commission to help clarify these differences.

## National Register Districts

A National Register District is part of the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register of Historic Places is the list of individual buildings, sites, structures, objects, **and** districts, deemed important in American history, culture, architecture, or archaeology. It is a federal designation and is administered by the Secretary of the Interior through the Massachusetts Historical Commission as the State Historic Preservation Office.

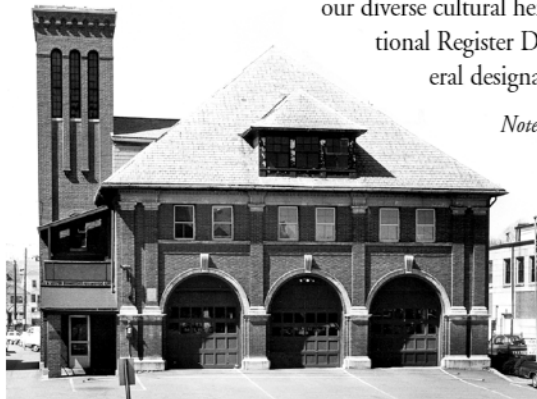
### *Listing in the National Register:*

- recognizes that the area is important to the history of the community, state, or nation.
- allows the owners of income-producing properties certain federal tax incentives for rehabilitation.
- provides limited protection from adverse effects by federal or state involved projects.

If there is no state or federal involvement in a project (such as federal licenses, permits, or funding) and no pertinent local or regional regulations (such as a local historic district), then listing in the National Register of Historic Places does not in any way limit an owner's handling of the property.

There are over 900 National Register Districts in Massachusetts.

The National Register of Historic Places, begun in 1966, promotes an appreciation of our diverse cultural heritage. Communities with National Register Districts take great pride in this federal designation.



Fire Station, Melrose Town Center Historic District, both a Local and National Register Historic District

*Note:* A National Register District cannot be listed if a majority of the property owners submit notarized objections. Every owner of record of private property has the opportunity to comment and/or object to the nomination, and has one vote regardless of whether they own a single property, multiple properties, or a portion of a property.

## Local Historic Districts

In general, local historic districts are far more effective at preventing inappropriate changes than a National Register District. In a local historic district, a locally appointed Historic District Commission reviews proposed changes to exterior architectural features visible from a public way. For instance, if a building addition is proposed in a local historic district, the property owner must submit an application to the Historic District Commission. The Historic District Commission holds a public hearing and makes a determination on whether the new addition is appropriate. If the addition is deemed appropriate, the Historic District Commission issues a Certificate, allowing the work to progress. Many Historic District Commissions have prepared *Historic District Design Guidelines* that clarify how proposed projects should respect the existing historic character.

Local Historic Districts in Massachusetts were first established on Beacon Hill and Nantucket in 1955. There are now over 200 local historic districts in Massachusetts. Local Historic Districts have been very effective at saving historic structures, neighborhoods, and villages from inappropriate alteration and demolition.

Following the steps outlined in Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40C, Local Historic Districts are established by a two-thirds majority city council or town meeting vote.

By establishing a local historic district, a community recognizes the importance of its architectural heritage and how vulnerable it is to inappropriate alterations without this local regulation.

Many proposed changes are exempt from review. In a local historic district, there is no review of interior features. In addition, a variety of exterior features are often exempt such as air conditioning units, storm doors, storm windows, paint color, and temporary structures. The decision on which features are exempt from review depends on how the local bylaw or ordinance is written and passed by your city council or town meeting vote.

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