

SO YOU WANT TO NOMINATE A HISTORIC DISTRICT... REQUIREMENTS ON PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT DURING THE SURVEY AND NOMINATION PROCESSES

WHY...

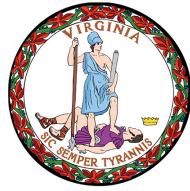
One of the most important parts of preparing a nomination for listing a historic district in the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places is public engagement.

- A majority of property owners (50% +1) within the proposed district **must** support the nomination or it cannot proceed.
- Others who may be affected by the nomination, such as local business employees, community organizations, and rental property residents, also are entitled to be informed about plans concerning the proposed district.
- Local governments are essential partners in nominating historic districts and must be kept informed of such proposals.
- Adequate public engagement is necessary in order to facilitate successful completion of the district's nomination. Therefore, the attached Public Engagement Form **must** be submitted to DHR staff for review **before** work begins on a district nomination project.

HOW...

DHR requires that applicants develop strategies for public engagement before they embark on a nomination project for a historic district. A district nomination cannot proceed without support from a majority of property owners and, therefore, it is a waste of time to start a nomination project without first making sure your project has adequate support. Ways to gauge support are

- **Talk** to the people who live, work, worship, seek entertainment, and engage in other activities within the proposed district.
 - Use social media to start making connections with other people and organizations that may be interested in, or opposed to, a district nomination
 - Contact neighborhood associations, business associations, and community organizations that also may be interested in or supportive
 - Be prepared to explain why you are seeking to nominate a historic district and the reasons Register listing is being pursued.
- **Contact** your local government to find out whether a local preservation plan is in place and, if so, if your proposed district already has been identified as a place of interest.
 - Currently, almost 40 of Virginia's local governments are [Certified Local Governments](#) (CLGs) with dedicated historic preservation staff. If your district is within the jurisdiction of a CLG, you **must** contact the preservation staff for assistance.
- Reach out to DHR for guidance by contacting [your Regional Preservation Office](#). DHR staff must approve your public engagement process before they can recommend that the nomination project should proceed.



More or different communication strategies can be added as the project proceeds. This allows you to:

- Continue tracking public support for the historic district designation before expending substantial time, work, and/or financial resources.
- Collect information from long-time residents about the district's history and changes over time.
- Learn more about individual properties within the district.
- Identify funding sources for your project, if you have not already done so.
- Get to know your neighbors!

WHO...

DHR's [Regional Preservation Offices](#) are available to advise you on the most effective ways to engage the public during your nomination project.

- DHR maintains three regional offices:
 - Western region, located in Salem
 - Northern region, located in Stephens City, Frederick County
 - Eastern region, located in Richmond.
- Each office offers technical information and guidance on the full range of DHR's statewide programs.
- Contact information and service areas for DHR's three regional offices are available at <https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/about-dhr/regional-preservation-offices/>.
- DHR also generally advises historic district applicants to work with professional consultants who have expertise in Virginia's history and architecture as well as the nomination process. DHR offers a [directory](#) of consultants that lists their contact information and areas of expertise.

WHEN...

Conduct initial outreach as described above **before** you begin formal work on your historic district project.

After you have established that your project has support among property owners and other interested parties, your nomination project will consist of three broad tasks. Public engagement should be incorporated in each one:

- **TASK ONE:** Preparation of a [Preliminary Information Form](#) (PIF) and submission to the appropriate Regional office. DHR will use this form to evaluate the proposed district's eligibility for the Virginia Landmarks Register and National Register of Historic Places.
 - **Continue** educating residents, property owners, and the public at large about the proposed district and the reasons Register listing is being pursued.
 - Many local governments have specialized staff who can provide technical assistance and you should find out what that might include. Good places to start include the administrator's, planning, and tax assessor's offices and the GIS department, which often manages numerous types of maps that can be useful.



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- As noted above, almost 40 of Virginia's local governments are [Certified Local Governments](#) (CLGs) with dedicated historic preservation staff. If your proposed district is within the jurisdiction of a CLG, you **must** contact the preservation staff for assistance. A CLG has its own historic preservation program that is locally managed and your district project must be reviewed and approved in order to proceed. CLG staff also are immensely helpful sources of technical guidance and expertise.
- Local government elected officials also should be informed about the proposed district.
- **TASK TWO:** If the historic district is found to be eligible for the Registers, then the next step is completion of a comprehensive [survey](#) of all architectural resources within the district boundaries.¹
 - **Before** the survey starts, reach out to all segments of the general public (residents, businesses, community groups, property owners) within the proposed district boundary to inform them about when the survey will take place, who will be conducting the survey, and the kinds of information that will be recorded. Easy ways to do this are provided in the list at the end of this guidance document.
 - The survey **must** be conducted in accordance with DHR's [Guidelines for Conducting Historic Resources Survey](#).
 - **Continue** educating residents, property owners, and the public at large about the proposed district and the reasons Register listing is being pursued. Remember: real estate is bought and sold on a regular basis and new residents may not have heard of your district project at an earlier stage.
- **TASK THREE:** After the survey is completed and approved by DHR, a [nomination](#) for the historic district can be prepared.
 - DHR will review the nomination and, upon finding that it is complete, will schedule it for presentation to the Virginia State Review Board and the Board of Historic Resources.
 - As noted above, **continue** educating residents, property owners, and the public at large about the proposed district and the reasons Register listing is being pursued.
 - DHR will conduct a formal notification and public hearing process with your assistance after the nomination has been scheduled for presentation to the Boards.

WHAT...

What are your options for public outreach and engagement?

- DHR's [Regional Preservation Offices](#) will provide you with guidance on which options are appropriate for your particular district.
- Local government staff, particularly in the planning, tax assessor's, and GIS offices, likely can help you with creating a map of your proposed district, a list of property owners within the proposed district, and even assistance with finding appropriate public meeting space.
- Professional [consultants](#) also can be contracted to assist you with strategies for public outreach.

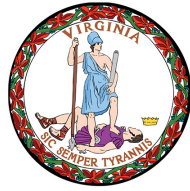
¹ . Note that archaeological sites can be included in a historic district too. DHR staff will provide detailed guidance on whether this is appropriate and how to document these sites.



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Following is a list of activities, in no particular order, that applicants have used for recent, successful historic district nomination projects. Consult with your [Regional Preservation Office](#) staff member for guidance on the best approaches for your district. DHR **requires** that documentation of outreach activities be provided to the Regional Preservation Office at each major step of the district project.

- Contact local elected officials to explain what you want to accomplish by nominating a historic district to the Registers.
- If a local association (neighborhood, business owner, civic, etc.) represents all or part of the proposed district, contact each one to see if you can present your district project to their members.
 - This is also a great opportunity to ask organization staffs and memberships if they have any information about the district’s history, including historic photos.
- Door-to-door canvassing of each property within the proposed district to inform residents, business owners, and organizations about the district proposal.
NOTE: Posted “no trespassing” signs must be obeyed.
- Mail a postcard or flyer about the district proposal to all affected property owners and residents within the proposed district.
 - DHR can provide guidance on content and format.
 - The U.S. Postal Service offers assistance for compiling mailing addresses through their [Every Door Direct Mail](#) service.
 - Numerous private companies also can be contracted to conduct mass mailings.
- Develop an informative flyer that can be handed out during canvassing or other public outreach activities.
 - DHR can advise on content and format of the flyer.
- Train survey staff about the district project, including the sponsoring organization and reasons that the district nomination is being prepared; also encourage survey staff to engage with property owners and anyone curious about what they’re doing and why.
 - DHR can provide survey staff with training on how to explain typical goals of architectural survey and why this is required as part of the district nomination process.
- Submit an article about the proposed historic district nomination for publication in a neighborhood newsletter and/or online publication.
- Set up an information table and/or have brochures/postcards available at a community event.



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- Send out a press release about the district proposal to generate interest from local media outlets.
 - Many local feature reporters stay on the lookout for fresh special-interest stories.
 - Don't forget about local radio stations, including commercial, nonprofit, college, and volunteer-run stations.
- Ask for permission to place posters or flyers on community message boards at local businesses, public libraries, community meeting facilities, churches, and other community-oriented venues.
- Attend a city council/county board of supervisors meeting to inform elected officials of the historic district proposal.
 - If the historic district is within an incorporated Town, then attending a Town Council also is warranted.
- Create a social media page, blog, or website dedicated to informing owners about the proposed district.
 - Post updates as work on the project proceeds, from submission of the Preliminary Information Form to the hoped-for listing in the Registers.
 - Add information about your proposed district's history, including historic photographs, maps, and other images.
 - Ask readers to submit their own images and content.
 - Take advantage of crowdsourcing by including a "who is it?/what is it?" feature for identifying unknown people, events, and places in historic photos.
- Ask managers of community blogs and websites to post information about the proposed district, such as a flyer or press release.
 - Websites managed by civic associations, neighborhood associations, local government entities, homeowners associations, and other community-oriented groups are all appropriate.
- Ask managers of community social media outlets (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) to post information about the proposed district.
- If you have other ideas for effective public engagement, please let us know!



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PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT FORM

Name of proposed district: _____

Location of proposed district (City or County and, if applicable, Town):

Public Engagement Plan:

(List each of the public engagement activities that have taken place as of today's date)

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Signature of person authorized to speak on behalf of the district project)

Please attach examples of any outreach materials that have been distributed, such as emails, social media posts, postcards, meeting flyers, press releases, websites, etc.