

Self-Test for Historic Significance on Your Property

Using the Cedar Rapids Historic Sites and Districts Identification system, one is able to determine if property is located within the bounds of a historic district, if a structure potentially has historic significance, or if a structure already has the designation as an individual historic landmark.

The [Historic Surveys and Data](#) page maintained by the City of Cedar Rapids contains the interactive mapping tool which will indicate if a property has been surveyed for historic significance or is already designated as having historical significance. The page also contains a Glossary, Frequently Asked Questions and two narrated How-To videos that make the system user friendly.

Below are a set of instructions which will help you answer the following question, “Does this property potentially have historic significance?”

1. **Locate a property on the interactive mapping tool** - Once you have clicked on a property using the interactive database the pop up box will indicate if it has been surveyed for historical significance or if it is already designated as historic. In the event a property has not been surveyed, the next steps will help you determine if the property could be historically significant.
2. **Determine the age of the structure** - Structures which are not at least 50 years or older generally are not included on historic registers or considered eligible to be listed on a historic register.

Using the [Cedar Rapids City Assessor](#) search page is a good way to help determine age of a structure. One may also use the [City Assessor Parcel Viewer](#) to obtain information about a property. Search by specific address or navigate to the property in question; click that parcel and, in the popup box, click the top link that says “Summary Page.”

Using either search method will launch the assessor summary of the property and structures on it. Under “Residential Building Information” or “Commercial Building Information” headings on the summary page, you will find the “Occupancy” column heading. Expand the triangle below that and the year built will appear in the summary with other information on the structure.

3. **Review the National Park Service’s National Register Bulletin on How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation** – The criteria to determine if a property is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places provides a framework to determine if the property under consideration has historic significance. Reviewing the property under

consideration against the following sections of the Bulletin will be particularly helpful to determine potential historic significance:

- a. **Section II. National Register Criteria for Evaluation** - To be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) the historic property under consideration, must fit into one or more of the [Criteria for Evaluation](#) established by NPS. This page indicates four criteria, A-D which determines eligibility for the NRHP.
- b. **Section IV. How to Define Categories of Historic Properties** - The NPS website describes the differences between a Building, Structure, Object, Site or District. This will help determine which category the property or structure you are interested in fits into, which is important to know before determining if it has the potential to be historic.
- c. **Section V. How to Evaluate a Property Within Its Historic Context** - The National Park Service Website states that, “To qualify for the National Register; the potentially historic property must represent a significant part of history and it must have characteristics which make it a good representative of the past.” Use the NPS guidance for [Understanding Historic Contexts](#) to determine potential historic significance.
- d. **Section VII. How to Apply the Criteria Considerations** - Some property types are generally excluded from listing on the NRHP, but there are circumstances in which these properties are considered historic. Some considerations from NPS will help you determine if your property is generally excluded and examples which highlight if that property is eligible or not eligible.
- e. **Section VIII. How to Evaluate the Integrity of a Property** - No property or structure looks exactly as it did when it was constructed or initially improved. However, the key aspects of it need to be retained for the property to retain historic integrity and therefore, their ability to convey the significance of the structure or property. The NPS provides [guidance to determine](#) if the property has maintained that integrity and thus, potential historic significance.

After working through these steps, it is very likely that you will be able to determine if the property or structure under consideration potentially has historic significance and could possibly be eligible for the NRHP.

My Property Doesn't Appear Eligible for the NRHP

In the event your property is not eligible for the NRHP, it is possible that your property could have local significance. Eligibility for a Local Historic District or a Local Historic Landmark is determined by [Cedar Rapids Municipal Code Section 18.05](#).

Evidence of integrity and eligibility can be presented to the [Cedar Rapids Historic Preservation Commission \(HPC\)](#), [State Historic Preservation Office \(SHPO\)](#) and [Cedar Rapids City Council](#). The HPC holds an initial hearing and will make a recommendation on the local historic district or landmark. If recommended for approval, SHPO reviews the research and also makes a recommendation. The City Planning Commission holds a public hearing on the matter and all recommendations and comments are then forwarded to the City Council, who will make the final determination. The following are resources which can help you research historic significance:

1. One resource to consult to help determine local significance is the [History Center](#). The History Center provides resources and assistance to research locally important persons, events and has a vast archive of local materials related to Cedar Rapids history.
2. The [Genealogical Society of Linn County Iowa](#) has information, records, photographs, books and historic periodicals to help with research related to the Cedar Rapids area.
3. [Save Cedar Rapids Heritage](#) is a local organization who works to preserve historic buildings and works in the community to promote preservation.
4. The City of Cedar Rapids [Community Development Department](#) is here to help, please contact us. We can help you coordinate with the [Historic Preservation Commission](#) to assist in researching and answering questions you may have.
5. Anyone doing integrity and eligibility research can choose to enlist the help of a professional to help with research.