

Local Designation Benefits & Process Comparisons

Quick Comparison of Benefits

Category	Local Designation	Wisconsin State Register	National Register
Main purpose	Protect historic character at the local level	Recognize statewide significance + enable incentives	Recognize national significance + enable federal programs
Biggest benefit	✓ Strong protection from inappropriate changes	💰 Access to state tax credits	💰 Access to federal tax credits + prestige
Property value impact	✓ Often stabilizes & increases values	⚖️ Moderate positive effect	⚖️ Moderate (recognition-driven)
Tax credits available	✗ Usually none (unless local programs exist)	✓ 20–25% WI tax credits	✓ 20% federal tax credit
Grants / funding eligibility	⚠️ Limited	✓ Some state programs	✓ Federal & some state programs
Restrictions on property owner	✓ YES (design review required)	✗ NO restrictions by listing alone	✗ NO restrictions by listing alone
Control over renovations	⚠️ Must get local approval for visible changes	✓ Full control (unless using incentives)	✓ Full control (unless federal funding involved)
Protection from demolition	✓ Strong (local approval required)	✗ None on its own	✗ None on its own
Protection from outside projects	⚠️ Local influence only	⚠️ Limited	✓ Federal review required if federal funds involved

Complexity of process	 Low–Moderate	 Moderate	 Highest (state + federal review)
Time to achieve	 Fast (months)	 Medium	 Longest (often 6–12+ months)
Public recognition / prestige	 Local recognition	 State-level recognition	 High national recognition
Best use case	Protecting neighborhood character	Unlocking funding for rehab	Large projects, grants, or prestige recognition
Works with other designations?	 Can layer with state/national	 Often paired with national	 Often paired with state/local

NOTE The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards applies to both WI state and Federal tax credits regarding design standards. Program rules and requirements differ.

Quick Tax Credits Comparisons

Situation	Must follow historic standards?
Using federal/state tax credits	✓ Yes (required)
Using federal funding or permits	✓ Yes (review required)
Using state/federal grants	✓ Yes (usually required)
No funding, no incentives	✗ No
Local historic designation applies	⚠ Maybe (depends on local ordinance)

Category	Federal Credit	Wisconsin State Credit
Design standards	✓ Same	✓ Same
Governing rules	IRS + NPS	State (WHS + WEDC)
Eligible properties	Income-producing only	Income-producing + homes
Credit %	20%	20% (commercial) / 25% (homes)
Payout timing	Spread over 5 years	Often faster (varies)
Approval	SHPO + NPS	SHPO (+ WEDC)
Funding caps	None specific	✓ Limited funding pool
Transferability	Limited	Often easier

Quick Comparison of Process

Step / Feature	Local Designation (Columbus, WI)	Wisconsin State Register	National Register
Who runs it	Historic Landmarks Preservation Commission (HLPC)	Wisconsin Historical Society (SHPO)	National Park Service (via SHPO)
Who starts it	Usually HLPC, property owner, or local group	Anyone (owner, org, citizen)	Anyone (submitted through SHPO)
Step 1: Eligibility check	Based on local criteria (age, architecture, local significance)	Must meet state/national historic criteria	Same criteria as state (often identical)
Step 2: Documentation	Local application (less detailed)	Formal nomination (history, photos, significance)	Same nomination format (very detailed)
Step 3: Review process	HLPC	State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) review	SHPO review + National Park Service review
Step 4: Public input	✓ Often required (hearings, city meetings)	✓ Sometimes part of review	✓ Typically included in state review
Step 5: Decision body	HLPC	State review board	State review board → National Park Service final decision
Final approval	HLPC vote; appeals by City Council	Wisconsin State Register listing	National Park Service lists property
Timeframe	Usually fastest (months)	Moderate (several months)	Longest (6–12+ months typical)
Level of recognition	Local significance	State significance	National significance
Restrictions after listing	✓ Yes (design review required)	✗ None by itself	✗ None by itself
Main benefit	Protection of historic character	Access to state tax credits	Federal tax credits + prestige
Relationship to others	Independent	Often paired with national	Often paired with state