

Survey of Historic Resources in Downtown Lincoln

Frequently Asked Questions

- 1) Why do a survey of downtown Lincoln?** In 2018, the LCEDF received a grant from the Kansas Historical Society to hire Spencer Preservation to conduct surveys of historic resources throughout the county including downtown Lincoln, downtown Sylvan Grove and Lincoln's city park. The primary purpose of the surveys was to determine if those districts (and/or individual properties within it) would be eligible for any historic designations that could open up financial resources for property improvements and tourism development initiatives.
- 2) What are the specific historic designations this survey could lead to?** There are two primary designations an overall district or an individual building can achieve: the National Register of Historic Places and the Register of Historic Kansas Places.

The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) is the country's official list of historically significant properties. Properties eligible for the register generally retain their historic appearance, are at least 50 years old, and have the potential to be documented as historically or architecturally significant at either the local, state, or national level. Many types of properties are listed in the register, including barns, banks, courthouses, libraries, houses, parks, ranches, battlefields, hospitals, roads, bridges, rail depots, and archeological sites. The National Register is a National Park Service program administered by the Kansas State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

The Register of Historic Kansas Places (RHKP) is our state's official list of historically significant properties. Properties included in the National Register are first listed in the state register; however, not all properties listed in the state register are further included in the National Register. The same general criteria are used to assess the eligibility of a property for inclusion in the state register, but more flexibility is allowed in the interpretation of the criteria for eligibility.

- 3) Why designate a district or an individual property on the National Register of Historic Places or the Register of Historic Kansas Places?** Communities and property owners seek historic designations for a number of reasons, the primary ones being:
 - Provides a prestigious recognition to a place or a property that can be used in marketing campaigns and tourism development initiatives
 - Bolsters pride in a community's history and heritage
 - Supports local heritage education initiatives
 - Encourages the preservation of historic properties by providing financial resources to property owners to help maintain and improve their properties. These programs could include Heritage Trust Fund grants (max. \$90,000 grant with 20% local match for rehabilitation projects), Historic Preservation Fund grants (for planning projects), state historic tax credits (a 25% credit on qualified expenses), and federal historic tax credits (a 20% credit on qualified expenses).
- 4) The survey says the downtown is considered 'eligible' to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Now what?** The survey is simply a report that assesses a district's historic integrity and eligibility for any historic designations. It does not actually make the designation. What happens next is up to the local community with two possible options.

The first option is to do nothing. If the general community does not want the downtown to be listed on the NRHP, the report doesn't have to go any further. The survey can be used as a tool to promote local history as there is interesting notes about significant dates and architectural styles.

The second option is to begin the formal process of nominating the district to the NRHP. This may require some additional research and preparing the nomination forms. The nomination must then be reviewed by the Kansas Historic Sites Review Board. Upon approval at the state level, the nomination is then submitted to the National Park Service for final review and approval for listing on the NRHP.

- 5) **The survey says my property is considered “contributing” to Lincoln’s downtown district. What does that mean?** A contributing resource is a building, structure, object or site within the district’s boundaries that retains enough of its own historic physical features that it adds to the overall historic quality and significance of the district. *A contributing property may be eligible for financial incentives such as grants and tax credits.*
- 6) **The survey says my property is considered “non-contributing” to Lincoln’s downtown district. What does that mean?** A non-contributing resource does not contribute to the overall historic quality and significance of the district. This could be because the resource is less than 50 years old or has been significantly altered that it no longer retains enough historic physical features. Your property is not impacted one way or the other if the district is designated as historic or not. *A non-contributing property is NOT eligible for financial incentives.*
- 7) **I heard if my building is historic, I will be told how I can or can’t make changes to my building. Is that true?** Not necessarily. The NRHP and the RHKP are honorary designations and *not* zoning regulations or ordinances. Historic designations do not place any limitations or restrictions on a property owner from doing anything to their buildings up-to and including demolition.

Kansas’s State Preservation Law (K.S.A. 75-2724) states that the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) must review projects related to historically designated properties (those listed on the NRHP or RHKP) when: 1) the projects requires local building/demolition permits and 2) the project involves state or federal funding. *Because Lincoln does not require local building permits for the rehabilitation or remodeling of a property, SHPO review is not triggered, even if you own a historically designated property.* If you want to read Kansas’s State Preservation Law, it is available online at: <https://www.kshs.org/p/state-preservation-law/14648>

Having said that, *if a property owner is utilizing state or federal financial incentives*, such as grants or tax credits, a review *IS* required. Think of it this way, financial incentives always come with strings attached. If you want money for your project, you are going to have to follow some rules. In these cases, the rules are the “Secretary of Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation”, the nationally accepted benchmark for evaluating changes to historic properties. <https://www.kshs.org/p/preservation-standards-and-techniques/14649>

- 8) **What if I have more questions?** No problem! A public meeting will be held on **Monday, June 17th, 7:30pm, at the Lincoln County Historical Museum in Lincoln** to present the final survey of downtown Lincoln to the community, discuss how these determinations do (or do not) affect property owners and answer any questions or concerns attendees may have.

You are also welcome to contact:

- Kelly Larson – Director of the Lincoln County Economic Development Foundation (785) 524-8954, LcedfDirector@Outlook.com
- Jamee Fiore – National Register Coordinator at the Kansas Historical Society (785) 272-8681 x216, jamee.fiore@ks.gov
- Katrina Ringler – Grants Manager at the Kansas Historical Society (785) 272-8681 x215, katrina.ringler@ks.gov