

## 1.4 HISTORIC DISTRICT OVERVIEW

The National Register of Historic Places is a program established by federal law and administered by the National Park Service through state historic-preservation institutions. In the case of Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) administers the process by which a property or district is nominated to the register. Once a nomination form is properly prepared, it is submitted to the Historic Preservation Board, a panel appointed by the governor. If approved by this panel, it is then sent to the National Park Service, who also must approve it. Once entered on the National Register, a property or district obtains certain planning protections for federal- and state-funded or licensed projects, and certain tax benefits are tied to the listing for income-producing properties.



Figure 1-12: the downtown West Chester historic district

As shown in Figure 1-12, the study area lies at the center of both the National Register Historic District, admitted to the National Register of Historic Places in 1987, and the Municipal Historic District, established pursuant to state law through a local ordinance enacted by Borough Council in 1989. Certification of the Municipal Historic District was required by the PHMC before the ordinance could go into effect. The Borough achieved Pennsylvania CLG status in June 1994. The same standards that are used to decide the district's National Register eligibility are used to decide if the district can be certified under state law. Therefore, the National Register standards will be employed for this study.

It is widely recognized that the integrity of a historic district does not rely on the eligibility and, by implication, the integrity of any single building in the district. However, buildings within the historic district may be generally categorized as contributing or non-contributing to the district. Since the 1984 nomination form for the National Register explicitly indicated that the properties in the study area were contributing, except for portions of the former Mosteller's Department Store, that issue is closed from further evaluation. This conclusion remains valid given that the subject properties have changed little from the time the register form was prepared and submitted.

As a result of its listing in the National Register of Historic Places, the West Chester Downtown Historic District has been found, as a whole, to possess the necessary historic integrity relating to the period of significance for which it was nominated (i.e., a period extending to the 1930's).

Therefore, the buildings in the study area possess a strong baseline of integrity that contributes to the overall character of the historic district.