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The Historic Preservation Certification Process: How to Succeed

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A successful historic preservation tax credit project is one that NPS has approved. But while NPS is the final arbiter of tax credit projects, it is not the first point of contact. It should be your goal to make sure that NPS is happy with the project in the beginning (for your own peace of mind) and in the end (for the benefit of your pocket book). How do you get there? This presentation will provide you with some tips and tricks, as well as *bona fide*, good, old-fashioned advice about how to get your project approved as Certified Historic Rehabilitation.

There is an old Russian folk saying: “The Czar is good, but he’s far, far away in Moscow.” For most of you not based in Washington, DC, the same holds true—NPS is, of course, very good, but it is far, far away in Washington. The State Historic Preservation Offices, the SHPOs, are the local “eyes and ears” of the Park Service. The SHPOs are the first line of defense. (But at that I will stop using the analogy by comparing SHPO offices to local Russian bureaucracy).

So how does someone overcome the distance when taking on a tax credit project? If you walk away with nothing else: Remember these three basic points:

- Consult with your State Office *early and often*
- Seek help on big and/or complicated projects *before you are in trouble*
- Do the work that you told NPS you would do

**CONSULT EARLY AND OFTEN**

SHPOs around the country recommend that developers contact them early on. And that is good advice!

Let the SHPO know about your project as soon as you think you have a project. Ask the simple, straightforward question: “Does this property look like it can be a successful tax credit project?” Obviously, asked this early, the answer may not turn out to be the same in the end. But the theory is that information shared at this point will give the SHPO’s enough sense of what the building is and what you as developer want to do that they can set you in the right direction and keep you there.

What do you need to tell the SHPO’s?

- Identify the property
- Explain what you have in mind and why
- Ask what they think