

Role of Local Governments In the Revised (2009) Special Assessment of Historic Property Program

The 2009 Legislation Session brought several revisions to the program. One of those called for local governments to take the primary role for project review and approval of the specially-assessed properties in their jurisdictions. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) sees this change as an opportunity for a healthy dialogue between SHPO and the local landmarks commission/staff, and looks upon it as a collaborative process that can benefit all concerned.

Program Overview

- 10-year “freeze” of assessed value (which equates to lower property taxes).
- An approved Preservation Plan is required, and substantial work must be completed within the first 5 years.
- A second 10-year term is possible, though only after reassessment and submission of a new, more stringent Preservation Plan.

Certification of Applications

- SHPO certifies properties for participation in the program.
- Local governments are given 30 days to comment on applications.

Approval of Projects

- Local governments will typically serve as the decision-makers on Preservation Plan projects, but only under the following conditions:
 - The project triggers the need for local design review and approval, based on local preservation ordinance authority.
 - The local preservation ordinance is based on the “historic rehabilitation standards” (Secretary of the Interior’s “Standards for Rehabilitation”).
- Local governments must, however, coordinate with SHPO as follows:
 - Provide SHPO a copy of the proposed project (email is OK) and allow SHPO 14 days to comment. Information should include a brief project description, photos, elevation drawings or floor plans, if appropriate, manufacturer’s/contractor’s specifications, etc.
 - Address SHPO comments during the decision-making process and include in the written decision justification for accepting or rejecting SHPO comments.
 - Provide SHPO with a copy of the decision.
- Local governments may ask SHPO to be the primary approver of projects under any of the following conditions:
 - Projects involve work that is not under the jurisdiction of the local ordinance (e.g. interior work).
 - The local government feels it does not have the appropriate expertise or time for such oversight. (Most local governments already conduct a required local review, however, so this “new” reviewer role shouldn’t require additional work.)

Appeals of Decisions

- Local government decisions must be appealed through the specified local appeals process.
- SHPO decisions must be appealed through the Historic Assessment Review Committee, as specified in statute.

SHPO Contact Information

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