

Summary

Back to the Future: A Review of the National Historic Preservation Program

A Report by a Panel of the National Academy of Public Administration for the National Park Service, December 2007

About the authors:



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Summary of Recommendations

Some forty years ago, the National Historic Preservation Act (16 USC 470) set forth a vision for a federal-state partnership to preserve and protect the nation's historic properties. In the NAPA Panel's view, the National Historic Preservation Program stands as a successful example of effective federal-state partnership and is working to realize Congress' original vision to a great extent. While the program's basic structure is sound, it continues to face a number of notable challenges. The Panel concludes that a stronger federal leadership role, greater resources, and enhanced management are needed to build upon the existing, successful framework to achieve the full potential of the NHPA on behalf of the American people. The following recommendations are derived from a fifty-six page report available at www.NAPAwash.org

The Panel recommends that

- the National Park Service (NPS) build upon the National Preservation program's success by providing a stronger national leadership role in consultation with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) and other national partners as appropriate;
- the ACHP work to improve the Section 106 process;
- the NPS expand its mission to make building the capacity of State Historic Preservation Officers and Tribal Historic Preservation Officers a top priority and that it pursue this goal aggressively in cooperation with its national partners;
- the Department of the Interior and the NPS strengthen the performance of the National Historic Preservation program and expand resources based on its demonstrated effectiveness in cooperation with the ACHP.
- the NPS proactively address the situation in which tribes find themselves by creating an NPS-tribal working group to consider experience gained and lessons learned;
- the NPS improve the efficiency of national historic preservation efforts by taking full advantage of information technologies;
- the NPS take new building products and technological changes into account; and
- OMB form a "community of interest" among federal program managers who administer block grant and formula grant programs to learn from each other how to improve accountability, measure results, and continuously improve performance.