

The Local Landmarker

Issue 4, June 2007

GRANTS EDITION!

PEEKSKILL

HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM Fall 2002

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MAIN STREET LOOKING WEST, CIRCA 1900

Overview of Historic Preservation in Peekskill



FRANKLIN STREET SCHOOL
CONSTRUCTED IN 1902.
DEMOLISHED IN 1969.

Over the last three decades, the City of Peekskill has experienced a marked increase in the replacement of older structures with new construction in its downtown area. This prompted Peekskill's Common Council to begin the process of protecting the remaining historic resources in its central business district. In May 2000, the Common Council adopted legislation that provides for "Historic Districts and Landmarks Preservation". On March 26, 2001, the City designated its first local historic district in the downtown area (see map on page 2). This prestigious designation highlights the historical and architectural significance of the district, and ensures that all renovations, demolition and new construction within the district are reviewed by the City prior to construction. It is anticipated that this legislation will stabilize neighborhood growth and value, bring long term investment to the community, and promote Peekskill's rich historic and architectural heritage.

Historic preservation is a catalyst for the revitalization, stabilization, and enhancement of historic neighborhoods. The creation of a historic district typically results in improved property maintenance and a heightened sense of cooperation within the neighborhood. Another important outcome of preservation activities is increased property values. Historic designation fosters community cohesion, identity, and pride, along with an appreciation of the historic character of the community and concern for its future.

If you own a structure that is designated as a local landmark or located within a historic district, this legislation will make it subject to certain standards. While you have to meet these standards when exterior work is done on your property, you also benefit from knowing that all the property in the district will be treated in the same manner. The relationship between you, your neighbor and the City becomes one of partnering to maintain historical, architectural, cultural and real property values.

For more information, contact Peekskill's Department of Planning and Development at 914-734-4210.

On the Cover: A CLG grant assisted publication produced by the City of Peekskill, this booklet is a great introduction to the local preservation program for residents and visitors. You can read more about this publication and how to access it online in the "Featured Website" section of this issue.

From the Coordinator

This issue

This issue of *The Local Landmarker* is dedicated to the CLG grants process, and is forwarded along with the formal grants packet. We were hoping to hold a series of regional workshops for the CLG grants, but time and some personal issues within our offices prevented that noble idea from proceeding. So, to make up for not being able to provide direct assistance in a meeting, I'm going to use this issue to go over the grant application in detail and provide some examples of excellent grants products we've seen during the years. If you've applied before, do so again. You might be finishing up a larger project, or starting a new one. If you've never applied think about doing so: it's a source of federal funding that only CLGs are eligible to ask for and I'm sure there's a worthy project in your community.

I've always been of the opinion that the most important part of grantsmanship is following the grant application instructions. While this may sound simple on the surface, I'm always surprised at how many people obviously don't read the instructions. People also overlook a section, forget a signature, or don't include budgets. Therefore, if you are the only one preparing the materials, there are several techniques you can use to review the application before you mail it. One method is to set the application aside for at least one full day and then go back to it with a fresh set of eyes. Another is to have another person go over the application with a critical eye - two reviewers are even better!

One new thing we're looking to do for this upcoming round is to hold workshops after the awards are announced so that documentation requirements, timelines, reporting requirements, reimbursement information, etc. are all clearly understood by awardees. If you have additional input as to what you feel you need to know during these sessions, please call or write me.

So, look over the application materials, using this issue as a guide, review other projects as ideas for your grant application, and call me if you have any questions. As you may know, I'm on the road a lot visiting current and potential new CLG communities, but I'll always try to get back to you if you leave a message and a number.

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The CLG Grant Application

For purposes of this article, I'll be using the materials in the actual grant application packet as a basis for discussion. I'll be elaborating or expanding on some of the wording in those materials to help you better understand the intent and procedures of the CLG grants process.

Funding

Under the provisions of the amendment to the National Historic Preservation Act that created the Certified Local Government program (original act, 1966, CLG amendment, 1980), each state has to set aside at least ten percent of the state's allocation of federal historic preservation funds (HPF) for grants to CLGs. The HPF is the fund that is allocated to states to enable them to administer federal historic preservation programs at the state level. Every state has a State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Most SHPOs are located within state agencies. The New York SHPO is part of the Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation. In New York, we typically set aside 10% of our federal funds for CLG grants. Based on an average annual federal allotment of +/- \$1,000,000 to New York State, this translates to approximately \$100,000 available annually for grants. New York currently has 57 CLGs, and that number is growing. Therefore, we may not be able to award every applicant a grant to ensure that projects are adequately funded. Eligible applications are evaluated and ranked according to the selection criteria. Past grant awards have ranged from \$1,200 to \$29,000, with most in the \$5,000 to \$15,000 range.

Funding Priorities

Before you begin to fill out the application, it's good to start with an understanding of the types of project we are looking to fund. We consider the list below to be priorities, which means that applications proposing projects in one or more of these categories will get the highest funding priority. We do not mean the priority list to be the only appropriate grants-assisted work, but we have found that projects in these categories address many of the issues and needs common across the state. *Please note that this is an informal, "annotated" list of priorities. For the official priorities list, please see the grants application. Also, since audits have not been performed in the past year, I have not included the "Projects to address deficiencies in CLG performance" category here.)*

Commission Training: You can NEVER have enough training. Most people working with local preservation are volunteers. While this provides for true democratic practice in local preservation efforts, and those volunteers bring the expertise that their "day-jobs" provide to the table, most people have never done the type of work a commission handles before their appointment. Understanding the legal role the commission plays, operating within the local law, using standards and guidelines for review; it can all be new and intimidating. Couple that with the fact that local commissions are always gaining or losing members depending on appointment terms, and you've got a recipe for a loss of corporate knowledge. Therefore, training is an extremely important priority. The **highest** funding priority within training is sponsorship of a statewide conference for CLG commissions. Closely following that priority are jointly sponsored projects that can assist more than one CLG, such as shared consultants

or joint town/village/city projects if all participants in the grant application are all CLGs.

Public Education: Public information and outreach projects can have a significant impact in aiding the work of a commission. Examples of this are quarterly or annual publications that are mailed out to all property owners describing the commission's process and procedures, workshops to take some of the "mystery" out of coming before the commission, and other such projects designed to raise public knowledge and acceptance of local historic preservation programs.

Survey and Designation: While important for new commissions that have not yet formally designated any resources, surveys and designation projects are also important for more established commissions as well. The understanding of historic resources is a dynamic enterprise. There might be areas of your community that have never been surveyed for historic resources; there might be resource types such as industrial buildings that had not been considered worthy of designation when the commission was established; and, time, always marching forward, will bring buildings and other structures into potential consideration for landmark designation. Another angle on surveys is to update older, existing surveys to provide current information for use in a database or designation process.

Demonstration projects on Critical Issues. A "critical issue" is one that has not been substantially addressed in any other study, publication, or workshop and has the potential to be an issue either regionally or state-wide. A good project would look to develop a model approach to the problem that could then be taken and used state-wide. Examples of these issues include economic revitalization using historic preservation, affordable housing in historic buildings/districts, protection for historic landscapes and farmlands (addressing sprawl, uncontrolled development), identification of resources associated with the history of minority populations, and comprehensive land use planning.

Considerations

These are the "refiners" to the priorities that hopefully help you understand our thought processes a little better when we review the applications. Key in their concepts is that the project will have a beneficial impact on present and future preservation efforts of the CLG, has local support, and will not duplicate the work of others CLGs. We also look to see that the project has been carefully planned in respect to scope, objective, budget and project schedules. A project that is overambitious in scope may not get funded due to the possibility of it not being completed within the federal timeframe. It would be better to break a larger project into sections that could be sequentially funded through several grant rounds.

We also check that the applicant has committed, or best of all, set-aside resources (either cash or in-kind) to the project. A project match is not required, but we encourage at least a match of least 40% of the total budget amount. Again, this match can be cash or in-kind services billable to the project.

Timetable

Applications are due this year by July 20, 2007. Our goal is to have awards announced in September 2007, although this date is not "hard and fast." A little known fact is that applications may be filed up to one year prior to the deadline date. If they are, they are placed on file for consideration during the next upcoming round. If an application is received after the deadline, we may consider it for funding later in the year if money becomes available. We have had funded projects withdraw from the cycle, and we have the option to redirect the money that would have otherwise gone to that municipality.

Project Scheduling

As noted above, we would like to award grants in September of this year, but we cannot declare that to be a “set” date. After awards are announced, we move towards getting them under contract within two to three months. The timing of project completion can be a bit hard to understand for those not used to federal funding, as we use the federal fiscal year as the calendar for the grant cycle. Grant projects must be completed in the fiscal year of the award (October 1, 2007 – September 30, 2008) or the fiscal year following (for this round, October 2008- September 2009). Therefore, this year’s CLG grants will be considered as being in Federal Fiscal Year 2008 (FFY2008). Don’t forget that there is closeout paperwork that must be completed, so to allow sufficient time for closeout, we recommend that FY2008 projects be scheduled to end by September 30, 2008. This gives us all time to go through the paperwork, get copies of publications, and close out our “books” by the end of the calendar (not fiscal) year.

Payment

This is a grants program, but the money is paid to awardees on a reimbursement basis. The project must be completed and documentation of the total project expenditures must be submitted before checks are cut. This should be considered when doing your internal budgeting, as the municipality may have to incur the total project cost before receiving the reimbursement.

The Application Form

The application, while relatively short, requires information that is important not to overlook. When in doubt, include more information that you think necessary rather than leave a section blank or only partially completed. As always, call or write if you have any questions. I’d rather help you put together a complete application rather than disqualify the municipality due to an incomplete one.

Page 1

This page contains all the contact information and a budget summary so that a glance we can tell what CLG is applying, who the appropriate contact people are, and the total amount of the grant requested. While it may seem self-explanatory, I would like to walk through it, letter by letter.

Letter A: Applicant/Local Government. Since grants are only awarded to municipalities, this should not be a person’s name. This should be the formal name of your village, city, town or county. The address should be the general mailing address of the local government.

Letter B: Chief Elected Official. For Cities and Villages, this is typically the Mayor; for towns, the Supervisor, head of the Town Board, or the head of the legally appropriate legislative body.

Letter C: Project Contact, Program. This should be the person that will be responsible for seeing the project through to completion. This does not mean the person who might actually

do the work described in the application, as many CLG projects are done by consultants. This is the person we can contact if we have questions about status, timetables, etc. and the person who can answer for the municipality if we have questions about the project

Letter D: Project Contact. Fiscal: This should be the local person who will be responsible for the money or “purse-strings” of the project. A treasurer or other such titled person is typically the name here. This is important if we have questions about funding, payments, or other fiscal matters.

Letter E: Project Name. This is simply the name of the project being submitted. This doesn't have to be anything elaborate or fancy. In many cases, a simple and declarative description of the project's goal, end result, or intended product is best.

Letter F: Budget Summary. Later in the application is a section for a more elaborate budget description (and that is a very important section!), but for this section, a simple summary of overall dollars is needed.

Letter G: This step assures us that this is an official submission on the behalf of the local government, and that the project has the backing, support (program and fiscal), and awareness of the local government.

Page 2: Project Description

This page is your opportunity to “sell” us on the need, solid planning, and benefits of your proposed project. **Need** is an important aspect of your grant application; without it we cannot understand why you are asking for the grant! We are looking to fund projects that will truly address a need so that your local preservation program can move forward. Clearly detailing the **planning** behind the project lets us know that you are ready to move quickly and in a positive direction once a grant is awarded. The **benefits** of your project can be local, regional, or state-wide. Be certain to let us know how the project will further your local preservation work both now and for the long term.

Page 3: Budget

Most of us get nervous when we have to think about budgets. However, this is one case where you'll need to sharpen your pencil and your nerves. Since we have a limited amount of money to award, we need to make certain that none of it is going to waste, and that the proposed project has been carefully thought through as to cost. Don't forget to include any in-kind services as they count towards the total dollar amount. As noted above, there is no required match for this grant program, but we do encourage a 40% match if possible. This helps us stretch those precious federal dollars.

Page 3 A is essentially a continuation of the budget sheet, and gives us an assurance that any moneys you've budgeted as match are or will be available. This is another step in assuring that the project, if awarded will be able to move quickly, and be completed on time.

Page 4: Assurances

This page, while on the surface is simply a page of statements that you must initial by, they are actually conditions of award that we must be certain the municipality is aware of. Be certain to read each carefully and make sure you understand its intent before you initial it. Included in the list are statements that require the municipality to hire professionals who meet federal historic preservation qualifications and projects that cost that over \$10,000 to be formally advertised for competitive bidding in accordance with Federal bidding requirements. As I stated before, following directions in filling out grant applications is an important part of grant writing; some applicants in the past have put check marks beside the requirements rather than initialing them. This might sound quibbling, but initials beside a statement confirm that an individual has read each one and noted it as being part of the application process, and that we know who that individual is.

Page 4 A: Civil Rights Assurances

This is a federally required step that is necessary to receive funds from the United States Department of the Interior (our source of federal funding.) The key assurance the municipality is agreeing to by signing this are that the local historic preservation program will consider the role of all segments of the population in the history, archaeology, architecture, and cultural development of the community, that minority and handicapped individuals will have full access to the funded activities and services, and that nondiscrimination information will be provided to the public as part of the project.

Page 4 B: Affirmative Action/Minority and Woman-Owned Business Enterprise (WMBE) Policy Statement

This is a New York State required agreement that ensures that the program/project will be undertaken without discrimination in regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, sexual preference or Vietnam Era Veteran status. Also, it commits the municipality to steps to ensure that minority and WMBE companies are recruited for the project. The local EEO/Minority/MWBE coordinator must sign this form.

Page 4 C: Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension, Ineligibility and Voluntary Exclusion

This is another federally required statement that simply ensures that the municipality is not in any way ineligible to take part in the grants process.

That covers the application! As always, if you have any questions, please call. I look forward to reviewing the applications.

Featured Website(s)

Examples of CLG Projects on the Internet

When a project receives funding, we like to ensure that the product gets maximum exposure, and the internet is an excellent way for that to happen. Here are two communities that have used CLG funding for products and worked to make that happen.

The City Of Utica

The City of Utica has prominently placed information on their historic preservation program on the city website. From the main city webpage at www.cityofutica.com, click on "Find historic and scenic information." That will take you to the page for the local preservation commission, and you will see "Download historic and scenic brochure." This brochure was funded during the FFY2006 grant round and was the grant was recently closed out with a successful product. You can also scroll down to the bottom of the page and download the design guidelines that assist applicants and commission members in protecting locally designated historic properties. These guidelines were assisted with a grant from the FFY2003 grant round.

The City of Peekskill

In 2002, the City of Peekskill utilized CLG funds to produce an excellent brochure for residents describing and explaining the local preservation program. It states why historic preservation is important to the life of Peekskill, describes the Certification of Appropriateness process, and states local design guidelines and the benefits of being within a local historic district. This brochure can be found by going to the City of Peekskill's webpage at www.ci.peekskill.ny.us/ and clicking on "Historical Brochure".

The Back Page

A recent publication I'd like to bring to your attention is [The Politics of Historic Districts](#) by William E. Schmickle. It's subtitled "A Primer for Grassroots Preservation" and is based on his experiences in North Carolina getting a local historic district effort underway. Schmickle stresses that you must understand how to work within your local community to get the job accomplished, and understand that no matter how pure the intent, preservation does not work for everyone on the same values. He then helps the reader understand the different points of view and how to build a strong, cohesive, diverse approach to moving historic preservation forward in your community. He also helps the reader understand the viewpoint of many of the typical opponents to local preservation and how to handle their arguments in a factual manner.

Schmickle's book is published by Altamira Press, and is available through ordering it at your local bookstore or through major online booksellers. Check it out!