



Preserving historic preservation in New York City - by David Piscuskas

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NYC's history reflects, in many ways, the history of the United States of America: Eras of expeditious growth and innovation that advanced through the enterprise of people from diverse cultures. More than three centuries of buildings trace this history; architectural masterpieces and historic neighborhoods contain the chronicles of many generations. Historic buildings help our residents connect to their past, providing tangible reminders of human achievement, societal progress, and the resilience of democracy, as well as lessons of loss and inequality.

For more than 35 years, the federal Historic Tax Credit (HTC) has successfully connected our present with the accomplishments of our past by helping to preserve historic resources. Created in 1981, the HTC is the most significant investment the federal government makes toward the preservation of historic buildings, catalyzing economic development through restoration and reuse. It is a widely-used redevelopment tool, helping revitalize cities, towns, and rural communities across the country.

The HTC has a proven track record for stimulating economic growth through private investment that creates well paying, local jobs. Nationwide, the HTC has offered vital economic support in the rehabilitation of more than 40,000 buildings, created over 2.3 million jobs, and leveraged \$117 billion in private investment. Research has shown that on average, the credit leverages over \$5 of private investment for every \$1 in funding, creating highly effective public-private partnerships. The cumulative \$23 billion cost of this program has realized \$28 billion in federal tax receipts generated solely by these rehabilitation projects. The National Park Service and the Internal Revenue Service administer the program in partnership with State Historic Preservation Offices, a prime example of federal and state governments working together effectively on behalf of local communities.

Since 2013, the HTC has spurred \$3 billion of investment in historic properties in NYS. In 2016 alone, \$748 million in investments was generated by the credit. In total, over 400 historic homes, businesses, schools, theaters, hotels, and community spaces in New York have benefited from the tax credit since 2013, with each project utilizing on average \$22 million in credits. The HTC has

created over 49,000 jobs in NYS, with many HTC projects ideally suited for emerging, smaller firms.

Historic preservation is an important economic catalyst for NYC as well. Today, more than \$800 million is invested annually in our city's historic buildings, creating jobs for 9,000 New Yorkers and income exceeding \$500 million each year. 84% of all HTC projects are in low-income areas. Without the credits, properties can often sit idle for decades.

Policymakers at the national and local level should prioritize the preservation of historic resources. The HTC has a proven track record in helping rehabilitate buildings and revitalize communities across the nation. The protection and enhancement of this funding mechanism is crucial to maintaining the economy and quality of life in cities.

In the words of William Murtagh, a former director of the Historic Preservation Program at Columbia University and widely considered a “founding father” of preservation, “It has been said that, at its best, historic preservation engages the past in a conversation with the present over a mutual concern for the future.” Let us all be inspired to engage in this conversation.

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