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FEDERAL UPDATE

National Trust Co-Hosts Sustainable Urban Design Briefing for Hill Staffers

On July 17th, the National Trust partnered with Smart Growth America, the Northeast-Midwest Institute, and Reconnecting America to host a briefing for over 100 Capitol Hill staffers on "sustainable urban redevelopment" to highlight projects that are green and energy-efficient both internally and externally, and save energy by virtue of location and relationship to the city.

Restoration was a key component of the session and Portland architect Ralph DeNola presented a case study on behalf of the Trust on the Portland Armory in Portland, Oregon, and neighboring restoration projects on behalf of the Trust to demonstrate the key role that rehabilitation of historic buildings in creating sustainable urban redevelopment. DeNola and other presenters used their case studies to illustrate key policy recommendations, including the need to pass the "Community Restoration and Revitalization Act" (HR 1043/S. 584) as well as other legislation encouraging brownfields redevelopment.

Second Supplemental Appropriations Bill May Include Disaster Relief for Flood-Ravaged Historic Properties

Senate Appropriations Committee chairman Robert Byrd (D-WV) is moving forward on a second economic stimulus package that may include both tax incentives and grants for rehabilitating flood-ravaged historic properties damaged in the recent Midwest floods. The Appropriations Committee has scheduled a mark up for July 22nd. The National Trust and its preservation partners are advocating for a proposal to include an increase in the historic rehab credit from 20 percent to 26 percent and from 20 percent to 40 percent for "special projects" in affected states. However, the proposal has met with some resistance in the House, with staffers indicating that such an increase in the credit would be only for flood-damaged buildings -- thus leaving the 40 percent increase for smaller, Main Street 'special projects' somewhat doubtful. In addition, \$35 million was requested by the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Offices (NCSHPO) this week for disaster assistance grants to Iowa, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri and Minnesota, along with \$3 million for associated administrative costs that would cover additional Section 106 review.

However, further progress on the second stimulus package will hinge on an offer made by House Appropriations Committee ranking member Jerry Lewis (R-CA) to Committee chairman David Obey (D-WI) to not bring up any amendments dealing with high energy costs or offshore drilling at all committee meetings, so long as Democrats promise to schedule a markup of the Interior bill before the August recess. Republicans have been pushing to have the Interior bill marked up in advance because they want to offer an OCS-drilling amendment as a quid-pro-quo for moving forward on the second stimulus package. Chairman Obey has thus far not budged on his pledge to

Rehab Tax Credit
Amendments Still
Intact as Housing
Relief Package
Moves Back to
the House

stop the mark up of all spending bills in the House in retaliation for GOP attempts to fast-forward consideration of the Interior Bill and an off-shore drilling amendment back in June.

Housing Relief Package Still On Track With Rehab Tax Credit Amendments in Tow

The Senate passed its version of the Housing/Mortgage relief bill (H.R. 3221) on July 11th with three amendments to the federal rehabilitation tax credit safely in tow. However, the expanded non-profit leaseback provision offered by Sens. Blanche Lincoln (D-AR) and Gordon Smith (R-OR) to extend the allowance lease period from 20 to 31.5 years was not the version included in the Senate-passed bill because it proved too costly.

On the scheduling front, further consideration of the housing package has been delayed until early next week while lawmakers digest the Treasury Department's plan to bail out mortgage giants Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, which would be added to the bill in conference.

Conservation System and Preserve America/Save America's Treasures Authorization Bills Face Uncertainty in Senate

National Trust
and Conservation
System Alliance
Scramble to
Include both
PA/SAT and
Conservation
System
Permanence Bills
in Smaller Public
Lands Package
Being Assembled
in the Senate

An omnibus lands package (S. 3213) that contains both the Senate companion Preserve America (PA)/Save America's Treasures (SAT) authorization (S. 2262) and the Conservation System permanence (S. 1139) bills is now being superseded by a somewhat smaller package of already-approved, House-passed public lands bills that have met the scrutiny of Sen. Tom Coburn (R-OK), who had threatened to stop the larger package because of objections he had with several of the bills contained within that measure. Previously, Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) had stated that the omnibus lands package bill would not be considered until September. However, with a Coburn-approved package of bills it may be possible for the smaller measure to be considered before the August recess. The National Trust and its Conservation System Alliance partners are closely monitoring the developments surround the new package and the possible timing for floor consideration before the August recess. Fortunately, the House companion bills for both the PA/SAT (HR 3981) and the Conservation System (H.R. 2016) authorizations have already passed in that chamber so they would be eligible for inclusion in the new, but smaller lands package in the Senate.

