

**NATIONAL
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Richard Moe
PRESIDENT

February 23, 2009

The Honorable M. Jodi Rell
Governor
Executive Office of the Governor
State Capitol
210 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, Connecticut 06106

Dear Governor Rell:

Your proposed budget will have a devastating impact on historic preservation programs that have brought enormous benefits to the people of Connecticut, including those who don't consider themselves preservationists. While the current economic crisis calls for tough choices, it also calls for clear thinking and vision. In these challenging times, it would be foolish not to make full use of every tool that works – and historic preservation definitely works.

I am especially concerned by your proposal to eliminate the Community Investment Act, suspend the state historic tax credit for two years, and sharply reduce funding for the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation. At a time when government at all levels is desperately seeking ways to stimulate private-sector investment, it is disastrously short-sighted to eliminate programs that have shown their effectiveness in that very arena. Since 2006, for example, grants awarded through the Community Investment Act have totaled \$23.7 million – and leveraged more than \$41.7 million from other sources. Similarly, Historic Preservation Technical Assistance Grants from the Connecticut Trust have generated \$5 of private investment for every dollar of public funds awarded.

Projects funded by these grants have had a significant impact on scores of cities and towns, creating jobs, putting abandoned properties back on the tax rolls, restoring historic sites, conserving open space and farmland, revitalizing neighborhoods and creating affordable housing. In short, they have made Connecticut a better place to live and helped draw tourists – and tourist dollars – to the state. These programs deserve to be strengthened, not crippled or killed.

It is especially important that the effectiveness of the state historic preservation office (SHPO) not be curtailed at this crucial time. Once federal stimulus funds start flowing to Connecticut, the SHPO will be called upon to review projects in a timely fashion – a job the office can't perform if it lacks the necessary staff.

The state historic preservation office also processes nominations to the National Register of Historic Places and reviews rehabilitation projects seeking to utilize federal tax credits. Lack of adequate staffing is sure to cause delays in National Register listing (the threshold for eligibility for the federal historic rehab tax credit) and create a serious logjam in the timely review and approval of tax-credit projects. If these projects can't go forward, the benefits they offer are put on hold – and the benefits are substantial. Just

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since 2007, seven Connecticut projects utilizing tax credits have pumped \$51 million in construction costs into local economies. Over the years, tax-credit projects have created an average of 45 jobs each and brought more than \$600 million in investment to communities all over the state.

Statistics like these offer convincing evidence that historic preservation, far from being a "frill," is a powerful engine that drives real, sustainable economic growth. Knowing this, I am convinced that the funding cuts you propose will actually hamper the state's economic recovery.

A few years ago, in an opinion piece in the *Hartford Courant*, you spoke proudly of your administration's efforts to fight sprawl and encourage community revitalization and smart growth. You concluded with this statement: "It is not about political will – it is about doing what is right for Connecticut."

In the spirit of these words – as true now as when they were written – I urge you to reconsider your devastating budget cuts to historic preservation. The threatened programs have achieved commendable, measurable results in the past, not only preserving Connecticut's rich heritage but also bringing new economic vitality to its communities and improving the quality of life for its people. With your support, they can continue to do "what is right for Connecticut" by aiding the state's recovery from the current crisis.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Moe", written over a printed name.

Richard Moe

RM:dy