



From time to time, your municipality may be asked to review a complex project, face challenging issues related to a specific property or have preservation-related planning needs. These issues are often multi-faceted and may require outside expertise as well as comprehensive guidance on a range of preservation issues, some of which may not have been considered previously. The Guidance for Preservation Solutions (GPS) program is a way for the PA SHPO to provide Certified Local Governments (CLGs) with focused comments, suggestions, and direction on cultural resource issues in their communities.

How GPS Works



The GPS program brings together PA SHPO staff from each of the agency's programs to review your community's project/issue and provide relevant comments and guidance. Examples include consideration of how a development project may impact National Register eligibility, the appropriateness of certain design or material choices for a historic property, a property's archaeological potential, and/or survey and documentation needs.



Formal requests for review/assistance may be submitted by your municipality along with relevant project plans, documents, and specific questions/issues the community is seeking help with. The Community Preservation Coordinator (Coordinator) for the region will present the project to the PA SHPO regional team for review and discussion. The team will identify issues and guidance from all relevant program areas and the Coordinator will provide your community with a written report within a specified timeframe, generally 30 days.

Requesting GPS Assistance



GPS is only available to CLGs and all requests must be made in writing. Requests for assistance may come from the HARB, Historical Commission, elected body, planning commission, or staff. No requests from individual citizens or community organizations will be considered for GPS. There are no deadlines for GPS and requests are accepted on an ongoing basis. While the PA SHPO will make every attempt to provide guidance as quickly as possible, most responses will typically take 30 days.

To request GPS assistance, please email or write to the Community Preservation Coordinator for your region (see attached map) with the following information:



- Name, title, email address and phone number for project contact
- Project description, including location and detailed project plans
- Drawings, renderings, specifications, and photos, as applicable
- Type of review being performed by the municipality (i.e. SALDO, building permits, Certificate of Appropriateness) and timeline for issuing a decision
- Specific questions or issues that the CLG is seeking PA SHPO guidance on
- Date you would like a response from the PA SHPO

Eligible Requests for Assistance



To avoid potential conflicts with other PA SHPO programs or projects, the staff will only consider projects where PA SHPO has no other formal role through environmental review/Section 106, tax credits, grants, other programs, or there is little likelihood that the PA SHPO will be involved in the future. PA SHPO may choose not to respond to a specific request if:

- the project will likely involve the PA SHPO in the future; or
- the scale and nature of the request is too complex or is beyond the PA SHPO's areas of expertise; or
- the timeframe for response does not allow sufficient time for meaningful review and comment.

The PA SHPO will notify the CLG whether or not the project qualifies for GPS within 3 working days after receiving the request.



EXAMPLE: A private developer is seeking various local approvals to build a housing development on a property that is National Register listed and locally regulated by the Township's Historical Commission. The project is entirely privately financed and doesn't require any Federal or State permits. The municipal leadership is preservation sensitive but wants advice on preservation issues that may be at play before commenting on the proposal. There is some preservation language in the zoning ordinance, but it's murky and the Planning Commission is asking for SHPO's advice so it can make an informed decision on the developer's request.



EXAMPLE: A Borough has recently acquired a prominent historic property to prevent likely demolition by a private owner. Borough staff and elected officials want to proceed in a prudent manner and would like advice before engaging a consultant to develop a plan for preserving the property.