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Advisory Council on Historic Preservation Task Force Issues Recommendations to Improve the Availability of Digital Information About Historic Properties

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) today announced the findings of a task force charged with formulating recommendations to improve the availability of digital and geospatial information about historic properties in an effort to inform federal project planning. The Digital Information [Task Force report](#) was presented to ACHP Chairman Aimee Jorjani at the ACHP’s March business meeting.

“The recent pandemic has underscored just how important the availability of digital information is in ensuring historic preservation goals are factored into federal decision making even when federal agencies, State Historic Preservation Offices, Indian tribes, local governments, and other stakeholders may be working remotely,” Chairman Jorjani said. “The report’s recommendations are a roadmap to increase the availability of tools like digital mapping and web-based review submission systems that can help ensure effective and efficient consideration of cultural resources in project planning.”

When federal agencies, along with their tribal, state, and local counterparts; applicants; and consultants have ready access to accurate, current data about the location and nature of historic properties, they can make project siting and design decisions that take historic properties into account earlier and more effectively. Better access to digital historic property information and the ability to exchange it can contribute to the efficiency of environmental reviews, including reviews carried out under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, for infrastructure projects.

“The current COVID-19 crisis has confirmed that participants in the Section 106 process need to have the capability to conduct reviews and consultations remotely,” said Reid Nelson, director of the ACHP’s Office of Federal Agency Programs. “This requires not only information in a digital format but also the capability to exchange information and views when work must be conducted away from the office.”

The report outlines five major recommendations:

- Make the Administration, Congress, agency officials, and the public aware of how digital information, including geographic information systems (GIS), increases the effectiveness and efficiency of project planning and helps avoid harm to historic properties.
- Identify opportunities for funding and resource enhancement.
- Enable cultural resources GIS data exchange between states, tribes, local governments, and federal agencies.
- Address data management impediments to increase GIS availability.
- Properly manage access and secure sensitive data.

A series of action recommendations accompanied the report findings. The ACHP will carry out these tasks to implement the report’s recommendations in cooperation with federal and preservation partners over the coming months.

Members of the Digital Information Task Force included general public member Jordan Tannenbaum, former expert member Dorothy Lippert, the Departments of the Interior and Transportation, National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers, National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Council on Environmental Quality, and National Alliance of Preservation Commissions.

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***About the ACHP:** An independent federal agency, the ACHP promotes the economic, educational, environmental, sustainability, and cultural values of historic preservation and advises the President and Congress on national historic preservation policy. It also influences federal activities, programs, and policies that affect historic and cultural properties. See www.achp.gov for more information.*