Laura N. Chick, the state's inspector general monitoring federal stimulus money, says there is a backlog of construction projects because of an added layer of bureaucracy for historic preservation.

In a letter today to Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, Chick says the Recovery Act was an opportunity to find "ways to streamline, eliminate needless hurdles, slash bureaucratic red tape and implement efficiencies." But there are roadblocks, she writes:

By law, the State's Office of Historic Preservation is required to sign-off before construction projects begin. Due to the Recovery Act there has been a marked increase in the number and type of projects and this has resulted in a two month backlog which is growing exponentially as more projects advance forward. In addition, some state departments which are receiving Recovery funds have never had to deal with the National Protection of Historical Properties Law. These departments require additional attention with training and consultation.

Many of these projects are for weatherization - adding an air conditioning system or new windows. Rather than eliminate the historic preservation red tape, Chick recommends adding more staff to deal with the problem. That means, she suggests, "modifying" furloughs for key personnel, moving staff from other departments to help with the backlog, streamlining the hiring process, rehiring on a short-term basis retired state employees, and conducting an open-call for experienced volunteers.

"Every day that a project is stalled is a delay in creating desperately needed jobs for Californians," she wrote.