



## Memorandum

**Date:** November 20, 2007  
**To:** Mayor and City Council  
**From:** Suja Lowenthal, Second District &  
**Subject:** Jergins Pedestrian Subway Tunnel

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### REQUESTED ACTION:

Respectfully request the City Manager perform a comprehensive study of potential adaptive reuses for the Jergins Pedestrian Subway Tunnel to help identify the best way of effectively preserving and utilizing this historic "landmark" for the benefit of residents and visitors to Long Beach.

Request the City Manager pursue grant funding for study, planning, preservation and adaptive reuse activities associated with the Jergins Pedestrian Subway Tunnel. [See attached memo]

Request the City Manager return to the City Council within 60 days with an outline and approach for performing the study and pursuing grant funding.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Originally constructed in 1927 and opened in 1928, the Jergins Pedestrian Subway Tunnel connected Ocean Boulevard and upper Pine Avenue with the Jergins Trust Building arcade filled with specialty shops, as well as our beautiful beach and famous Pike amusement area. The tunnel was 181 feet long 30 feet wide and 12 feet high with "elegant" Italian ceramic tile lining its walls and ceiling. Tourists came in droves to Long Beach on a newly expanded streetcar trolley system stretching to Los Angeles and all other parts of Southern California to experience the "Coney Island of the West". Surveys at the time indicate that nearly 2000 people an hour, 4000 on weekends were crossing Ocean Boulevard to reach our shoreline. As a result, construction of the Jergins Tunnel became feasible with the realignment of the Pacific Electric tracks and necessary to safely guide people to the shoreline area. In the 1930's, vendors lined both sides of the tunnel with small booths hoping to make a living off of those who could afford to live during the Depression. The tunnel continued to be used through the 40's and 50's, ushering even more tourists and Navy enlistees to and from Downtown and the Pike area.

In 1967, the Jergins Tunnel closed due to the widening of Ocean Blvd. For the last forty years it has remained closed except for the occasional film shoot. Due to its location, sound design and construction, the tunnel has remained preserved in relatively good condition. In 2001, then Vice Mayor Dan Baker and the City Council requested that the City Manager prepare a report on the possible restoration and use of the tunnel [see attached]. A "task group" made up of various City departments reviewed existing documents and toured the tunnel to determine its physical condition and propose options for reuse. Those options included reestablishing a passageway connecting the Renaissance Hotel to a proposed hotel at the old Jergins Trust site; a pedestrian passageway without connection to either the Renaissance or the proposed hotel; host to new institutional or commercial activities such as historical preservation, arts, restaurant, meeting area or vendor shops; passive viewing of the landmark from only the south entrance.

The task group estimated that the costs to modify the tunnel for public safety and ADA requirements would be \$750,000 or more, but did not investigate whether any funding was available through historic preservation grants. As there was no appropriation for the costs in the FY02 budget, the City Council received and filed the report with no additional action.

Most recently, we have seen an increased interest among residents and history buffs in lost or forgotten historic treasures such as the Jergins Tunnel. In October, an event called University by the Sea linked California State University at Long Beach with our Downtown using the tunnel as a theatre to showcase silent and local resident films. This particular feature of the event was enthusiastically received as requests for entrance to the film series and "passing periods" between films far surpassed the capacity of the tunnel and number of showings.

Long Beach is home to numerous historic landmarks and artifacts tracing our history and providing us with a glimpse of our shared past. In some cases, we have done a tremendous job of preserving and adapting our history to our present. However, there are notable examples of our failure to embrace and preserve our past, which serve as reminders that once something is gone it cannot be recovered. The Jergins Tunnel provides Long Beach with a tremendous opportunity to celebrate its past while identifying a beneficial function in its future.



**Date:** November 9, 2007  
**To:** Suja Lowenthal, Councilmember District 2  
**From:** Jan Ostashay, Historic Preservation Officer  
**Subject:** POTENTIAL PRESERVATION FUNDING SOURCES: JERGIN'S TUNNEL REHAB

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In response to your request for a list of preservation funding sources for the possible rehabilitation of the Jergins Tunnel I have compiled the following grant programs for your information. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

**Title:**  
America's Historical and Cultural Organizations Implementation Grants  
**Funding Source:**  
National Endowment for the Humanities

**Title:**  
America's Historical and Cultural Organizations Planning Grants  
**Funding Source:**  
National Endowment for the Humanities

**Title:**  
Interpreting America's Historic Places Planning Grants  
**Funding Source:**  
National Endowment for the Humanities

**Title:**  
Interpreting America's Historic Places Implementation Grants  
**Funding Source:**  
National Endowment for the Humanities

**Title:**  
Digital Humanities Start-up Grants  
**Funding Source:**  
National Endowment for the Humanities

**Title:**  
Architectural Conservation Implementation Grants  
**Funding Source:**  
The Getty Foundation

**Title:**

Architectural Conservation Planning Grants

**Funding Source:**

The Getty Foundation

**Title:**

Education and Training Grants for Conservation

**Funding Source:**

The Getty Foundation

**Title:**

California Heritage Fund Grant Program

**Funding Source:**

California Office of Historic Preservation

**Title:**

California Cultural and Historical Endowment Grant

**Funding Source:**

California Cultural and Historical Endowment, State Library Office

**Title:**

Save America's Treasures (must be listed on National Register)

**Funding Source:**

National Park Service

**Title:**

Transportation Enhancement Activities (TEA)

**Funding Source:**

Federal Highway Administration/Caltrans

**Title:**

Certified Local Government Grant

**Funding Source:**

California Office of Historic Preservation

**Title:**

Historic Preservation Grants

**Funding Source:**

National Trust for Historic Preservation

**Title:**

Private Grants

**Funding Source:**

Various Philanthropic Organizations

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HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

City of Long Beach

SUBJECT: Report on the Possible Restoration and Use of the Jergins Pedestrian Subway Tunnel (District 2)

DISCUSSION

On July 31, 2001, on the motion of Vice Mayor Dan Baker, the City Council requested that the City Manager prepare a report on the possible restoration and use of the old Jergins Pedestrian Subway tunnel.

**Historical.** In the Spring 2001 edition of the *Long Beach Heritage* newsletter, resident Bill Cwiklo wrote:

*According to Morgan Humphrey, a lifetime Long Beach resident and preservationist, the Jergins Trust Building pedestrian subway tunnel that remains under Ocean Boulevard (near the northeast corner of Pine Avenue) was an entrance to paradise. Along with the now destroyed arcade under the Jergins Trust Building, it connected Ocean Boulevard and upper Pine Avenue with the beach and the famous Pike amusement area.*

*Constructed in 1927 and opened in 1928, the elegant Italian ceramic tile-lined tunnel is 181 feet long and 30 feet wide. It once had a skylight in its southern edge in Victory Park. The tunnel itself contained a number of small concession stands. It led into the Jergins Trust Building arcade where two levels of specialty shops enticed visitors all the way to the final exit at Seaside Way at the corner of lower Pine Avenue.*

*Both the skylight and the concession stands were lost in the early 1940 's... the tunnel was closed in 1967 when Ocean Boulevard was widened.*

**Study Effort.** A task group, having representatives from the Departments of Public Works, Community Development, and Planning and Building, was convened to undertake a study of the tunnel for potential public use. City records, including construction plans on file, were assembled and reviewed; and a tour of the tunnel was conducted. Messrs. Cwiklo and Humphrey, who had expressed strong support for the study at the July 31, 2001 City Council meeting, were asked to meet with the task group to provide input and to share their views. Also in attendance was Kambiz Babaoff, representing Ensemble Investments, which has a Disposition and Development Agreement with the Redevelopment Agency for the construction of a hotel on the former Jergins Trust building site. A meeting was also held in the office of Vice Mayor Baker with a representative of Balboa Films, who suggested that the tunnel might be utilized as a museum for chronicling the extensive silent film industry that formerly existed in Long Beach.

**Physical Condition.** The task group found the tunnel to be in reasonably good shape, considering the length of time it has not been utilized or maintained. The tunnel is 30 feet wide and approximately 12 feet in maximum height. The top of the tunnel is about 5 feet below the Ocean Boulevard street surface. The extensive tile-work that lines the walls and floor is generally intact and in good condition. The tunnel has been sealed off with a concrete wall at its northerly terminus near the north curb line of Ocean Boulevard. Two ventilation ducts extend from this location in the tunnel to outlets in the sidewalk abutting the Renaissance Long Beach Hotel. At the southerly end, the tunnel is sealed with plywood and wooden studs at about the southerly edge of Victory Park. There is a padlocked door at this location to provide controlled

entry. However, there was evidence observed during the task group's tour that the tunnel had been, or was being, used for shelter by parties unknown. The tunnel appears to be structurally sound based on the lack of obvious distress to the existing tile walls and ceiling, and the fact that it has existed for many years without apparent structural damage. However, a more intensive structural investigation will be needed to conclusively find that there has not been a deterioration of structural capacity over the years that could potentially endanger future occupants or users of the tunnel.

**Options for Reuse.** The task group considered several alternatives for future use of the tunnel:

1. As a passageway between the existing Renaissance Long Beach Hotel and the proposed hotel on the Jergins Trust site. This would afford patrons or visitors from each hotel the convenience to freely walk between the hotels without having to deal with inclement or uncomfortable weather. Moreover, the tunnel could be provided with displays and concessions that would attract visitors and become a special Long Beach experience. The tunnel could also serve as an interesting, albeit indirect, linkage through the respective hotel lobbies connecting the Convention Center/Queensway Bay area to north Pine Avenue and the Promenade.
2. As a pedestrian linkage between north and south Pine Avenue without connection to either the Renaissance Long Beach Hotel or the proposed hotel on the Jergins Trust site. With the installation of access stairs and elevators from the Ocean Boulevard sidewalks at the north and south ends of the tunnel, the Convention Center and the Queensway Bay facilities will be more conveniently linked with the restaurants and shops north of Ocean Boulevard. Besides providing protected pedestrian access across a busy street, the tunnel could be furnished with interesting displays and concessions that would attract visitors in addition to the lure of being able to see the tunnel itself as an important vestige of Long Beach past.
3. As an active use other than for Pedestrian travel. Instead of employing it as a pedestrian passageway traversing Ocean Boulevard, the tunnel could be utilized to house any number of new institutional or commercial activities. The tunnel could be an excellent location for displaying historical artifacts (such as those of the silent film industry or those from the razed Long Beach Naval Station), for displaying works of local artists, for housing unique shops that market products consistent with a special theme to be established; or possibly for unique restaurants and meeting rooms that capitalize on the underground ambiance of the tunnel. (The zoning regulations allow such uses. North of the centerline of Ocean Boulevard, the use of the tunnel is governed by Planned District 30 (PD 30), and south of the centerline by Planned District 6 (PD 6). Both of these PDs allow retail uses. Further, PD 30 permits museums and personal services uses; anPdD 6 permits art galleries.)
4. As a passive use, allowing only exterior viewing. If not currently feasible to deploy the tunnel for pedestrian travel or to use it for institutional or commercial activities, the tunnel itself could be made more accessible to the public for exterior viewing through glazed panels at the south end. This would require cleanup, some renovation, the addition or repair of lighting fixtures, the installation of view panels in the south wall, and the construction of code-compliant public passageways to the view panels from Victory Park or from the lobby of the hotel to be constructed on the Jergins Trust site. (Code compliance includes all life safety regulations as well as usability by the physically disabled.)
5. Preserve as urban archeology. At the very least, if no other options are found to be currently feasible, the tunnel could be secured and kept intact as a site of important Long Beach archeology. This will ensure that future generations have the opportunity to restore the tunnel as a treasured City artifact. (The certified environmental impact report (EIR 21-98) for the hotel

proposed on the Jergins Trust site contains a mitigation measure requiring that: “The existing subway located below Ocean Boulevard shall be preserved to the satisfaction of the Director of Planning and Building.”)

**Challenges and Issues.** The task group identified several major challenges or issues associated with moving forward with any of the described options:

1. What are the City's current rights to the tunnel? Under the current Development and Disposition Agreement that extends to September 1, 2002, the developer of the proposed hotel on the former Jergins Trust site has exclusive rights to the tunnel, and storage use is being contemplated. Therefore, the City will need to negotiate the return of control of the tunnel, or enter into a new agreement for its development and use, if the tunnel is to be utilized as described in Alternates 1 through 4.

2. How does the proposed use of the tunnel fit with the existing Renaissance Long Beach Hotel and the design of the new hotel on the Jergins Trust site? The lobby of the existing Renaissance Long Beach Hotel and the designed lobby of the new hotel on the Jergins Trust site are located at the Ocean Boulevard level, which is about 18 feet above the floor line of the tunnel. Considerable construction will, therefore, be needed to make a connection between the two hotels. Since there is not a designed passageway to the tunnel within the existing Renaissance Long Beach Hotel, extensive interior alterations will be required to provide a building code-compliant corridor from the lobby to the tunnel. In addition, the northern terminus of the existing tunnel must be extended from its current location at the curb line to the basement of the hotel. At the southern end of the tunnel, the design of the future underground parking of the proposed hotel on the Jergins Trust site has a ramp that is perpendicular to the tunnel and which is at an elevation that does not line up with the floor of the tunnel. Therefore, considerable redesign of the underground parking will be required in order to provide a suitable, code-compliant passageway from the lobby level of the new hotel to the tunnel. The resultant redesign of the parking layout and the construction of a passageway could result in a loss of required parking spaces, making approval of the design by the City and the California Coastal Commission problematic.

3. Will the owners of the Renaissance Long Beach Hotel agree to connecting the building to the tunnel, and to allowing the associated alterations to their hotel? At this preliminary stage, no contact has been made by staff with the owners of the Renaissance Long Beach Hotel to solicit their interest in connecting the hotel to the tunnel. Even if they agree to connecting the hotel to the tunnel, it is likely that the hotel's owners would expect the City to pay the major share of all related remodeling and operational expenses.

4. Construction costs to make improvements necessary for public use of the tunnel are substantial. It can be reasonably speculated that the associated capital costs to make the tunnel safe and fully accessible for public use (as either a pedestrian passageway, or as a facility to house commercial or institutional uses) will range upwards of \$750,000. Safe, complying means of access and egress must be provided at both ends of the tunnel. This will require the construction of stairways that meet the requirements of the Uniform Building, Fire, and other regulatory codes. In accordance with California State Law, access to the physically disabled will need to be provided by the construction of elevators at both ends of the tunnel. In addition, if commercial or institutional uses such as shops, restaurants, or museums are provided in the tunnel, new restroom facilities must be constructed; and these must be fully compliant with disabled access and other regulatory standards. Moreover, renovation improvements will be needed to provide code-required ventilation and lighting. There will be additional costs

associated with remodeling the interior of the tunnel for any contemplated institutional or commercial uses.

5. Operational costs to maintain the tunnel available for pedestrian travel can be significant.

People are often apprehensive about entering underground tunnels because of safety reasons. Therefore, to encourage the use of the tunnel, public safety must be assured by the visible presence of police or security guards. Excellent lighting must also be provided, and the facility must be kept clean and inviting. The combination of security personnel and lighting will ensure that the tunnel does not become a harborage for vagrants or undesirables. There will be substantial expenses associated with providing this level of security, for lighting energy costs, and for maintenance. (For example, the costs of providing full-time security, along with lighting and general maintenance, are estimated to range upwards of \$1 50,000 per year.)

**Conclusions.** The Jergins Pedestrian Subway tunnel is an important and valuable City asset and should therefore be preserved. However, the tunnel is currently under the control of the developer of the hotel on the former Jergins Trust site. Therefore, a new agreement must be negotiated with the developer if any alternative use of the tunnel is undertaken. Moreover, any future use of the tunnel involving public access will require large expenditures to ensure usability and safety. Absent the availability of funding, the tunnel should continue to be secured and preserved while opportunities are sought in the future for obtaining grants or other resources that will enable the tunnel to be modified for public use. Moreover, further study should be made on the adaptive reuse of the tunnel so as to identify the best potential way of effectively utilizing this historic resource .

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FISCAL IMPACT

If the Jergins Pedestrian Subway tunnel is modified for public use, it is estimated that capital costs of \$750,000 or more will be incurred along with yearly operational costs for security, lighting and maintenance of \$150,000. There is no appropriation in the FY02 budget for these costs and no identified funding source.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE CITY COUNCIL: Receive and file this report; and request that the City Manager pursue obtaining expert studies on the adaptive reuse of the Jergins Pedestrian Subway tunnel as a treasured remnant of past Long Beach.

Respectfully submitted,

EUGENE ZELLER  
DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND BUILDING

APPROVED:

HENRY TABOADA  
CITY MANAGER