



Legislation Text

File #: 07-1375, **Version:** 1

Recommendation to respectfully request 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 City Manager pursue grant funding for study, planning, preservation and adaptive reuse activities associated with the Jergins Pedestrian Subway Tunnel; and

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

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.

Approve recommendation.

SUJA LOWENTHAL, SECOND DISTRICT