



Date: March 20, 2007
To: Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Bonnie Lowenthal, Vice Mayor and Councilmember, First District *BL*
Subject: **Review demolition permits of potentially significant historic buildings**

Due to the increase of building activity throughout the City, there has been a significant increase in the number of requests for demolition of all types of properties, from commercial buildings to single-family residences. The majority of these demolition requests are located in areas outside designated historic districts. Current City practice dealing with requests for demolition outside of historic districts is to issue the permit and allow the demolition except in those cases where an application for a larger development project has been submitted and an environmental review is being undertaken. This has created situations where demolition permits have been issued to remove structures that are potentially significant historic buildings.

Staff is currently updating the City's historic preservation ordinance (Chapter 2.63, Cultural Heritage Commission) to address a permanent solution to this issue. However, in order to provide an intervening solution, this office recommends that the City Attorney prepare an interim zoning ordinance to require review of all demolition permits for structures greater than 45 years in age prior to issuance of a building permit. If the structure is found to be potentially historically significant, the Planning and Building Department would then be authorized to withhold the issuance of a demolition permit, and the necessary CEQA analysis would need to be conducted if the applicant wanted to continue with the demolition process.

Recommendation:

I respectfully request that the proposal for an interim zoning ordinance to require review of all demolition permits for structures greater than 45 years in age be referred to the Housing and Neighborhoods Committee for discussion and recommendation.