

From: Ruthann Lehrer [<mailto:ruthannpreserves@yahoo.com>]

Sent: Wednesday, August 12, 2015 12:45 PM

To: cityclerk

Subject: Revision of Cultural Heritage Ordinance

This letter was sent to all council members today. Please include it as part of the public record on this upcoming item.

August 12, 2015

Re: Revision of Cultural Heritage Ordinance

Dear Mayor Garcia and Council Members,

I am writing to request reconsideration of the proposed new language in the Cultural Heritage ordinance concerning owner consent for nominating a property for landmark status. Having been Long Beach's Neighborhood and Historic Preservation Officer for 15 years, I have had considerable experience in working with property owners.

The fact is, most property owners are not informed about what historic preservation regulations are, how they work and what the benefits are. Their negative preconceptions will cut off debate right at the start, before a discussion can even begin about how landmark protections work and how they would affect their particular property. Under the current language, once a nomination is filed, a substantive discussion with the property owner is then launched: to establish how the property would be regulated, whether the regulations are consistent with the owner's own interests, and whether the benefits to the owner might compensate for the regulations. While the owner's property rights are always a strong consideration in nominating potential

landmarks, the process as it now stands allows for due evaluation of all the factors that go into making a decision about landmark status. The existing process allows an owner to have all the facts before a decision is made, rather than be governed by untested preconceptions.

Decisions whether or not to landmark a property involve weighing the public interest in preserving that building vs. an owner's objections and the reasons for those objections (if they exist). Protecting historic resources is considered a public good, with benefits to the community at large, as historic resources are vulnerable and irreplaceable. It is the proper role of City decision-makers through the appropriate public bodies, such as the Cultural Heritage Commission, Planning Commission and City Council, to weigh all the factors involved in a decision to landmark and to make that decision. While the owner's perspective will weigh into the decision, to leave that decision solely to a single property owner distorts the balance between the public interest and private rights. If there is controversy about a landmark nomination, the debate should take place through established city procedures, and not be cut off before it can begin.

Many thanks for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Ruthann Lehrer