



Belmont Heights Community Association

375 Redondo Ave #332 * Long Beach, California 90814

www.MyBelmontHeights.org

June 5, 2007

Vice-Mayor Bonnie Lowenthal
City of Long Beach
333 West Ocean Boulevard, 14th Floor
Long Beach, CA 90802

Val Lerch, Councilmember
City of Long Beach – District 9
333 West Ocean Blvd., 14th Floor
Long Beach, CA 90802

Rae Gabelich, Councilmember
City of Long Beach – District 8
333 West Ocean Blvd., 14th Floor
Long Beach, CA 90802

Re: Housing in Neighborhoods Committee – Proposed Interim Zoning Ordinance for Review of Demotion Permit of Potentially Historic Building

Dear Vice Mayor Lowenthal and Councilmembers Lerch and Gabelich:

As one heavily impacted area, the Belmont Heights Community Association strongly supports the proposed interim zoning in concept. This proposal, along with the proposed “Neighborhood Character Stabilization” plan, authored by Councilmembers Uranga and DeLong will go a long way towards both preventing the demolition of homes which are part of the neighborhood fabric and ensuring that restoration and adaptive re-use are the best first option.

With regards to this interim zoning proposal, our concern is that it is not clear that the interim zoning proposal will prevent demolition of those older homes which have the potential to be refurbished and restored **but which would not qualify as historic under CEQA**. This is a critical aspect of preserving the character of Belmont Heights and other areas of the City. There are many examples of beautiful homes in the Heights where owners of dilapidated homes declined demolition in favor of restoration with highly beneficial results. Unfortunately the opposite has also occurred.

Our Association is concerned that many homes which may not qualify as “potentially significant historic buildings” under a CEQA analysis are nonetheless quite significant to the character-defining quality of the neighborhood. Often older buildings contribute as part of the neighborhood fabric as a whole, the appreciation of which is realized through analyzing the street scape, surrounding architecture, open space and character of the neighborhood. **In addition to using CEQA guidelines, Long Beach should develop its own additional guidelines – that evaluate demolitions based on their impact to the neighborhood.**



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While we have yet to see a proposed ordinance, we have the following questions:

1. How would a “potentially historically significant building” be determined?
2. Who and what department will make that determination and based on what functional criteria?
3. How would the ordinance protect homes that are not necessarily “historic” but which contribute to the character of the surrounding neighborhood?
4. Will the affected neighborhood have notification of a proposed residential demolition?
5. If neighborhood residents believe that a home proposed for demolition meets the criteria for “potentially historically significant” how will those concerns be evaluated and determined ahead of any demolition?
6. How will the proposed interim zoning ordinance catch all demolitions, since it is our understanding that many residential demolitions do not get or require a separate demolition permit – it’s just part of the remodel/building permit?

We look forward to working with the City to develop the best protection possible for our City’s diverse neighborhoods.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Maureen Neeley", written over a horizontal line.

Maureen Neeley

Marc Coleman

Co-Chair, Neighborhood Preservation Committee of BHCA

cc: Suzanne Frick
Gary DeLong
Mike Stewart
Neighborhood Preservation Committee Members

SUBMITTED INTO RECORD ON 6/5/07 AT THE

Housing & Neighborhoods COMMITTEE MEETING.