

R-24 CORRESPONDENCE – Karen Highberger

Dear Mayor Garcia and Council Members,

I am writing to ask your support for “Option A”, supported by the entire Cultural Heritage Commission, regarding the proposed changes to the Cultural Heritage Ordinance. This item specifically addresses owner’s consent in regards to nominating a property for landmark status. This change to our ordinance will weaken preservation efforts in our City. This proposed change is also opposed by the State Preservation Officer, L A Conservancy and Long Beach Heritage as well as residents in Historic Districts throughout the City. Keeping the ordinance as currently written does not prevent a property owner from opting out of historic designation of their property; it just slows the process and allows the property owner, the community and City Staff to have a conversation regarding the importance of the specific property. It provides a means to stop demolition of an important property until its historical value can be researched and the property owner can be shown the value of the building in a historical context. This is a very valuable tool for preserving our built environment in Long Beach.

A major part of the character of our City is its built environment; our 17 Historic Districts and the beautiful buildings from the early part of the last century. Preservation is good business in the long term and it’s an economic driver. Visitors to Long Beach enjoy walking tours in our Downtown and East Village area. Home buyers are targeting our Historic Districts for their architectural charm and the pride of ownership residents have for their homes, as well as residential developments in historic buildings downtown.

Long Beach needs to be stewards of the history of our city. It is a big responsibility and taking the time to examine all possibilities for a property instead of wholesale demolition or alteration of potentially historic properties is vital. Long Beach has been without a Historic Preservation Officer for 8 years and this has not been good for preservation in our city. Please do not further weaken the ability to protect our history and enhance our city by this change to the Cultural Heritage Ordinance.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best Regards,

Karen Highberger