



Date: August 1, 2013
To: Chair and Members of the Planning Commission
From: Amy J. Bodek, Director of Development Services
Subject: Mortuaries, Crematoriums and Cemeteries Study Session

In February 2013, the City Council established a nine-month moratorium on any expansion of or new mortuaries or crematoriums to allow time to review existing City regulations and formulate any suggested revisions or refinements.

Since that time, staff has conducted research into current regulations of these types of businesses, had a health risk assessment of crematorium operations completed by an environmental consulting firm, and developed a set of suggested recommendations.

To address Council and community concerns, staff studied all related business activities to get a clearer understanding of issues pertaining to all funeral and burial industries currently located in Long Beach. There are currently four cemeteries and eight mortuaries in Long Beach. A map of these locations is attached.

Two of the mortuaries provide cremation services onsite, and the remaining facilities provide cremation services through contracts with locations within Southern California, but outside of Long Beach. Staff also contacted a number of other communities to get a sense of the state of current regulations of these types of businesses.

Staff had a number of discussions with interested community members and with funeral directors operating in Long Beach. A community meeting was held on July 11, 2013, to discuss possible regulations. At that meeting approximately 45 people discussed the suggested recommendations listed below and asked questions about moratoriums in general, the process to impose new regulations on these specific businesses, and implications of the specific suggested recommendations.

In discussing the proposed regulations with the community, the primary issues raised had to do with health concerns from crematorium emissions near existing residential districts, appropriate off-street loading areas for funeral homes, and parking for assembly uses at funeral homes, especially in parking impacted areas.

To address community and Council concerns, staff is proposing the following changes:

1. Provide updated definitions for mortuaries and crematoriums.
2. Mortuaries and funeral homes would be allowed in commercial zones, with a requirement for a loading parking space and adequate parking for assembly uses.
3. Traditional crematoriums would require a 600-foot buffer from any existing residential district, provided that they are:
 - a. Only as an accessory use to a mortuary in a commercial zone, or cemetery, subject to the distancing requirement.
 - b. Allowed as a stand-alone use within the Medium Industrial (IM) or General Industrial (IG) zones, subject to the distancing requirement and an Administrative Use Permit.
4. Amortize existing crematorium operations that do not meet the distancing requirements by December 31, 2023.

The proposed revisions focus on location and chronic health-related issues pertaining to crematoriums, and nuisance issues related to parking at mortuaries or funeral homes.

Staff believes the proposed changes will address the concerns of the community by requiring a separation of crematoriums from residential districts based on the results of the attached health risk assessment, and by providing clear standards for mortuaries, funeral homes and cemeteries.

The next step is to incorporate recommendations provided at the Study Session and bring the revised proposal back to the Planning Commission in September 2013.

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Attachments: Exhibit A – Health Risk Assessment for Crematoriums
Exhibit B – Cemeteries and Funeral Homes Map
Exhibit C – Additional Background Materials