



R-13

Memorandum

To: Mayor and City Council

October 11, 2011

From: Suja Lowenthal, Second District

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Suja", written over the printed name.

Subject: Adaptive Reuse Incentive Program

REQUESTED ACTION:

Request the City Manager develop an adaptive reuse incentive program and ordinance that recognizes the economic, environmental and cultural value of preserving older and/or historic landmark buildings in consultation with the Cultural Heritage Commission, Planning Commission and the historic preservation community.

Request that the program include, but not be limited to, the following elements drawing on adaptive reuse ordinances in Los Angeles, Santa Monica and Pasadena:

- A fair, clear and predictable approval process that stresses collaboration between the various approval entities including Building, Fire, Planning and Public Works.
- Regulatory changes to provide incentives for adaptive reuse, including the potential for density, corridors/neighborhoods of focus, by-right and parking waivers.
- Flexibility in building and fire codes that mandate health and safety protections while ensuring that requirements do not render projects infeasible
- Application of the historic building code as appropriate.
- Develop a handbook and online resource describing the program to potential developers.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Adaptive reuse is the recognition that when buildings are brought back to life through reuse or repurposing, they revitalize and stabilize neighborhoods by preserving the historic context of our communities and its architecture. Furthermore, adaptive reuse policies and standards often result in new housing and mixed-use opportunities, thereby multiplying their economic impact and creating jobs.

Currently, the City of Long Beach supports efforts aimed at preserving and repurposing existing historic buildings through documents such as the Downtown Planning District 30 (PD-30), Downtown Plan, zoning, municipal code and the Historic Preservation Element. Although these resources acknowledge the need to offer some incentives for reuse, namely reduced

parking requirements and density limitations, Long Beach must demonstrate true innovation by readdressing and promoting adaptive reuse as a vital resource and fiscal reality through incentives applied everywhere in the city, not just in our historically rich downtown.

The existing team of City staffers that includes Building, Fire, Planning and Public Works is paramount to a successful adaptive reuse incentive program. A model program must ensure that this team is prepared and equipped to make discretionary decisions while working with the development community. They should have tools such as technical incentives that allow flexibility in restoring a historic building and innovative solutions that also contribute to the project being "green" and sustainable. The team must be allowed to be more "prescriptive" using sound building and fire/life safety principals to create an environment that seriously considers mitigations proposed by qualified design professionals.

There are ordinances identified by the historical community to be model ordinances in Los Angeles, Pasadena and Santa Monica that could be used in drafting our own program and ordinance. One of the attractive elements of the Los Angeles adaptive reuse program is the collaboration of the Building, Fire, Planning and Public Works staff as a sort of "red team" to address particularly complex adaptive reuse projects in a holistic manner at one point in time rather than in departmental areas of responsibility. This cooperation results in more efficient use of staff time and expedited permit approvals.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Development Services estimates the total cost to implement at \$25,000, which would cover the costs of staff time and materials for the code amendments as well as the handbook and process improvements. It is worth noting that the potential positive fiscal impact of adaptive reuse is significantly more than \$25,000 since the changes would be introducing new uses into either unused or underutilized buildings.