

## What is Adaptive Reuse Zoning?

- By-right option for commercial (office or retail) building owners to convert their existing building into residential use.
- Given it applies to existing building, will be administered by Building and Safety, not review through Planning. However, Planning will get involved if there are unusual impacts associated with the conversion.

## Why?

- COVID pandemic re-mapped commercial space occupancy.
- Per City of LA, 44M sq ft of office space in LA today. (Equivalent to 30 high-rise downtown towers.)
- post-COVID, owners struggling with higher vacancy rates.
- Ecologically much better to reuse existing building than demo it and build new. (One study suggests it takes 80 years of new build occupancy to absorb the pollution of one building demo.)
- Housing Element team did an analysis: with a 25 year and 15 year

## Ordinance History/Status?

- 1999 - Original Adaptive Reuse policy: granted to Downtown LA in a Specific Plan.
- 2003 - Planning granted other communities similar Adaptive Reuse Specific Plans (Hollywood, Koreatown, Chinatown, Lincoln Heights, South LA)
- What the City learned from these early examples informs their thinking about new city-wide ordinance, currently being drafted.
- **Goal: Ordinance adopted by City Spring/Winter of 2024.**

## Proposed Draft Adaptive Reuse Ordinance Details

- Building Type?
  - Building 15 years old or older (for 2024: build on or before 2009) can go straight to Building and Safety for BY-RIGHT project review and approval. (Change from DTLA ordinance citing 50 years or older) NOTE: age of building based on date Building & Safety issued Occupancy Certificate.
  - Buildings between 5 and 15 years old; must go through Conditional Use review (Planning).
  - Buildings with “historic” designation adhere to California History Building code, goes through existing Historic review, approval (Planning).
  - Industrial zoned buildings: No adaptive reuse for residential allowed.
- What parts of Commercial property can be converted? All spaces eligible for adaptive reuse (including parking garages, parking lot space, etc.)

- Minimum dwelling unit size = Lifting zoning limit on minimum unit size. Building & Safety has defined “habitable” (micro) as small as 250 sq ft. (Rationale: allow for a wide range of unit types.)
- Existing ADA, Fire and Safety requirements: continue to be required in Building and Safety review.
- These projects EXEMPT from more restrictive requirements in Specific Plans, Q or D Conditions, Specific Overlays and Site Plan Reviews.
  - Goal: accept physical features of the existing building; override normal residential requirements (e.g., set-backs, specific height restrictions, etc.)
- Additional space created for common use only: will allow for addition of 1 story, on top, max 16’ ONLY for the purposes of adding common access amenities (gym, roof deck, etc) and NEVER for additional housing. (Attempts to overcome limited open/public space inherent in commercial building designs. Doesn’t count in the FAR calculation.)
- Partial or Gradual Conversion: Ok to convert a commercial to residential in stages. (E.g., 10 story office building, convert 3 floors to residential at first. Wait a few years, convert another 2 stories, etc.) Also Ok to convert only part of commercial building to residential.
- TOC incentives? Those allowances and incentives can’t be used on the existing building. But if owner has large parking lot, can do new-build TOC in that open parcel space.
- Parking Requirements? Default for multi-unit residential is zero parking. However, in discussion with Building & Safety. Even if residential space qualifies for zero parking allowance, if portions of the building remain commercial owner will be required to still provide commercial parking.

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