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October 1, 2014

City Council of the City of Los Angeles
Planning and Land Use Management (PLUM) Committee
200 North Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

**Re: Report on Baseline Mansionization Ordinance Amendment (CF 14-0656)
and the Department's Neighborhood Conservation Initiative**

Honorable Members of the Planning and Land Use Management (PLUM) Committee:

On May 16, 2014, Councilmember Koretz introduced a motion requesting that the Department of City Planning prepare an ordinance to address "the counterproductive provisions of the Baseline Mansionization Ordinance to stabilize the conflict of out-of-scale homes that continue to proliferate in entire neighborhoods" and included a set of recommended changes. At its July 29, 2014 meeting, the PLUM Committee requested that the Department of City Planning report back on a proposal to accomplish this request.

In response to this request, the Department is proposing a four step approach to address the short-term and long-term effects of this urgent issue:

1. Establish an **Interim Control Ordinance (ICO)** to limit the demolition of single-family homes in five proposed **Historic Preservation Overlay Zones (HPOZs)** and the construction of new single-family homes in four proposed **Residential Floor Area (RFA)** overlay districts and one hillside area. The estimated timeframe for this effort is 60 days.
2. Close loophole in the **Baseline Mansionization Ordinance (BMO)**. The estimated timeframe for this effort is 18 months.

3. Create and implement new single-family zones that address the specific goals of four proposed **Residential Floor Area (RFA)** overlay districts and one hillside neighborhood. The estimated timeframe for this effort is 24 months.
4. Establish five new **Historic Preservation Overlay Zones (HPOZs)**. The estimated timeframe for this effort is 24 months.

BACKGROUND

The BMO established regulations to reduce the development potential of single-family residential structures on single-family zoned lots outside of Hillside Areas and the Coastal Zone. The ordinance provided a “one-size-fits-most” set of maximum allowable development regulations for single-family zones with the expectation that individual communities could increase or decrease the development potential through the application of RFA Districts.

Since 2008, RFA Districts have been established in Sunland-Tujunga, Studio City, and Beverly Grove. Recently, the City Council has seen an increase in the number of requests for new RFA Districts with some seeking just the replication of an existing RFA District or an expansion of existing boundaries. At the same time, the City has seen a surge in requests for HPOZs. Many historic neighborhoods across the City are confronted with development pressure and the potential irreversible loss of historic resources that accompanies the demolition and alteration of historic homes. The City's SurveyLA Program has identified potential Historic Districts across the City, which has further galvanized communities to protect and keep their neighborhoods intact.

Recognizing the need to further protect the character of neighborhoods, the City Council funded four new planner positions for a Neighborhood Conservation Initiative. Although the Department has the budget authority to staff this initiative, these positions cannot be filled until the first quarter of 2015. Taking this into account, the Department will address a portion of this work program with existing staff. The majority of the work program outlined below will not begin until the staffing for the Neighborhood Conservation Initiative is in place.

In addition to existing neighborhood protections, the Department has embarked on a five-year effort to comprehensively revise the Zoning Code – **re:code LA**. A key element of this project is the creation of more finely-tuned single-family zones. Given the urgency for additional neighborhood character protections, the Department will reprioritize the **re:code LA** work program so that the creation of new contextual single-family zones can be made available for implementation through the current Zoning Code, and much earlier than previously proposed.

1. ESTABLISH AN INTERIM CONTROL ORDINANCE (ICO)

An ICO would temporarily prohibit demolition in five proposed HPOZs and limit construction activity in four proposed RFA Districts and a hillside neighborhood for a maximum period of two years. Below are three concepts to address different categories of neighborhoods:

Proposed HPOZs – Prohibit all single-family home demolitions in the following five selected areas, which have been surveyed or are in the process of having a Historic Resources Survey prepared by a qualified consultant:

- Sunset Square – Council District 4
- Carthay Square – Council District 5
- Holmby – Westwood – Council District 5
- Oxford Square – Council District 10
- El Sereno – Berkshire Craftman District– Council District 14

Proposed RFA Districts – An option to provide maximum neighborhood protection in the following areas could prohibit all single-family home demolitions while allowing only interior remodels that retain all exterior walls and roofs. A less restrictive option that includes some flexibility for property owners could allow complete demolitions but limit new structures to 120% of the size of the previously legally existing structure; however in no case shall the ICO grant more development potential than is already permitted.

- ✓ Studio City/Valley Village – Council District 2
- South Hollywood – Council District 4
- ✓ La Brea Hancock Neighborhood – Council District 4
- North Beverly Grove – Council District 5

Hillside Neighborhood – Similar to the proposed RFA Districts above.

- The Oaks – Council District 4

The ICO would include exceptions for projects with vested rights, for health and safety reasons, and where its application would violate state or federal law.

2. AMEND BASELINE MANSIONIZATION ORDINANCE (BMO)

The new Neighborhood Conservation staff will amend the regulations established by the Baseline Mansionization Ordinance (BMO) as outlined in the subject motion. The focus of this effort will be on closing known loopholes.

3. ESTABLISH NEW SINGLE FAMILY ZONES FOR 5 PROPOSED RFA DISTRICTS and ONE HILLSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD

The Department will reprioritize the **re:code LA** work program so that the creation of new contextual single-family zones can be made available for implementation prior to the completion of the new Zoning Code. Project staff will analyze the five proposed RFA Districts and the hillside neighborhood and develop new zoning options that address development concerns. The new Neighborhood Conservation staff will codify and implement the newly crafted zones in the five neighborhoods.

4. ESTABLISH 5 NEW HPOZs

The new Neighborhood Conservation staff will create and establish five new HPOZs. The work program will include: Verification of the Historic Resources Survey and Context Statement prepared by the consultant, confirmation of area boundaries, drafting of a Preservation Plan, public workshops, official public hearing, certification of the Historic Resources Survey by the Cultural Heritage Commission, ordinance and Preservation Plan adoption by the City Planning Commission and finally, adoption by the City Council.

CONCLUSION

The Department of City Planning recognizes the importance of neighborhood preservation while also supporting development that is consistent with the fabric of these communities. The aforementioned four part Neighborhood Conservation Initiation addresses the City's goal of protecting neighborhood character.

For further information, please contact Tom Rothmann at tom.rothmann@lacity.org or 213-978-1891 or Erick Lopez at erick.lopez@lacity.org or 213-978-1323.

Sincerely,



Alan Bell, AICP
Deputy Director of Planning