

MOTION

Los Angeles faces an unprecedented housing crisis that has contributed to an unprecedented homelessness crisis, in which tens of thousands of people suffer on our streets daily. As the deadly COVID-19 virus continues to spread, it is an urgent public health and moral priority that we provide shelter for people currently living on our streets using all available tools at our disposal.

The City has declared a shelter crisis due to the significant number of people experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles; this crisis requires both construction of new and acquisition of existing buildings that can be converted into supportive housing and transitional housing, which provide access to assistance and services for individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of experiencing homelessness.

The City's Comprehensive Homeless Strategy also includes identifying opportunities for adaptive reuse of existing private properties that are capable of being converted into Transitional and Supportive Housing, with special focus on hotels and motels. In response, in 2018, the City Council approved both the Interim Motel Conversion and the Permanent Supportive Housing Ordinances to reduce regulatory and procedural barriers to the production of affordable housing. Since 2018, the City has approved 42 PSH projects resulting in over 3,500 beds, with thousands more in the pipeline. This strategy to repurpose existing buildings has proved successful in providing greater flexibility to struggling building owners, while also meeting the goal to provide inexpensive, affordable housing options to address our housing crisis.

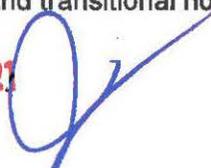
Early in the pandemic, the City, the County and the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority quickly brought more than 7,000 vulnerable people indoors in a period of a few months. Project Roomkey, the central initiative of this effort, secured more than 4,000 rooms in 37 hotels between the City and County of Los Angeles, which served more than 6,000 people. While Project Roomkey provides urgent, interim housing, Project Homekey further seeks to acquire hotels and motels that can permanently convert to supportive housing.

As the City's economy recovers from the fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, and tourism returns to Los Angeles, it is reasonable to expect that hotels will see more business. The City should explore options for adaptive reuse of existing buildings throughout the City that go beyond just hotels and motels. In particular, commercial office buildings could potentially be converted into housing. With more companies moving to remote work, it is also feasible that some commercial buildings will sustain vacancies into the next year. The City should consider whether underutilized office and commercial buildings could be reasonably converted into housing.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the City Council instruct the Department of City Planning, Department of Housing and Community Investment Development, and City Attorney, in consultation with the Department of Building and Safety and the Los Angeles Fire Department, to report back with feasibility of and recommendations for expanding the provisions of the existing Interim Motel Conversion Ordinance to existing commercial office buildings.

I FURTHER MOVE that the Council instruct City Attorney to prepare draft changes to the Motel Conversion Ordinance that would allow the repurposing or adaptation of commercial office buildings into supportive and transitional housing with supportive services.

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PRESENTED BY:



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