

LEGISLATIVE DIGEST

[Planning Code - Permits to Install Business Signs to Historic Buildings or Buildings in Conservation Districts in the C-3 (Downtown) Area]

Ordinance amending the Planning Code to require a hearing before the Historic Preservation Commission rather than an administrative review by Planning Department staff of applications for a permit to install business signs to a Significant or Contributory building or a building in a Conservation District in the C-3 (Downtown) area, provided that the permit is for a Major Alteration; affirming the Planning Department's determination under the California Environmental Quality Act; and making public necessity, convenience, and welfare findings under Planning Code, Section 302, and findings of consistency with the General Plan, and the eight priority policies of Planning Code, Section 101.1.

Existing Law

Article 11 of the Planning Code provides preservation standards and permit procedures for proposed alterations to historic buildings and buildings in conservation districts in the City's Downtown area.

Under Section 1111.1, the Historic Preservation Commission ("HPC") can delegate to Planning Department staff certain types of permits for proposed alterations to historic buildings and buildings in conservation districts, if the HPC considers such alterations to be of a "minor" character, and to retain others that it considers "major."

Certain scopes of work, however, have by ordinance been delegated to Planning staff in all instances – such as permits to provide accessible entrances to historic buildings. When considering approval of an application so delegated, Planning Department must follow the requirements of Article 11, including "compl[iance] with the Secretary of the Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties for significant and contributory buildings, as well as any applicable guidelines, local interpretations, bulletins, or other policies."

Amendments to Current Law

This ordinance would amend Section 1111.1 to delete the delegation to Planning Department staff for one of the scopes of work that are currently delegated by ordinance: applications for a permit to install business signs to historic districts in the Downtown area. Instead, the ordinance would require a hearing before the HPC for such proposed alterations, absent a future delegation from the HPC under the "minor" permit to alter procedures.

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The ordinance would also require that, when considering permit applications delegated by ordinance, Planning Department shall make written findings explaining how the proposed improvements conform to the requirements of Article 11.

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