

PRESS RELEASE



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Old Building, New Life: Adaptive Reuse Unlocks More Housing

LOS ANGELES — Los Angeles City Planning is helping bring new life to empty office buildings through the Citywide Adaptive Reuse Ordinance (ARO). Effective as of Feb. 1, 2026, the ARO amends the Zoning Code to establish zoning incentives and streamline procedures to help transform underutilized commercial buildings that are at least 15 years old into new housing.

“With shifting demands for office and retail space, ARO is a unique opportunity to create more housing, reactivate vacant space and revitalize commercial corridors,” said Director of City Planning Vince Bertoni. “Sometimes the greenest building is the one already built. The ARO will help reimagine existing spaces to create new housing opportunities for Angelenos and do so in a sustainable manner.”

Los Angeles seized on adaptive reuse as a core strategy of its adopted [Housing Element Rezoning Program](#), which started with stakeholder outreach in 2023. The office vacancy rate in Los Angeles has remained historically high since the pandemic, in part due to shifts in how and where work is done, consistent with national trends. With millions of square feet of office space available in Los Angeles, the ARO assists property owners seeking to convert commercial office spaces to housing by eliminating outdated zoning codes. The new policy also expedites the residential conversion process by allowing most applicants to submit building permit applications directly to the Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety (LADBS). In addition, new incentives have been put in place to allow for the flexible and creative use of interior spaces.

The City of Los Angeles has been a national leader in facilitating the reuse of existing buildings, sparking the revitalization of Downtown Los Angeles, the Wilshire corridor, Hollywood, and other historic neighborhoods since the City’s first Adaptive Reuse Ordinance was established in 1999. That policy enabled the creation of more than 12,000 housing units in Downtown alone. This has led to economic regeneration, housing opportunities, and preserving and reinvigorating the City’s architectural legacy. The new City policy is expected to usher in a new era of revitalization, adding housing while rehabilitating many existing buildings for years to come. For more information on the new Citywide Adaptive Reuse Ordinance, visit <https://planning.lacity.gov/project-review/adaptive-reuse>.

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