



HISTORIC BROADWAY COMMERCIAL REUSE BRINGING BACK BROADWAY

This Information Bulletin (IB) is a general guideline for permit protocol on repairs, alterations and additions necessary for the preservation, rehabilitation related construction, change of use or continued use of Qualified Historical Buildings or Properties located on South Broadway in Downtown Los Angeles between 1st and 12th Streets.

This bulletin has been developed as a joint effort of the Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety (LADBS) and the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD), in response to Councilmember José Huizar's initiative, "Bringing Back Broadway," to encourage the reactivation of Broadway's buildings. The Bulletin provides guidelines and assistance related to the implementation of the California State Historical Building Code (CHBC).

BACKGROUND

The "Broadway Theatre and Entertainment District" (ZI No. 2408) is a National Register Historic District which is within the area covered by these guidelines. Broadway is known as the birthplace of theatrical and cinematic entertainment in Los Angeles and previously was considered the commercial and retail capital of the United States. Today, Broadway suffers from one of the largest inventories of underutilized historic buildings in the nation. Due to their 19th century design and functionality, many of these commercial and theatrical buildings have fallen to substandard levels of fire/life safety during years and decades of vacancy, and many can no longer be legally occupied, putting neighboring buildings at risk. More than 1-million square feet of commercial space remains vacant in upper floors along Broadway.

This (IB) addresses the challenges when historical buildings are undergoing change of use and/or commercial reuse with respect to compliance with the current Los Angeles Building Code (LABC). In conjunction with the LABC, the California Historical Building Code (CHBC) may be used to provide solutions that are reasonably equivalent to the regular code (as defined in CHBC Chapter 8-2) when dealing with **Qualified Historical Buildings or Properties**, and can be used to provide flexibility in addressing the challenges faced when historic buildings are undergoing change of use and/or commercial reuse. The bulletin provides solutions for the preservation of Qualified Historical Buildings or Properties on South Broadway in Downtown Los Angeles, and provides guidelines for life-safety, access for persons with disabilities, and a cost-effective approach to preservation, and also promotes sustainability. For additional information regarding efforts of Councilmember José Huizar's Bringing Back Broadway initiative, visit BringingBackBroadway.com.

QUALIFIED HISTORICAL BUILDINGS OR PROPERTIES

To utilize the provisions from the CHBC and this bulletin, buildings must be identified as a “Qualified Historical Building.” Qualified Historical Buildings are defined and are identified as follows:

Definition of Qualified Historical Building (Health and Safety Code Section 18955):

Any building, site, object, place, location, district or collection of structures, and their associated sites, deemed of importance to the history, architecture or culture of an area by an appropriate local, state or federal governmental jurisdiction. This shall include historical buildings or properties on, or determined eligible for national, state or local historical registers or inventories, such as the National Register of Historic Places, California Register of Historical Resources, State Historical Landmarks, and State Points of Historical Interest, and City or County registers, inventories or surveys of historical or architecturally significant sites, places or landmarks.

Identification of Qualified Historical Buildings:

The designation of Qualified Historic Buildings can be identified using the following resources:

- <http://zimas.lacity.org/>
 1. Search the subjected building or property by address, street intersection or Assessor Parcel Number (APN).
 2. Look for Historic Preservation Review under the planning and zoning tab of property activity report.
 3. Click “yes” and locate the designation for National register designation or eligibility as indicated, such as “Broadway Theatre and Commercial District” or other designations.
 4. Applicants should note that not all qualified historic buildings which may qualify for the use of these guidelines may have its historic status reflected in ZIMAS. Applicants are encouraged to consult with staff of the Department of City Planning Office of Historic Resources to determine and confirm eligibility. When necessary the Office of Historic Resources shall make the final determination on a building’s qualified historic status.
- National Historic Register Document
<http://www.bringingbackbroadway.com/ARCHITECTURALGEMS/NATIONALHISTORICREGISTERDOCUMENT/index.htm>

ZONING CODE

- **General zoning regulations:** All proposed work shall conform to the zoning regulation per current LA Municipal Code, including historical building requirements.
- **Community Design Overlay:** In addition to the general zoning regulations, a project located in the applicable area of ZI No. 2408 “BROADWAY THEATER AND ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT DESIGN GUIDE (COMMUNITY DESIGN OVERLAY)” shall

also follow the requirements of ZI No. 2408 and a clearance sign-off by the Department of City Planning is required, except for interior alterations that will not affect the exterior of a building.

(Zoning Information No. 2408) per Ordinance No. 180871
<http://zimas.ci.la.ca.us/documents/zoneinfo/ZI2408.pdf>).

- **Parking exemption for Historical Building under change of use:** Per LAMC 12.21A4(x)(2), any structure designated on the National Register of Historic places or State or City list of historical or cultural monuments, no additional automobile parking or bicycle parking spaces need to be provided in connection with a change of use; however a decision-making body, as part of a discretionary approval related to a change of use, may impose conditions requiring additional parking requirements in connection with the change of use.
- **Parking exemption for providing accessible parking spaces:** Per LAMC 12.2A.4(m) exception 2, the Department of Building and Safety may reduce the number of required parking spaces by the number of spaces, which the Department of Building and Safety determines are needed to provide disabled parking spaces as required by the State access laws.

BUILDING CODE

Alterations, repairs, change of use, and additions to existing buildings shall comply with Los Angeles Existing Building Code (LAEBC) and Chapter 11B of the Los Angeles Building Code (LABC) when applicable and may use the CHBC to provide solutions to facilitate the preservation of qualified historical buildings or properties.

DOCUMENTATION

When required, the establishment of existing or previously permitted uses shall be provided with a copy of documents in the order listed below:

- 1) the current Certification of Occupancy,
- 2) historical building permit records,
- 3) other official records from City, County, State, or Federal agencies,
- 4) Notations within the Broadway Theater and Entertainment National Register Historic District document, and / or updates to that document, the State of California Department of Parks & Recreation Inventory forms or other official historical studies and surveys related to legally established previous uses, and
- 5) other documentation, including but not limited to Sanborn maps, historic photographs, historic drawings, newspaper clips, etc., will be considered on a case by case basis evaluated by the Building and Safety Plan Check Supervisor.

CURRENT COMPLIANCE WITH LAFD CHIEF'S REGULATION NO. 4

Existing buildings must be continuously maintained in compliance with LAMC 91.8604. A copy of the Certification(s) for each of the “original” fire protection systems within a building, showing compliance with LAFD Chief’s Regulation No. 4 must be included with plans when requested by LAFD. A list of the fire protection devices which require periodic testing in accordance with LAFD Chief’s Regulation No. 4 is as follows: Not all systems listed below apply to each building. Those that do apply must be maintained.

- Basic Fire Warning Systems
- Complex Fire Warning Systems
- Central Station Signaling Systems
- Smoke Management Systems
- Elevators, Automatic
- Emergency Generator and Lighting Systems
- Fire Doors
- Fire Escapes
- Class I Standpipe Systems
- Class II Standpipe Systems
- Class III Standpipe Systems
- Combined Standpipe Systems
- Class H Standpipe Systems
- Fire Pumps
- Automatic Fire Sprinkler Systems
- Pressure Reducing Valves (PRV’s)
- Automatic Fire Extinguishing System

Additional information regarding LAFD Chief’s Regulation No. 4 may be found at the following link:
<http://lafd.org/prevention/reg4.html>.

BUILDING PERMITTING PROTOCOL

The steps to obtain a building permit for projects within the area covered by this bulletin are listed in this section.

1. Clearly specify the proposed scope of work description on the permit application and incorporate into construction plans as necessary.
2. Establish legal existing use with the documentation as specified on pages 3 and 4. Building Records are available at the Metro and Van Nuys district offices. More information on hours and location of the Building and Safety Records Counters may be obtained from <http://ladbs.org/LADBSWeb/building-permit-records.jsf>.
3. Apply for a building permit at one of the LADBS Construction Service Centers (<http://ladbs.org/LADBSWeb/locations.jsf>).

A. **Express Permit application:** No construction plans are required for minor building maintenance or repair. Refer to Information Bulletin P/BC 2020-003 for types of work that qualify for Express Permit. However, clearances for historic buildings will be required to be obtained from the Department of City Planning.

B. Plan Check application:

- i. For construction work that does not qualify for Express Permits, construction plans are required. Refer to the following Information Bulletins for document submittal requirements:
 - P/BC 2020-006 for document submittal requirements for tenant improvement, addition, or alteration to an existing commercial/industrial building.
 - P/BC 2020-021 for document requirements for changing the use of existing building.

- ii. A separate set of construction plans may be required to be submitted for Accessibility plan check and/or Green building plan check.

Submit a separate set of construction plans to the Los Angeles Fire Department for the review concurrently.

- iii. After building plans are submitted, plans are reviewed. Plan check corrections and a Clearance Summary Worksheet will be released to address the corrections, if any, and obtain clearance sign-offs from other City agencies as specified on the Clearance Summary Worksheet.

- iv. Verification of plan check comments:
 - a) For the Over-the-Counter Plan Check and Extended Counter Plan Check, return to one of the LADBS Construction Service counters to obtain the building permit.
 - b) For the Regular Plan Check, schedule an appointment with the designated Plan Check Engineer to address corrections and obtain a building permit.

Note: Separate Mechanical and/or Electrical permits may also be required for the project. Additional permitting procedures and code requirements on mechanical, electrical, plumbing, elevator and fire sprinkler permits may be obtained at the LADBS Construction Services Center counters.

HISTORIC BROADWAY COMMERCIAL REUSE GUIDELINES

Attachment A of this IB, “Historic Broadway Commercial Reuse Guidelines”, may be used to provide guidance to determine fire/life safety and building code. This document provides guidance on how to apply alternative methods of the CHBC for the commercial reuse of historical buildings. These Guidelines interpret some of the requirements for each category to utilize alternative methods per the CHBC, so that if compliance with the current code is triggered by the project, a set of applicable alternative methods may be used. The commercial reuse of historic buildings has been categorized as listed below:

Categories:

Category 1. This is the least intensive category of commercial reuse project. Reactivation of the historical use or change of use to a less hazardous group shall not mandate conformance with the new construction requirements as set forth in the current code, provided the qualified historic building or property conforms to the requirements applicable to the new reactivated use or character of occupancy as set forth in the CHBC. Category 1 projects are:

- Reactivation of any previously permitted use, AND/OR
- Change of use to a less hazardous occupancy group.

Category 2. Category 2 projects are :

- Alteration to existing building resulting in an increase of occupant load, OR
- Change of use to a more hazardous group.

Category 3. Category 3 projects are:

- Alteration to existing building resulting in an increase of occupant load, AND
- Change of use to a more hazardous group.

SECTION A: BASIC GUIDELINES FOR EXISTING BUILDINGS:

The following basic guidelines shall be applied to each category of commercial reuse projects covered in these guidelines.

I. Helipad:

New helipads are not required for existing buildings.

II. Rooftop Egress:

Any new assembly use on a rooftop will require at least 2 means of egress which are not fire escapes. New occupied roofs shall be provided with exits in compliance with the current code [LABC Sec.1006].

III. Fire Alarm Systems:

Every qualified historic building or property shall be provided with fire alarm systems as required for the occupancy by the current Building Code [CHBC 8-409]. Other technologies including fire alarm systems, smoke and heat detection systems, occupant notification and annunciation systems, smoke control systems and fire modeling, timed egress analysis and modeling, as well as other engineering methods and technologies may be accepted by the enforcing agency to address areas of non-conformance on a case-by-case basis [CHBC 8-411].

IV. High Rise Retrofit Ordinance:

High rise buildings cited as part of Ordinance Nos. 163836 and 165319 must meet the City's High Rise Retrofit Ordinance or may comply with the current Plumbing Code, when floors above the ground floor are to be occupied.

V. Green Building Code Compliance:

Additions of any size and/or alterations more than \$200,000 shall be subjected to the green building code requirements. If the historical significance or character defining features are threatened, alternative provisions for access may be applied and will be considered on a case by case basis.

VI. Disabled Access Compliance:

Section 11B-202 of the LABC shall be used in conjunction with Section 8-6 of the CHBC to achieve access for people with disabilities.

VII. Rooftop Garden:

Rooftop gardens for the purposes of urban farming shall not be considered an assembly use or occupancy. Rooftop gardens shall be made accessible to persons with disabilities.

SECTION B: ADDITIONS TO EXISTING BUILDINGS:

All new additions shall comply with current LA Building Code requirements since this category of work does not qualify for alternative methods.

In any case, no work undertaken shall make the building less conforming than before the repair or remodel was undertaken, including fire protection, means of egress and accessibility.

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS AND REFERENCES RELATED TO ALTERATIONS AND REPAIRS TO EXISTING BUILDINGS

Information Bulletins:

P/GI 2020-005: RESTAURANT & HOSPITALITY EXPRESS PERMITTING AND CONSTRUCTION PROCESS

P/GI 2020-006: DOCUMENT SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS FOR TENANT IMPROVEMENT, ADDITION, ALTERATION TO AN EXISTING COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL BUILDING

LADBS Plan Check Correction Lists:

PC/STR/Corr.Lst.111: Supplemental Plan Check Corrections Sheet for Bicycle Parking Ordinance (Effective 3/13/2013) (www.ladbs.org)

References:

American Society of Civil Engineers Standard 41-13
Broadway Theater and Entertainment National Register Historic District
State of California Department of Parks & Recreation Inventory forms
Individual Broadway Historic Building inventory – compilation of use notations
2019 California Historical Building Code (CHBC)

Attachments:

A. Historic Broadway Commercial Reuse Guidelines - CHBC Alternative