

## City of Los Angeles Delays Issuance of Demolition Permits for Most Structures More Than 45 Years Old

Article By:

Real Estate, Land Use and Environmental Practice Group

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Starting in January 2015, **the City will not issue demolition permits for structures more than 45 years old** until the applicant has **conspicuously posted a demolition notice on the property, sent letters to abutting neighbors and notified the applicable City Council District Office at least 30 days in advance of demolition**. This 30-day delay gives community groups and elected officials additional time to seek the designation of structures or districts as historic resources, in particular as a City “Historic-Cultural Monuments”, before they are razed.

The stated purpose of this demolition notification Ordinance is to prevent “stealth” demolitions of historic, but undesignated buildings in Los Angeles. Preservationists and other community groups have long complained about demolitions involving individual buildings that do not require environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) or Los Angeles preservation regulations, but may have historic significance. The 45-year “rolling” trigger is intended to provide potential protection for the shrinking roster of mid-century modern buildings, as well as more contemporary buildings constructed in the 1960s that are increasingly the subject of preservation concern. Over the next decade, structures built in the 1970s will be subject to the new public notice requirements.

Under the City’s preexisting Cultural Heritage Ordinance, once the formal designation process is initiated, the City imposes an automatic stay on demolition pending a final decision by the City Council – a process can last 7 or more months. The demolition notification Ordinance does exempt proposed demolitions approved through a pending specific plan, or previously approved as part of a project subject to CEQA, but the new notification requirements will undoubtedly come as surprise to many property owners who are unaware their projects raise potential historic issues.

It is surprising that the demolition notification Ordinance does not take account of the City’s ongoing effort, known as “Survey LA”, to identify and document all historic resources in Los Angeles. Following the completion of Survey LA, it might be appropriate to exempt structures from the new notification requirements that Survey LA has determined are not historic resources.

The new Ordinance provides a timely reminder that developers should consider conducting a historic assessment of buildings and other structures more than 45 years old before applying for demolition permits, and be prepared to provide evidence of non-significance in the event of any controversy

following the posting and delivery of the required notice.

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