

Summary of Programs and Ordinances

This table provides a snapshot based on the most recent ordinances and summaries from each city's planning framework for adaptive re-use. Overall, the most progressive approach to increase residential and utilization of the ordinances comes from San Francisco and Los Angeles, reduction in development fees, allowances for additional stories and reduction of parking. Interviews with developers will give us more perspective as to which incentives make the biggest impact. AB 2488 (detailed below) is also a standout feature, as the city has essentially created an improvement district and governing board to fund/finance conversion projects in the area.

Topic	San Francisco	Long Beach	Los Angeles	Santa Ana	Pasadena
Year Adopted	July 5, 2023	March 11, 2014.	Original ARO Adopted in 1999 "Citywide Adaptive Reuse Ordinance" Approved by City Council December 10, 2024	June 20, 2020	March 2025
Notes	Intentionally incentivizes housing, reduces fees to increase feasibility. Focused within the Financial District (FiDi)	The least focused on housing - more of a guide with exceptions but few incentives.	Originally developed to increase housing, since expanded to capture more housing and retain city fabric	As a part of the housing element, the city may revisit or amend the existing ordinance to provide additional incentives.	Introduces a range of incentives, reduces regulatory barriers, requires minimum average unit size, and limited new construction is permitted in conjunction with adaptive reuse. Variance could apply for Historic Resources
Code Section	Article 2, Sec 2.10.5 Ordinance 122-23; 2023 Amendment; 2024 Amendment	21.450 - Adaptive reuse projects	Chapter 1A of the Zoning Code – Article 9.4.6	Section 41-1650	Ordinance No. 7443
Programs	AB 2488 authorizes the City and County of San Francisco to designate one downtown revitalization and economic recovery financing district for the purpose of financing commercial-to-residential conversion projects with incremental tax revenues generated by commercial-to-residential conversion projects within the district. The district would be governed by a board composed of three members of the Board of Supervisors and two public members. The district would prepare a financing plan that includes requirements for affordable housing, identification of eligible commercial buildings, and a process for opted-in projects to receive incremental tax revenue generated by their projects for up to 30 years. The bill also specifies that the commercial-to-residential conversion projects that opt in are public works subject to prevailing wage and labor standards requirements. ¹	Incentive Program	Original ARO adopted in 1999 -Resulting in over 12,000 housing units – allowed only structures built before 1974 to convert.	Primarily focuses on preservation of historic structures and conversion to residential uses.	N/A

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Purpose	Increase housing, expand flexible workspace options, and mitigate loss of historic structures and poor design.	Goal to create opportunities to preserve historic buildings, and bring new use opportunities to underutilized sites.	Expand Adaptive Reuse incentives, the proposed Citywide Adaptive Reuse Ordinance intends to make housing opportunities available throughout Los Angeles.	Preservation of historic structures	Promote housing infill and preserve historic structures
Purpose and Key Features	Commercial to Residential.	<p>Change an existing building in any Neighborhood Commercial and Residential (CNR) District permitted use – except for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No AR in single-family or duplex residential zoning. Non-residential uses introduced into any multi-family res zones must be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood as determined by the Site Plan Review Committee. No new residential in any industrial zone. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing building conditions, including the present height, floor area, any yards or setbacks, parking and loading spaces, and open space are considered to meet Zoning Code requirements. Any configuration of units and unit sizes, new mezzanine or loft spaces, and shared amenities for residents may be created. In addition, new one-story structures to provide fitness rooms, lounges, shade for roof terraces, or other similar features may be built on the roof and not be counted as new floor area if these are accessible to all residents or guests 	Any change of use from Nonresidential Use to dwelling units, guest rooms or joint living and work quarters in all or any portion of any Eligible Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With diminishing demand for nonresidential space, there is a need to reevaluate the City's vacant or underutilized nonresidential buildings. The City recognizes the need to incentivize local housing production that is suitable for the varied needs of Pasadena residents. The proposed Zoning Code Amendments would reduce regulatory barriers to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incentivize the conversion of nonresidential buildings to multifamily and mixed-use; Accommodate innovative housing types; Accelerate the production of additional housing units; and Encourage the productive use of underutilized buildings.
Applicability	C-2/C-3 downtown districts, east of Franklin/13th/N of Townsend.	Multi-Family, Commercial, Industrial (no new res), Downtown (See map on page 9)	Citywide	Project Incentive Areas - midtown specific plan zoning district (SP-3); the transit zoning code district (SD-84); the North Main Street Corridor on both sides of Main Street from Seventeenth Street to the northernmost Main Place Drive; and, the East First Street Corridor on both sides of First Street from Grand Avenue to Elk Lane	<p>City-wide: existing non-residential buildings</p> <p>Development standards shall apply to Adaptive Reuse projects where there is a conversion from an existing nonresidential building (excluding buildings or portions of buildings used for Lodging - Hotels, Motels uses) to multi-family residential use or mixed-use.</p> <p>Variances for Historic Resources</p>
Eligibility Considerations	Must not seek density bonus (under section 206.5 or 206.6) and must not expand an existing building's envelope where the addition is more than 33% of the	Citywide, specific incentives for properties within the coastal district.	Citywide (was downtown-focused), now applies citywide to commercial and lower-density residential zones.	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project must involve conversion of existing building into multi-family residential or mixed use

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	existing building's Gross Floor Area; if a project exceeds this limit, the additions in excess of 33% must meet generally prevailing code requirements.				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buildings must have a valid certificate of occupancy issued at least 5 years prior Buildings or portions of buildings used for lodging/hotels/motels are explicitly <i>excluded</i> from using this section
Eligible Buildings	Nonresidential buildings. Must be in defined downtown districts, <33% addition to GFA.	Existing buildings citywide as specified by the AR zones; must meet city/historic standards; special rules in coastal zone.	All structures must conform with the building and zoning codes at time of construction. 15 year minimum waiting period after building permit issuance before proposed adaptive reuse of building; parking areas/structures within a building may be converted in at least 5 years have elapsed since BP issuance; at least 5 years has elapsed + approval by the zoning administrator.	Buildings built before July 1974 or listed/eligible as historic.	Existing nonresidential building (excluding buildings or portions of buildings used for Lodging - Hotels, Motels uses) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note: under current Pasadena law, hotels of under 80 rooms may be converted to affordable housing.
Waived/ Reduced Development Controls	Lot coverage waived, open space waived, streetscape and pedestrian improvements waived, DU exposure fulfilled through alternative standards, bike parking, DU mix requirement waived, transportation demand management waived, protected pedestrian/cycling/transit-oriented street frontage requirements for existing waived, height requirement flexibility.	Nonconforming setbacks may remain, existing height exempt from est. height limits (Any new or additional habitable space or floors must comply with height limits, unless waived by the SPR Committee), existing parking to remain. Units size: Res units must be a min. 450 sq.ft and project avg no less than 700 sq.ft. Must comply with Floor Area Ratio (FAR), Landscaping, Lot Coverage, Open Space, and any other applicable development standards of the underlying zone, unless waived by the SPR Committee.	Min Unit size: exempt (must meet building code) FA: existing floor area may be maintained <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adaptive reuse projects that remove internal spaces to create courtyards or light wells may add equivalent area on the site or adjacent lot Height: existing may be maintained, if affordable is provided 2 additional stories above zone's allowable height are permitted Yards: existing may be maintained Amenities: 1 new story permitted and not counted as new FA as long as its accessible to all residents Step backs/transitional height: exempt Open space/Landscaping: new OS/landscape not required but 50% of existing outdoor OS must be maintained and ROW trees must be provided/existing street trees maintained.	Setbacks: may remain Height: May remain, rooftop construction is included in the height exemption Loading: no new loading zone required is it does not exist Unit size minimum: 500 SF Ground-floor commercial req - ground floor of a multi-level building with three stories or more containing street frontage shall be used as commercial/retail space. Common area spaces: may not exceed 50% of the ground floor square footage Open Space: 10% of building SF, at least 25% of OS must be community/rec room, the remaining may be private balconies relaxed parking and zoning requirement	Height: For appurtenances and residential amenities: Existing height may be exceeded by max of 15' and will not count toward max height requirements Floor Area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional floor created within existing building will not count toward FAR max Residential Amenities can increase exiting floor areas up to 10% and will not count towards FAR Max Unit Size: The average unit size shall be a minimum of 450 square feet. No average unit size is required for projects that are 100 percent affordable or have less than 10 units.
Parking	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shared parking shall conform to the code for any project Parking Impacted Area 1/DU + 1/guest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Required parking spaces to be the number that existed on site, and maintained and not reduced but allows some reconfiguration of spaces without penalty 	New parking spaces not be required for any converted use within the building, New SF associate with new units: 2 spaces/DU	No new parking is required Shared Parking: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires: Administrative MCUP, being within an allowable walking

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2/1,000 SF of usable internal non-res space In MU the first 3,000 SF of non are exempt from parking requirements Up to 75% of spaces provided may be tandem Any further reductions must be approved by SPR <p><u>Outside Parking Impact Areas</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No add'l onsite parking required for conversion to res 1/1,000 SF of internal usable non-res space In MU the first 6,000 SF of non are exempt from parking requirements Up to 50% of spaces provided may be tandem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in number of spaces allowed if new residential use requires fewer spaces, or under AB2097 		<p>distance, contract, and location within Zoning district.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> May Require: A parking study to determine share parking reduction Loading spaces may be shared <p>Tandem Parking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allowed for Multi-Family and residential component of mixed-use (Assigned to same unit, up to 30%). Day-Care Centers and homes, Other non residential uses (Tandem: 75% of total off street parking; Triple Stacked: 50% of off street) Dimensions: 2 combined spaces (9' x34')- could be modified through MCUP <p>Off Street Parking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No new parking shall be required, existing parking may be reduced Car-Share can help reduce residential parking requirements (1 car share = 5 parking spaces) up to lesser of 20% reduction and 10 car-share parking spaces
Density limits	No density limit for projects in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northeast Waterfront Historic District Jackson Square Historic District Jackson Square Historic District Extension 	NA	New residential uses not subject to minimum lot area per unit requirements of their zone	The project can exceed the maximum general plan density for the site provided the Adaptive Reuse Project is in compliance with the development standards.	Adaptive Reuse Projects shall not be subject to dwelling unit per acre requirements. Average unit size shall be a minimum of 450. (Does not apply to projects that are 100% affordable or have less than 10 units) FAR: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional floor area created within existing building shall not count toward FAR Additional floor area compliant with Building or Fire Codes does not count towards Floor area ratio maxs Building existing floor area can be increase up to 10% for residential amenities

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					Height <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For appurtenances and residential amenities: Existing height may be exceeded by max of 15’ and will not count toward max height requirements
Affordable Housing	NA	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affordable Housing Linkage Fee - Adaptive Reuse conversions subject to Affordable Housing Linkage Fee ordinance As part of Unified Adaptive Reuse Projects, new construction may utilize unlimited density as an incentive Two additional stories, not considered as new floor area or height, up to maximum height allowed by Zone or Height District may be added on top of existing buildings 	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No requirement for affordable, but incentive is no average unit size is required for projects that are 100 percent affordable or have less than 10 units.
Approval Process	If a project seeks exceptions that are waived or modified in subsection (d) above, the hearing requirements in Section 309 shall not apply as to the consideration of those exceptions. But if a project seeks exceptions not otherwise waived or modified in subsection (d) above, the hearing requirements of Section 309 shall apply.	Determination of adaptive re-use is at the discretion of the Zoning Administrator, Building Official and Fire Official. Site Plan Review (SPR) required and coastal permit if applicable, plan check, CoO.	<u>By-right</u> Buildings at least 15 y/o and parking/parking structures at least 5 years old – review by Dept. of Building and Safety <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not include sites with historic resources as identified in <i>HistoricPlacesLA</i> <u>Discretionary</u> Buildings between 5-15 years old must be approved by the zoning administrator Not subject to CEQA	City planning approval, administrative standards, fire/building code compliance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The adaptive reuse pathway is streamlined compared to typical full discretionary development reviews. The review authority for eligible projects is the Director rather than a full commission in many cases. Applicants still need to follow the standard building permit process (engineering, fire, life safety, etc) once zoning/design review is cleared. What r Adaptive reuse projects meeting the ordinance criteria will undergo a consolidated design review process with the Director designated as the review authority, regardless of project size thresholds that would normally trigger Design Commission review.
Incentives	Waived Development or Development Impact Fee . Waived on any net new GFA of residential up to 110% of the FGA of non-res converted to res.	Mitigation flexibility (historic/resource), code waivers, flexible parking, maintained context for neighborhoods.	Density bonuses, open space and parking waivers, minimum unit size removed, affordable housing linkage.	Allowed residential in nonresidential zones; project qualifies even if base zone doesn't permit residential.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relaxed parking requirements Exemptions from dwelling unit per acre requirements Flexibility on floor area ratios for modifications within existing buildings

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					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Height allowances of up to 15 additional feet for residential amenities
Historic Preservation	Streamlined admin Certificates of Appropriateness, relaxed minor permits for historic buildings.	All projects follow local/state/federal historic provisions.	Fire/life safety flexibility for historic reuse, but must comply w/ existing state law.	Applies to eligible historic buildings, exception/process to request alternative standards adopted.	Variance for Historic Resources
Unique/ Notable Provisions	Flexible Workspace land use type, expanded retail/entertainment rights, alternative building code standards for reuse.	Special development standards for coastal projects, adaptive reuse manual. Deviations from the building code can be requested and are reviewed on a case by case basis	Exempts mezzanines/lofts from floor area, density waivers for conversions, triggers pandemic recovery focus.	Ground floor commercial required; minimum unit size 500 sf; must comply with Housing Opportunity Ordinance.	<p>Average unit size shall be a minimum of 450. (Does not apply to projects that are 100% affordable or have less than 10 units)</p> <p>flexibility on floor area ratios for modifications within existing buildings, and height allowances of up to 15 additional feet for residential amenities</p> <p>Each dwelling unit must have at least 150 square feet of open space, which can include common areas</p> <p>Limited new construction is permitted in conjunction with adaptive reuse projects, allowing up to a 50% increase in units or up to the maximum General Plan density, whichever is less</p>
Units Created	Data not available	Data not available	Enabled the creation of more than 12,000 housing units in Downtown alone	Data not available	May be too early to quantify.
Planning Department Contact Information	San Francisco Planning Department (628) 652-7600 pic@sfgov.org	Community Development / Planning Bureau – City of Long Beach Permit Center / Planning counter: 562.570.6194 lccd@longbeach.gov	Main Public Counter (Metro/Downtown DSC) Phone: (213) 482-7077 planning.figcounter@lacity.org housingelement@lacity.org	Planning & Building Agency – City of Santa Ana (Planning Division) Phone: (714) 647-5804 Email: Planning@santa-ana.org	Planning & Community Development Department (Current Planning and Zoning Services) (626) 744-4009 zoningquestions@cityofpasadena.net
Other Resources	Spur Presentation	AR Technical Manual (2014)	LA Fact Sheet		Adaptive Reuse Zoning Code Amendments Presentation to City Council

Additional Resource Links

- <https://turnercenter.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Adaptive-Reuse-November-2021.pdf>
- <https://perkinscoie.com/insights/update/san-francisco-adopts-ordinance-facilitate-conversion-office-buildings-housing>

Adaptive Re-use – Regional Program Review Matrix

Last Revised: 10.30.2025



3. <https://sfbos.org/sites/default/files/o0122-23.pdf>
4. <https://documents.coastal.ca.gov/reports/2016/3/th23a-3-2016.pdf>
5. <https://planning.lacity.gov/odocument/6725f347-7fdb-42fa-aa6e-44c37f8fa999/Fact Sheet - Adaptive Reuse Ordinance.pdf>
6. <https://www.hcd.ca.gov/housing-elements/docs/santa-ana-6th-adopted072622.pdf>
7. <https://www.santa-ana.org/documents/adaptive-reuse-ordinance-and-eligible-locations-map/>
8. <https://sfplanning.org/project/downtown-adaptive-reuse-program>
9. https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/san_francisco/latest/sf_planning/0-0-0-20135
10. <https://www.som.com/news/som-shapes-new-building-code-guidelines-to-help-increase-office-to-residential-conversions-in-downtown-san-francisco/>
11. https://www.sf.gov/sites/default/files/2024-09/G-29_AdaptiveReuse_20240925.pdf
12. <https://www.longbeach.gov/globalassets/uplan/media-library/documents/resources/uplan-phase-1---zoning-code-update>
13. https://www.spur.org/sites/default/files/2025-09/adaptive_reuse_brochure.pdf
14. <https://lbbusinessjournal.com/business/news/revisiting-the-long-beach-adaptive-reuse-ordinance/>
15. https://cityclerk.lacity.org/onlinedocs/2021/21-1230-S9_misc_7_10-30-2024.pdf
16. <https://www.santa-ana.org/wiseplace-psh-adaptive-reuse-development/>