

From: [Sandy Burud](#)
To: [City Clerk](#)
Subject: Historic Preservation item on the 3/2/2021 Study Session Agenda
Date: Sunday, February 28, 2021 11:54:15 AM

Dear Mayor and Council Members,

In regard to the Historic Preservation item on the 3/2/2021 Study Session Agenda:

I enthusiastically support the vigorous use of the Mills Act to incentivize Monrovia homeowners to landmark their historic homes and buildings. It's a powerful tool for protecting our priceless and irreplaceable architectural heritage.

It's that charming architecture that attracts many folks to live, work or visit Monrovia. That in turn generates value that fills our coffers to more than balance the loss of Mills Act tax revenue.

The Mills Act also supports homeowners' ability to invest in the constant upkeep that old homes require. It helps our neighborhoods to stay in good repair, also key to our City's appeal and economic well-being.

I am fortunate to own an 1887 home, which is what drew me to live in Monrovia. It does not qualify for landmarking because it does not meet the stringent standards. Even so, I support doing all we can to landmark homes, and that means maintaining the Mills Act's vitality.

I appreciate the Council's and the City staff's ongoing commitment to historic preservation. It's kept Monrovia such a charming "gem".

Best,

Sandy Burud

[REDACTED]
Monrovia, C
[REDACTED]

From: [Jim Wigton](#)
To: [City Clerk](#)
Subject: Study Session_ March 2, 2021
Date: Monday, March 1, 2021 8:06:42 PM

You don't get something for nothing.

The California State Legislature recognized this in 1972 when it passed the Mills Act, providing the mechanism by which cities in California could recognize historic resources. To offer an incentive for owners to restore and maintain these resources, the legislature provided the Mills Act contract which grants the owner a reduced property tax in exchange for putting the money back into the resource, thereby making it easier to deal with the financial hardship that often accompanies restoration. It would be a mistake to only consider the financial impact without also taking into account the overall benefit to the community. Monrovia has seen what can happen when properties are left to decline and how that decline affects the entire town. We also have seen how pride in and care for these properties improves the quality and livability of our neighborhoods. That is what we have today, in no small part due to the residents' support for preservation.

Submitted by Jim Wigton

35 year resident of Monrovia and MOHPG President

From: [Frances Geoffrion](#)
To: [City Clerk](#)
Cc: [Monrovia Historical Society](#)
Subject: Mills Act
Date: Tuesday, March 2, 2021 10:38:59 AM

Greetings, esteemed City Councilmembers, clerks, and anyone else who has to listen;

I have strong positive input for the Mills Act. I understand that it reduces property taxes as an incentive to keep and renovate old structures. I understand that that results in a loss in revenue to the City. I believe that so many factors are operating here that bear examining in this discussion, and would really recommend the city study it further along possibly these lines, to suggest just a few.

First, the Mills Act is needed. I am rehabbing a 1937 house in Sierra Madre and I can tell you that the costs add up. To bring it to usable, it will cost about 200k for a 1300 sf house. That's a lot of money, and it won't qualify for Mills because someone changed the front windows years ago. How to get people to spend that kind of coin to rehab an old structure? Tax incentives.

Second, with your history and those gorgeous homes, that keeps property values high. Everyone loves a beautiful older home.

Beautiful vintage homes drew me to Monrovia. We bought a... non vintage home. Not complaining, but our tax basis when we moved here tripled. Due to the recent reappraisal of the house we bought. It wasn't worth that before it sold. Net tax GAIN to the city. On the one we sold AND the one we bought. After that, they can only increase a small % per year due to proposition 13. So you'll have seniors, in their homes for 40 years, paying 2k in taxes per year or less, while we pay that much per month! Again, not complaining. But the obvious point is that encouraging houses to turn over is more profitable than much anything else you could do.

A beautiful vintage walkable downtown, too. Restaurants bustling. Draws in lots of visitors and a great place for a huge party, all great sources of tax revenue for the city.

Another idea that I would propose is that you consider designating certain structures as obviously of NO historic value. They aren't pretty, and nothing exciting happened there. This would allow small developers like me to buy them up and fix them up knowing they would not face this hurdle. It's very time consuming, and while holding a property and paying for it that is a disincentive to development. Say I buy an old duplex at the base of NoMo. It's ugly and not historic and we all agree about that. I go ahead and pour money into it and make it gorgeous. Not taller, not huge, not a mansion, just a beautiful useable single family residence. When I sell that, it gets reappraised now and the city makes more tax revenue forever more.

The Monrovia Historical Society is a very valuable resource. They could help provide this info. Just walk the town with Steve Baker and take notes. Pay them a fee to certify certain houses as non-historic, and up goes your tax base and their revenue too! I am thankful that they informed their membership that this issue was pending so that I could reply. Please excuse the hasty letter, I got

the email last night and have plans today. Very important issue though.

More hastily considered ideas of mine include that perhaps materials recycling credits could be applied at state levels for houses NOT demolished?

And perhaps the future development of lots of granny flats, aka ADUs, which I believe we all need, will also add value and therefore tax base increase. Actually, any addition to a residence triggers a revaluation. Not renovation, just additions and new construction.

Keep up the good work, Monrovia.

Frances Geoffrion, Architect

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Monrovia, California



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From: [Dylan Feik](#)
To: [Alice Atkins](#)
Subject: FW: Council Study Session Tomorrow - Your input welcome
Date: Tuesday, March 2, 2021 2:23:45 PM

FYI for public comment...

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 2, 2021 2:01 PM
To: monroviahistoricalsociety1896@gmail.com
Cc: Dylan Feik <dfeik@ci.monrovia.ca.us>; thomas.adams@century21.com; Gloria Crudgington <gcrudgington@ci.monrovia.ca.us>; Larry Spicer <lspicer@ci.monrovia.ca.us>; Becky Shevlin <beckyshevlin@gmail.com>; Alex Blackburn <ablackburn@ci.monrovia.ca.us>
Subject: Re: Council Study Session Tomorrow - Your input welcome

Hello Steve,

I am so glad the issue of historic preservation is being studied again.

Monrovia is such a special place with so much history, beauty and special character.

I would hope this review would consider all the options for protection and preservation----including historic districts (like Wildrose and Encinitas), PDA's (planned area developments like Esplanade etc.).

In a conversation with a degreed historic preservation specialist, the specialist shared the opinion that Monrovia has been lax in their preservation efforts in comparison to other surrounding cities like Pasadena etc. and that developers have had too much influence here. My hope would be that the city manager, city council, planning department and others would take strong action to protect the special character and heritage of Monrovia.

Thank you.

-----Original Message-----

From: Monrovia Historical Society <monroviahistoricalsociety1896@gmail.com>
To: Monrovia Historical Society <monroviahistoricalsociety1896@gmail.com>
Sent: Mon, Mar 1, 2021 5:16 pm
Subject: Re: Council Study Session Tomorrow - Your input welcome

Hello all,

To further explain the subject of the hearing, a Mills Act contract, in association with local landmark designation for an historic home or commercial building in Monrovia, recalculates the basis for property taxes,

resulting in a tax savings that is to be reinvested in the historic structure. There is a loss of tax revenue to the City, but the benefit is the more than 150 landmarked and protected structures in Monrovia and the enhanced neighborhoods and property values that our commitment to historic preservation has yielded.

Best Regards,

Steve Baker

On Mar 1, 2021, at 4:02 PM, Monrovia Historical Society
<monroviahistoricalsociety1896@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Monrovia Historical Society member,

On Tuesday March 2nd the City Council is having a study session about the value of Mills Act contracts -- the tax incentive for homeowners to apply for landmark status for an historic home or building. There is a loss of tax revenue to the City, but for those interested in historic preservation of our historic heritage, the incentive has resulted in over 150 landmarked structures in Monrovia.

You can lend your voice to this issue as the City by emailing a note to the City Clerk in advance of the study session. The Council values comments from community members as it weighs issues.

Public comments are accepted via email to the City Clerk at cityclerk@ci.monrovia.ca.us before 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday March 2, 2021.

Best Regards,

Steve Baker, President
Monrovia Historical Society

From: [Donna and David Baker](#)
To: [Alice Atkins](#)
Subject: Fwd: Comments for tonight's Study Session
Date: Tuesday, March 2, 2021 5:08:59 PM

----- Forwarded message -----


From: Donna and David Baker [REDACTED]
Date: Tue, Mar 2, 2021 at 4:18 PM
Subject: Comments for tonight's Study Session
To: Alice Atkins <aatkins@ci.monrovia.ca.us>

Hi Alice,

I'd like to submit the following for tonight's session to be read publicly:

As a local Realtor, I'd like to comment on tonight's session regarding the Historic Preservation Ordinance in relation to the Mills Act Contract. While I understand that this agreement between the City and the landmarked homeowners causes reduced tax income for the City, it is a huge benefit to homeowners. Not only does it allow a reduced tax consequence for the property owner, but it provides incentives for these owners to improve their properties when sometimes it would not be an option. The money saved in tax dollars converts into replaced and rotted wood siding, repair of broken chimneys and windows, upgraded electrical and retrofitting, among other improvements. Not only does this allow these homeowners to accomplish these upgrades with their tax savings, but it also increases property values when an owner goes to sell that particular property. Increased home values help generate added tax dollars otherwise lost through the Mills Act by also increasing home values citywide. In the 20 years I have been selling landmarked homes covered by the Mills Act, every single home has added value that would not have been offered without the tax savings and upgrades that were accomplished with that saved money. Our Historic Preservation Ordinance and the Mills Act Contract has made Monrovia a place people want to call home. By eliminating the Mills Act option, there is no incentive for people who buy older homes to landmark and preserve them for historical value. I urge the City Council to continue to offer the Mills Act option as part of the current landmarking program.

Very sincerely,
Donna Baker
Monrovia resident and Realtor with Douglas Elliman

Stephen R. Baker

Monrovia, CA 91016-2828

March 2, 2021

The Honorable Mayor and City Council,
City of Monrovia

Ladies and gentlemen,

When I returned to Monrovia in 1967 after an eight year hiatus, I was chagrined to learn that the beloved community of my youth was beginning to falter, losing economic vitality after eighty years and succumbing to stagnation and apathy. The decline continued until 1974, when it reached critical mass. The fateful municipal election that year resulted in a new majority on the City Council and sowed the seeds of the Monrovia Renaissance. Dynamic new leadership and innovative staff stemmed the tide of decline and Monrovia headed in the right direction once again. It was at about that time that Ruth Ryon (1944-2014) real estate editor for the Los Angeles Times, advised young couples seeking a new home to look in Monrovia, since the City had a wonderful housing stock priced well below that of neighboring communities.

A number of young couples did just that, buying vintage homes and investing long hours of sweat equity to bring them back from decline. Two of those couples were responsible for the formation of the Monrovia Old House Preservation Group in 1980, a support organization for those who, like themselves, needed mutual support and the sharing of resources.

The Renaissance of Monrovia and the City's treasure trove of historic architecture came to the attention of the Los Angeles Times again in 1983. The cover story in their Home Magazine of January 16, 1983 featured "Monrovia a study in small-town restoration", researched and written by Diane Williams Hlava. That article in turn brought Monrovia to the attention of the Los Angeles Conservancy, who partnered with the Monrovia Old House Preservation Group for the first Old Homes Tour, a tradition that has continued to the present time and has attracted generations of participants and spread the mystique of Monrovia regionally and beyond.

By 1995, City leadership agreed that Monrovia needed an Historic Preservation Ordinance, and an advisory committee was established. Many local preservationists sat on that committee, myself included. Our charge was to study existing ordinances in surrounding cities, evaluate their applicability to Monrovia, alter them as needed, and produce a working document.

We were told very specifically that a mandatory preservation ordinance was not an option, given the strong community reaction to one in a near-by community. What was acceptable, though, was an ordinance that offered a carrot rather than a stick. And that carrot was the availability of a Mills Act Contract as an inducement to landmark a home. We understood that Monrovia would lose a portion of the total property tax savings from the Mills Act Contract, but the prospect of that savings being reinvested in an historic property and the potential for safeguarding Monrovia's architectural heritage was considered to be a more-than-adequate trade for the loss of property tax revenue.

Monrovia's Historic Preservation Ordinance and the activities of the now Monrovia Historic Preservation Group have been major contributors to the high esteem in which Monrovia is held by her sister cities in the San Gabriel Valley. Gone are the days of Monrovia being a depressed real estate market—quite the contrary. I would like to suggest that the higher property taxes generated by Monrovia's newer residents who are drawn to the City by its rich architectural heritage and revitalized commercial areas more than compensate for the amount of property tax not received from Mills Act properties. Rather than seeing it as a loss, I see it as an investment in our community's past and its future. It is my hope that the inducement to preservation offered by Mills Act Contracts may continue well into that future.

Sincerely,

Stephen R. Baker