

Item 16.B – Pause on Mills Act & Structure of Merit (Historic Preservation)

Sponsors / Requesting Councilmembers:

Mayor Torosis, Mayor Pro Tempore Zwick, Councilmember Hall, Councilmember Raskin

What the agenda item does:

Directs the City Manager to **deprioritize and pause analysis of Mills Act and Structure of Merit revisions, and align landmarks work with the Landmarks Commission’s equity-focused report.** While framed as a pause, this effectively delays or halts updates to historic preservation incentives.

Potential impacts:

Historic preservation incentives may stagnate or weaken, reducing financial feasibility for maintaining older buildings. Neighborhood character could be affected over time as preservation protections lose effectiveness. Signals a shift away from **incentive-based preservation**; may weaken financial feasibility for maintaining historic structures and alter long-term neighborhood character.

Arguments in favor:

Supporters argue preservation policy should be reframed through equity and inclusivity and avoid incentivizing preservation that may limit housing supply or reinforce historic inequities.

Arguments against / concerns:

This effectively **dismantles preservation protections.** Opponents argue this undermines preservation incentives, discourages upkeep of historic structures, and effectively dismantles protections without a transparent policy debate or replacement framework.

Questions Council should answer before voting:

- What replaces the Mills Act incentives if they are paused or eliminated?
- How will historic properties remain financially viable without incentives?
- Is this a temporary pause or a permanent policy shift?
- Why is this being done without a full public hearing on preservation policy?