

Summary and Resources: Community Action Guide

For Informational Purposes Only - Last Update: February 7, 2026

ACTION NOW

- Write Letter to Santa Monica City Council - Agenda Item 16.B and Item 5.K
 - CC: all SM council members (emails and templates provided below)
 - CC: all keepsmsafe@gmail.com (for tracking engagement volume)
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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

TUESDAY, February 10TH - CITY COUNCIL MEETING - 5:30 pm

In Person: City Council Chambers, 1685 Main Street, Room 250, Santa Monica

- Register to speak at Speaker Kiosk before hearing opens @ 5:00 pm
- Depending on the number of people requesting to speak, the time allowed per speaker may vary. To avoid having to revise your remarks at the last minute, we recommend preparing both a one-minute and a two-minute version of your comment.
- **Talking points:**
 - 16.B Historic preservation
 - Item 5.K – Closed Session: Downtown Public Land (4th / 5th / Arizona + Parking Structure 1)

By Telephone: Register at santamonica.gov/public-comment by 5:00 PM on Feb 9, 2026 (day before)

Watch Remotely:

- <https://www.smgov.net/video>
- <https://www.youtube.com/user/Citytv16santamonica>

Meeting Agenda: https://santamonicacityca.iqm2.com/Citizens/Detail_Meeting.aspx?ID=1455

Letter Templates

Residents may use any of the following templates when submitting public comment.

Note: Send to keepsmsafe@gmail.com for tracking. Consider hand-delivering copies to the Board meeting for public record.

TEMPLATE #1: AGENDA ITEM 5.K - Firm, Accountability-Driven (Process + Precedent)

Via Email: council.mailbox@santamonica.gov, councilmtgitems@santamonica.gov, lane.negrete@santamonica.gov, Caroline.Torosis@santamonica.gov, jesse.zwick@santamonica.gov, Dan.Hall@santamonica.gov, Ellis.Raskin@santamonica.gov, Barry.Snell@santamonica.gov, Natalya.Zernitskaya@santamonica.gov,

Cc: keepsmsafe@gmail.com, Oliver.chi@santamonica.gov, heidi.vontongeln@santamonica.gov, attorney.mailbox@santamonica.gov

February 9, 2026

The Honorable Members of the Santa Monica City Council
1685 Main Street
Santa Monica, CA 90401

Re: Public Comment on Closed Session Item 5.K – Public Land & Downtown Impacts

Dear Mayor and Members of the City Council,

I am writing in advance of your closed-session discussion of **Item 5.K**, concerning negotiations over City-owned properties at 4th/5th/Arizona and Parking Structure 1.

While I understand the legal need for confidentiality in real estate negotiations, I am deeply concerned by the **recurring pattern** of the City permanently disposing of downtown public land and parking assets for homelessness-related uses **without a transparent, public-facing planning process** before negotiations begin.

Residents have already seen a downtown parking structure removed for affordable housing and human services—only for that site to later be leased for nonessential, temporary uses. That experience raises a fair and unavoidable question: **why is the City repeating this approach without first accounting for what happened last time?**

Before any further public land is committed, I respectfully urge the Council to consider and publicly address:

- Why downtown continues to be selected for concentrated loss of public land and parking
- What guarantees exist that land disposed of for housing or services will actually deliver those outcomes
- What happens if projects are delayed, altered, or fail altogether
- Why residents are not given a chance to weigh in before negotiations—not after assets are already effectively committed

Public land is a finite resource. Once it is gone, it is gone forever. Decisions of this magnitude should be guided by transparency, geographic fairness, and demonstrated lessons learned from prior actions—not urgency alone.

I ask the Council to pause further disposition of downtown public assets until residents are given a clear explanation of past outcomes, future safeguards, and the City's long-term strategy for public land stewardship.

Respectfully,

[Your Name]

TEMPLATE #2: ITEM 5.K Concern Regarding Closed Session Item 5.K – Repeating a Broken Pattern (Sharper, Values-Based (Trust + City Direction))

Via Email: council.mailbox@santamonica.gov, councilmtgitems@santamonica.gov, ana.negrete@santamonica.gov, Caroline.Torosis@santamonica.gov, jesse.zwick@santamonica.gov, Dan.Hall@santamonica.gov, Ellis.Raskin@santamonica.gov, Barry.Snell@santamonica.gov, Natalya.Zernitskaya@santamonica.gov,

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February 9, 2026

The Honorable Members of the Santa Monica City Council
1685 Main Street
Santa Monica, CA 90401

Re: Concern Regarding Closed Session Item 5.K – Repeating a Broken Pattern

Dear Mayor and Members of the City Council,

I am writing regarding Closed Session Item 5.K, and out of growing concern that Santa Monica is repeating a broken pattern when it comes to public land, downtown planning, and homelessness-related development.

The City has already demolished a downtown parking structure under the promise of affordable housing and essential services—only to later see that land repurposed for temporary, recreational use. Residents were told the loss of a public asset was necessary and permanent. The outcome was neither.

Now, the Council is again negotiating the disposal of downtown public land and parking assets, this time behind closed doors, before residents have any opportunity to understand the full implications.

This raises a fundamental issue of trust.

If the last disposal of public land did not deliver what was promised, why should residents believe this time will be different?

And why are we doing this again—without first acknowledging or explaining the prior outcome?

Homelessness is a serious issue. So is stewardship of public land. These goals should not be placed in conflict by rushing irreversible decisions without transparency, accountability, or geographic balance.

Santa Monica is more than a collection of parcels to be leveraged. It is a coastal city whose downtown, parking resources, and public land serve residents, workers, visitors, and small businesses alike. Repeatedly stripping those assets—while offering shifting justifications—puts the long-term health of the city at risk.

I urge the Council to stop treating closed session as a substitute for public planning, to acknowledge what happened with the last parking structure site, and to explain why repeating this approach is in the best interest of Santa Monica as a whole.

Respectfully,

[Your Name]

[Your Neighborhood / District]

[Santa Monica Resident]

TEMPLATE #3: ITEM 5.K Contradicts the City Manager's Downtown Revitalization Plan

Via Email: council.mailbox@santamonica.gov, councilmtgitems@santamonica.gov, lane.negrete@santamonica.gov, Caroline.Torosis@santamonica.gov, jesse.zwick@santamonica.gov, Dan.Hall@santamonica.gov, Ellis.Raskin@santamonica.gov, Barry.Snell@santamonica.gov, Natalya.Zernitskaya@santamonica.gov,

Cc: keepsmsafe@gmail.com, Oliver.chi@santamonica.gov, heidi.vontongeln@santamonica.gov, attorney.mailbox@santamonica.gov

February 9, 2026

The Honorable Members of the Santa Monica City Council
1685 Main Street
Santa Monica, CA 90401

Re: Closed Session Item 5.K – Contradicts the City Manager's Downtown Revitalization Plan

Dear Mayor and Members of the City Council,

I am writing regarding **Closed Session Item 5.K**, and to raise a fundamental concern about how this action directly contradicts the City Manager's stated revitalization plan for downtown Santa Monica.

City Manager Oliver Chi has repeatedly emphasized the need to bring back business activity, tourism, foot traffic, and economic vitality to downtown. That goal is widely shared by residents, workers, and small businesses who want to see Santa Monica recover as a vibrant coastal destination.

However, the continued disposal of downtown public land and parking assets for homelessness-related uses moves the city in the **opposite direction**.

Downtown revitalization depends on:

- Accessible parking and transportation
- A balanced mix of uses that attract visitors and locals
- Safety, predictability, and economic confidence
- Clear signals that downtown is open for business and tourism

Removing additional parking structures and public parcels—especially through closed-session negotiations—undermines those goals. It sends a conflicting message to businesses and visitors alike: that downtown is simultaneously being marketed for revitalization while being structurally reshaped in ways that discourage commerce, tourism, and everyday use.

Residents have already watched one downtown parking structure removed under the promise of affordable housing and human services, only to see the site later leased for temporary recreational use. That outcome weakened trust and did nothing to advance downtown recovery.

Repeating this approach raises serious questions about whether there is a coherent strategy guiding these decisions.

Before proceeding further with Item 5.K, the Council should publicly reconcile these contradictions by answering:

- How does disposing of downtown parking and public land advance the City Manager's revitalization plan?
- How will businesses and tourism recover when access and core infrastructure continue to be removed?
- Why are downtown impacts being decided in closed session rather than through an open economic and land-use strategy?
- What assurances exist that these actions will not further hollow out downtown activity?

Downtown Santa Monica cannot be revitalized on paper while being dismantled in practice. If the City is serious about restoring business confidence and tourism, its land-use and public-asset decisions must align with that goal—not work against it.

I urge the Council to pause further downtown land disposition, require a public accounting of how these actions align with the City Manager's revitalization plan, and engage residents and businesses openly before making irreversible decisions.

Respectfully,

[Your Name]

[Your Business / Neighborhood / District (optional)]

[Santa Monica Resident or Business Owner]

Note: Send to keepsmsafe@gmail.com for tracking. Consider hand-delivering copies to the Board meeting for public record.

TEMPLATE #4: Business Owner Comment on Closed Session Item 5.K

Via Email: council.mailbox@santamonica.gov, councilmtgitems@santamonica.gov, ana.negrete@santamonica.gov, Caroline.Torosis@santamonica.gov, jesse.zwick@santamonica.gov, Dan.Hall@santamonica.gov, Ellis.Raskin@santamonica.gov, Barry.Snell@santamonica.gov, Natalya.Zernitskaya@santamonica.gov,

Cc: keepsmsafe@gmail.com, Oliver.chi@santamonica.gov, heidi.vontongeln@santamonica.gov, attorney.mailbox@santamonica.gov

[DATE]

The Honorable Members of the Santa Monica City Council
1685 Main Street
Santa Monica, CA 90401

RE: Business Owner Comment on Closed Session Item 5.K – Downtown Revitalization at Risk

Dear Mayor and Members of the City Council,

I am writing as a **Santa Monica business owner** regarding **Closed Session Item 5.K**, and out of serious concern that the City's current approach to downtown land use directly undermines the very revitalization efforts the City Manager has publicly championed.

City Manager Oliver Chi has emphasized the urgent need to restore **business confidence, foot traffic, tourism, and economic vitality** in downtown Santa Monica. As a business owner, I agree. Our livelihoods depend on access, safety, predictability, and a downtown environment that attracts residents and visitors—not one that discourages them.

The continued disposal of downtown public land and parking assets for homelessness-related uses moves the City in the opposite direction of revitalization. Parking access, balanced land use, and a welcoming downtown environment are not secondary concerns for businesses—they are foundational.

Many of us are still struggling to recover from years of reduced tourism, remote work, and declining foot traffic. Decisions to remove parking structures and public parcels—especially through closed-session negotiations—send a deeply conflicting message to the business community: that downtown revitalization is a stated goal, but not a guiding principle in practice.

Business owners are also aware that a previous downtown parking structure was demolished under the promise of affordable housing and human services, only for the site to later be repurposed for temporary recreational use. That outcome did nothing to support downtown commerce or tourism, and it has understandably weakened trust.

Before proceeding further with Item 5.K, I urge the Council to publicly address:

- How the disposal of downtown parking and public land aligns with the City Manager's revitalization strategy
- How businesses are expected to survive and attract customers with continued reductions in access and infrastructure
- Why downtown economic impacts are being decided in closed session rather than through an open, business-focused planning process
- What assurances exist that this approach will not further destabilize downtown commerce

Downtown Santa Monica cannot recover if revitalization is treated as a talking point rather than a governing framework. If the City is serious about restoring tourism and supporting local businesses, its land-use decisions must reinforce that goal—not contradict it.

I respectfully urge the Council to pause further downtown land disposition, engage directly with the business community, and ensure that actions taken behind closed doors do not undermine the City's own stated economic priorities.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Business Name]

[Downtown Location / Years in Business]

[Santa Monica]

Note: Send to keepsmsafe@gmail.com for tracking. Consider hand-delivering copies to the Board meeting for public record.

TEMPLATE #1: Public Comment on Item 16.B – Historic Preservation & Mills Act

Via Email: council.mailbox@santamonica.gov, councilmtgitems@santamonica.gov, ana.negrete@santamonica.gov, Caroline.Torosis@santamonica.gov, jesse.zwick@santamonica.gov, Dan.Hall@santamonica.gov, Ellis.Raskin@santamonica.gov, Barry.Snell@santamonica.gov, Natalya.Zernitskaya@santamonica.gov,

Cc: keepsmsafe@gmail.com, Oliver.chi@santamonica.gov, heidi.vontongeln@santamonica.gov, attorney.mailbox@santamonica.gov

February 9, 2026

The Honorable Members of the Santa Monica City Council
1685 Main Street
Santa Monica, CA 90401

Re: **Public Comment on Item 16.B – Historic Preservation & Mills Act**

Dear Mayor and Members of the City Council,

I am writing to express concerns regarding **Item 16.B**, which directs the City Manager to deprioritize and pause analysis of the Mills Act and Structure of Merit while realigning landmarks work plans.

Historic preservation is not an abstract policy issue for Santa Monica. It directly affects neighborhood character, housing stability, environmental sustainability, and long-term community identity. The Mills Act and related incentives have historically played a key role in making preservation financially viable for property owners while protecting irreplaceable historic resources for the public.

While I understand and support efforts to broaden whose history is recognized and to approach preservation through an equity lens, **pausing or sidelining existing preservation incentives without a clearly defined replacement framework raises serious concerns**. Incentives matter. Historic buildings do not maintain themselves, and without viable tools in place, the practical result may be deferred maintenance, demolition by neglect, or loss of historic resources altogether.

Before moving forward, I respectfully ask the Council to clearly address the following questions:

- Is this pause intended to be temporary, or does it signal a permanent shift away from incentive-based historic preservation?
- What specific policies or tools will replace the Mills Act and Structure of Merit to ensure historic properties remain financially viable?
- Why is this decision being advanced without a full public hearing focused specifically on preservation policy and its long-term impacts?
- How will the City prevent unintended consequences such as loss of historic buildings while new frameworks are still undefined?

Santa Monica has already seen how incremental policy “pauses” can quietly result in permanent outcomes. Decisions that affect historic preservation deserve transparency, public engagement, and a clear roadmap—not an open-ended de-prioritization.

I urge the Council to slow this item down, provide clarity on what comes next, and ensure that historic preservation is not effectively dismantled without a thoughtful, publicly vetted alternative in place.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

TEMPLATE #2: Item 16.B –Preserving What Makes Santa Monica Santa Monica

Via Email: council.mailbox@santamonica.gov, councilmtgitems@santamonica.gov, ana.negrete@santamonica.gov, Caroline.Torosis@santamonica.gov, jesse.zwick@santamonica.gov, Dan.Hall@santamonica.gov, Ellis.Raskin@santamonica.gov, Barry.Snell@santamonica.gov, Natalya.Zernitskaya@santamonica.gov,

Cc: keepsmsafe@gmail.com, Oliver.chi@santamonica.gov, heidi.vontongeln@santamonica.gov, attorney.mailbox@santamonica.gov

February 9, 2026

The Honorable Members of the Santa Monica City Council
1685 Main Street
Santa Monica, CA 90401

Re: Public Comment on Item 16.B – Preserving What Makes Santa Monica Santa Monica

Dear Mayor and Members of the City Council,

I am writing regarding **Item 16.B**, and more broadly out of growing concern that this Council appears increasingly **hell-bent on remaking Santa Monica into something unrecognizable**—at the expense of the very qualities that make it a desirable beach community, a cultural destination, and an economic engine for residents and the City alike.

Santa Monica did not become a globally recognized coastal city by accident. Its historic buildings, walkable neighborhoods, architectural character, and connection to place are not obstacles to progress—they are foundational assets. Tourism, small businesses, and long-term residents all rely on the preservation of this identity. Systematically weakening historic preservation incentives sends the opposite signal: that nothing is worth protecting if it stands in the way of redevelopment.

Item 16.B proposes to pause and deprioritize the Mills Act and Structure of Merit without presenting a clear replacement framework. In practice, this looks less like a thoughtful policy recalibration and more like another step toward dismantling preservation protections through inaction, while the City aggressively advances large-scale redevelopment elsewhere.

Residents are watching a troubling pattern:

- Public assets removed or repurposed
- Historic protections weakened or sidelined
- “Pauses” that quietly become permanent
- And a city increasingly shaped for short-term development goals rather than long-term community value

At some point, the question must be asked plainly: **What is the end vision for Santa Monica?**
And who is this vision for?

Before advancing Item 16.B, the Council should clearly and publicly answer:

- Is this Council intentionally moving away from historic preservation as a core value?
- What concrete tools will replace existing incentives to prevent demolition by neglect?
- How does dismantling preservation align with maintaining Santa Monica as a beach destination and tourism-driven economy?
- Why are residents being asked to accept open-ended policy shifts without a comprehensive public discussion about the city's future character?

Equity and inclusion are essential goals—but they should not be used to justify erasing the physical history and identity of the city itself. **Preservation and progress are not mutually exclusive**, and treating them as such risks turning Santa Monica into just another overbuilt coastal city stripped of what made it special in the first place.

I urge the Council to reconsider this approach, slow this item down, and engage residents honestly about whether the goal is to preserve Santa Monica's character—or to fundamentally replace it.

Respectfully,
[Your Name]
[Your Neighborhood / District]

Note: Send to keepsmsafe@gmail.com for tracking. Consider hand-delivering copies to the Board meeting for public record.