DATE

The Honorable Todd Gloria and the San Diego City Council

202 C Street, 10th Floor

San Diego, CA 92101

Re: Adaptive Reuse Ordinance support

Mayor Gloria and Councilmembers,

I am writing to express my (or organization’s name) support for the City of San Diego to develop and implement an adaptive reuse ordinance. Incentivizing the adaptive reuse of older buildings for new uses will greatly contribute to viable housing options throughout the city. Converting older, economically distressed, and/or historically significant buildings to desperately needed new housing will also enhance community revitalization and stabilization. As in three other Southern California cities with such ordinances (outlined below), this strategy is expected to reduce commercial vacancies while supporting housing affordability, sustainability, and a circular economy.

San Diego’s older building stock is an underused asset with regulatory and zoning barriers that block its full potential. An adaptive reuse ordinance would provide welcome incentives, flexibility, regulatory relief, and technical assistance to unlock the full potential of older buildings by identifying areas with the highest reuse opportunities, creating adaptive reuse overlay zones, and establishing alternative building code regulations.

The reuse of older buildings also benefits the City’s climate action and housing priorities. Older buildings support the Climate Action Plan by eliminating tons of demolition waste and lowering the cost of new infill construction by using a building that already exists. Repurposing older buildings also supports housing, particularly pre-1974 office towers and commercial buildings with the potential for faster conversion to residential units.

Our neighboring California cities that have adopted adaptive reuse ordinances report successfully using them to provide housing and to revitalize key neighborhoods.

* In 1999, Los Angeles passed an adaptive reuse ordinance that rejuvenated its downtown into a thriving mixed-use corridor. As of January 2020, the Los Angeles Building and Safety Department had issued 188 building permits under this ordinance. According to a 2020 study, the result is an increase in market-rate apartments by 272%, market-rate condos by 59%, and affordable apartments and condos by 39% downtown. Pre-1999, there were 11,626 residential units in this district; by January 2019, use of the adaptive reuse ordinance grew the number of downtown residential units to 48,677, a resounding success in sparking revitalization and addressing housing concerns.
* In 2014, Santa Ana and Long Beach also adopted adaptive reuse ordinances to incentivize reuse in and around their downtowns. The ordinances focus on pre-1974 buildings and those that are historically designated, helping boost housing in the downtown areas.

(I/organization name) strongly urge the City of San Diego to prioritize the development of an adaptive reuse ordinance to benefit the people of San Diego.

Sincerely,

Name/Business/Organization

San Diego address