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Memorandum to: The Planning Commission Ordinance Committee

From: Mary O'Neil, AICP, Principal Planner

Date: January 27, 2020

RE: Definition of Adaptive Reuse

The definition in CDO Article 13 of Adaptive Reuse diverges from that of common practice and required threshold to trigger applicable financial incentives relative to sensitive rehabilitation.

Comprehensive Development Ordinance

Article 13 Definition:

Adaptive Reuse

For the purposes of this ordinance, adaptive reuse shall refer to the rehabilitation of a building or site listed or eligible for listing in the United States Department of the Interior's National Register of Historic Places or the Vermont State Register of Historic Places where alterations do not radically change, obscure, or destroy character-defining spaces, materials, features or finishes.

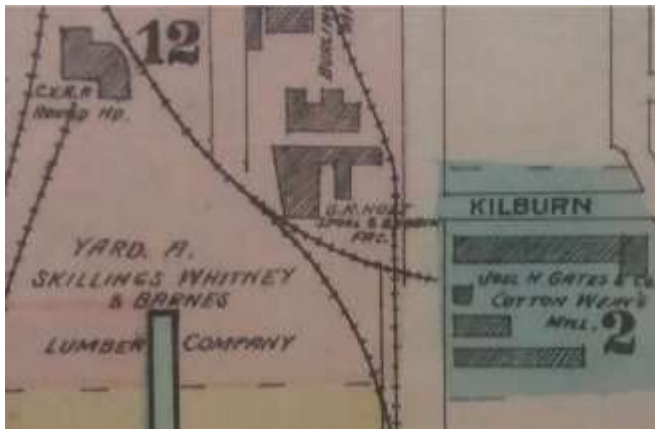
Adaptive Reuse, in accepted language and common development practice refers to the process of **reusing an old site or building for a purpose other than which it was built or for which it was designed, while retaining their historic features**. Along with brownfield reclamation, adaptive reuse is often utilized as a key tool in land conservation and the reduction of urban sprawl. According to Zaitzevsky and Bunnell¹, old buildings physically link us to our past and become a part of our cultural heritage; they should be preserved because of their "architectural beauty" and the "character and scale they add to the built environment". Retention and rehabilitation of existing buildings also reduces the consumption of building materials, resources, energy and water needed for new construction.

Adaptive reuse deals with the issues of conservation and heritage policies. When old buildings become unsuitable for their programmatic requirements, as progress in technology, politics and economics moves faster than the built environment, adaptive reuse comes in as a sustainable option for the reclamation of sites. In many situations, the types of buildings most likely to become subjects of adaptive reuse include 1) industrial buildings, as the process of manufacture moves away from city; 2) political buildings, such as palaces and buildings which cannot support current and future visitors of the site; and 3) community buildings such as churches or schools where the use has changed over time. (Think the Adams School on South Union Street, or the Steeple Market in Fairfax.)

Adaptive reuse is as an effective way of reducing urban sprawl and environmental impact. By reusing an existing structure within a site, the energy required to create these spaces is lessened, as is the material waste that comes from destroying old sites and rebuilding using new materials.

¹ Zaitzevsky, Cynthia; Bunnell, Gene (1979). "Built to Last: A Handbook on Recycling Old Buildings". *Bulletin of the Association for Preservation Technology*. **11** (1): 98. [doi:10.2307/1493683](https://doi.org/10.2307/1493683). [ISSN 0044-9466. JSTOR 1493683](https://www.jstor.org/stable/1493683).

Through adaptive reuse old, unoccupied buildings can become suitable sites for many different types of use. It is the structural example of reduce-reuse-recycle.



Examples of local Adaptive Reuse:
Joel H. Gates & Co. Cotton Weaving Mill
Now



Became the **Kilburn and Gates Furniture Manufactory**



Now **Kilburn & Gates office building.**



Meunier Brothers Glove Factory, 1-5 Pine Place
Grocery Store, Glove Factory, now apartments.



Fort Ethan Allen Calvary riding hall;
converted to St. Michael's College
Gymnasium, now **Elly Long Music Center**.

The World Architecture Festival's "Building of the Year" is an adaptive use project, transforming a 1932 industrial locomotive hangar into a library and arts center:
<https://www.traditionalbuilding.com/opinions/adaptive-reuse-traditional-buildings>

While the CDO definition ticks off the requirement for state or National Register listing, and the criteria relative to alterations, it omits the standard threshold for *changing the use* from its original.

This is essential in meeting other criteria that would satisfy application for Federal, State and Local funds, as well as tax advantages.

Reference is made to:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adaptive_reuse

for further information on the financial benefits of Adaptive Reuse;

<https://savingplaces.org/stories/how-to-support-adaptive-reuse-of-historic-buildings#.Xi9QdWhKhRY>

How to Support Adaptive Reuse of Historic Buildings;

and

<https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/revisingPB14.htm>

Preservation Brief 14: New Exterior Additions to Historic Buildings: Preservation Concerns.