

FACT SHEET

Use of Vacant or Underutilised Floor Space For Artist Studios

Information for owners and property consultants

Introduction

The City of Melbourne has resolved to assist in the identification and promotion of available inner city floor space for the use of studio space for artists.

In recent years the number of affordable inner city properties available to artists has fallen. At the same time there are a number of vacant buildings, or floors in buildings, in the CBD and surrounding areas which could be made available for such use at little or no cost.

The City is developing a database of properties which are derelict or otherwise vacant which could be reused for studio spaces at cheap rentals for either temporary or permanent accommodation. Occupancy of such spaces will reduce the risk of vandalism, fire, building deterioration and illegal occupancy by squatters – so it is in the best interests of all parties, especially building owners, to enable such spaces to be occupied by responsible tenants. It will assist the artistic community to have access to inner city premises which will ensure that creative industries and cultural production remain important aspects of the profile of the City of Melbourne.

What is meant by Artists Studios?

In this program Artists Studios are understood to mean small spaces occupied by artists for the production of visual art which is generally displayed and sold elsewhere.

In order to facilitate the take up of such spaces the program does not include art galleries, performance spaces or the creation of works and sculptures that require the use of heavy machinery, grinders and the like.

Similarly, residential accommodation is not included in the program. Whilst ancillary residential accommodation is to be encouraged, it is likely to involve additional health, building safety and amenity requirements and associated costs.

PERMIT REQUIREMENTS

Planning

In the CBD (Capital City Zone) a planning permit is required for an Artist Studio (defined in the Planning Scheme as an Art and Craft Centre), however there are unlikely to be any special planning requirements (such as car parking) provided that the use is as described above and there is no increase to the floor area of the building.

In the areas surrounding the CBD (Mixed Use Zone) a planning permit is also required, but again there are unlikely to be other planning conditions imposed.

The cost of a Planning Application is \$125.

Building

Specific advice should be sought from Councils Building Department on whether a building permit is required for the proposed use and fitout of any building. The requirements for obtaining a building permit relate to the existing use of the premises and/or works that are being carried out to facilitate the occupation of a building, or space, for use as an Artists Studio.

When choosing appropriate premises for use as an Artists Studio and assessing a building permit application, it is necessary to consider the following matters

- Suitable numbers of sanitary facilities being available for occupants
- Adequate access and the provision of suitable exits
- In some cases disabled access may need to be considered
- Services (including exit signs, emergency lights, fire hydrants, hose reels, extinguishers, sprinklers, smoke alarms etc.) may need to be provided and will need to be maintained.

Note:- Space for larger productions, sculptures requiring heavy or noisy machinery and live performances should be located in industrial zones or in specially designed performance spaces.

BENEFITS

The benefits to building owners of leasing vacant floor space for Artist Studios include:

1. Rental income from otherwise un-used or derelict floor space at little or no set-up cost.
2. Temporary lease of properties proposed for future redevelopment, secured by a special lease agreement which enables short term access when redevelopment is about to occur.
3. Provides security for vacant properties by:
 - reduce potential for access by squatters
 - improve property maintenance
4. Opportunity for financial subsidy to cover some or all of the set-up costs.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Interested property owners should contact :

Building Control Group

City of Melbourne

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