



# Restaurant Beverage Program

## Summary

City Planning is proposing a program to permit eligible sit-down restaurants to serve alcohol through an administrative clearance process. The Restaurant Beverage Program (RBP) is intended to save applicants time and money.

Largely as a result of community input, the ordinance incorporates nearly 50 operating standards. These standards will be applied citywide, contributing to consistency and equity in the review of alcohol permits.

## Background

With the global outbreak of COVID-19, restaurant owners have shifted to take-out, grocery service, and to-go sales of beer, wine, and cocktails to stay afloat. The profit margin from alcohol sales has provided restaurateurs with some temporary relief during the pandemic. The proposed Restaurant Beverage Program will build on the City's efforts to provide relief, offering long-term financial incentives designed to support jobs and business in Los Angeles.

The program shortens the time required for City approvals from months to weeks, helping restaurant owners get up and running faster once safer-at-home orders are lifted. The proposal would also reduce the cost of an alcohol permit from approximately \$13,000 to approximately \$4,000. Eligible restaurant owners would still be subject to operational standards as well as mandatory monitoring and inspections to ensure compliance.

Nightclubs, bars, and liquor stores would not be eligible for the Restaurant Beverage Program. They would continue to apply through a separate discretionary process involving a public hearing and extensive community input.



## Key Provisions

In order to apply, restaurant owners must meet specific eligibility criteria and comply with a number of operating standards. These standards are intended to filter out business models that would benefit from additional review and ultimately not qualify under the program's streamlined approval process. Some key provisions include:

- **Eligibility Restrictions:** Only restaurants with an operational kitchen and a full menu are eligible. Food must be served during all operating hours.
- **Hours of Operation:** Hours of operation must be limited to 7 a.m. to 11 p.m.
- **Entertainment:** No live entertainment, dancing, karaoke, DJs, or outdoor TV monitors or music are permitted. Only ambient indoor music is allowed.
- **Lighting:** A minimum amount of interior and exterior lighting is required.
- **Staff Training:** All employers and employees must complete alcohol service training.
- **Security:** Restaurants are required to install a camera surveillance system and maintain a complaint log. Graffiti and litter must be removed.
- **Enforcement Measures:** The restaurant must participate in the City's Monitoring, Verification, and Inspection Program (MViP)—a proactive enforcement program designed to inspect participants and report any violations to the Department of Building and Safety or the Police Department.

Businesses that do not qualify, or that wish to operate beyond the proposed restrictions, would still be able to apply for a conditional use permit.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Would bars, nightclubs, or liquor stores qualify for the program?

No. Only bona fide sit-down restaurants with a commercial kitchen, full menu, and continuous food service during all hours of operation are eligible. All food and beverages must be served to seated patrons. Restaurants are ineligible if they charge



for admission, require minimum drink purchases, restrict access based on age, or engage in any of a number of other practices common to bars or nightclubs.

### What community protections are being proposed?

The program's operating standards require a participating restaurant to be respectful of the surrounding neighborhood. Provisions include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Separating outdoor seating from residentially-zoned property by an enclosed building
- Prohibiting live entertainment, billiards, karaoke, or adult entertainment
- Prohibiting outdoor TV monitors or outdoor music
- Limiting outdoor seating to no more than 30% of the total seating area
- Restricting outdoor dining to the ground floor
- Installing a camera surveillance system and adequate interior and exterior lighting
- Posting contact information for community concerns and responding to any complaints
- Posting official identification indicating that the establishment is subject to the Restaurant Beverage Program

### How will the City monitor and enforce the program?

All participating restaurants must enroll in the City's Monitoring, Verification, and Inspection Program (MViP) and will be subject to City-initiated inspections. Repeat violators will be prohibited from serving alcohol unless they undergo a separate process with more review.

The California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) could be notified of any citations, which may trigger additional investigation and corrective measures.

### Will nearby residents be notified of any project applications?

Neighborhood councils and the relevant City Council district offices will be notified, upon filing, of every restaurant seeking an alcohol permit under this program. Participating restaurants must publicly display City identification noting their compliance with the program.



## Will this result in new alcohol-serving establishments?

The program is intended for only a narrow range of dining establishments. These are sit-down restaurants that close by 11 p.m. and comply with an array of other requirements. The program aims to encourage local, neighborhood-serving restaurants, as opposed to nightclubs and bars. Nightclubs and bars are not eligible for the Restaurant Beverage Program and would still have to undergo a separate approval process.

## Will residents have an opportunity to report any potential violations?

Yes. Residents can contact the Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety or the Police Department, depending on the type of violation. Additionally, participating restaurants would be required to display a City-issued decal including information about how to report violations.

## What are the next steps?

The City Planning Commission is slated to consider the Restaurant Beverage Program in the coming months. Prior to that public hearing, City Planning will host an information session by webinar in May. Details of this virtual session will be posted at [Planning4LA.org/about/calendar](https://planning4LA.org/about/calendar) once they are available.

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