



PRESS RELEASE



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Los Angeles Introduces a New Program to Simplify City Approvals for Restaurant Owners


LOS ANGELES — Today, City Planning released the framework for a new program that would simplify the approval process for sit-down restaurants seeking to serve alcoholic beverages. The proposed Restaurant Beverage Program would shorten the time for City approvals from months to a matter of weeks.

The profit margin from sales of alcoholic beverages has helped restaurant owners stay afloat during sharp rises in rent and payroll costs and, more recently, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Restaurant Beverage Program would create an efficient and easy-to-navigate process, providing opportunities to new startups while also aiding the recovery of existing small businesses, once the stay-at-home orders are lifted.

City Planning's proposed program would allow qualifying restaurants to receive over-the-counter approvals, saving applicants time and money. Restaurant owners would pay approximately \$4,000 for a permit to serve alcohol—significantly less than the permit's current price tag of \$13,000. These measures are in line with Los Angeles's broader efforts to help local and family-owned businesses prepare for the economic recovery ahead.

"Restaurant owners invest not only in their employees but also in the well-being of our City, its economy, and the neighborhoods that we serve," Director of Planning Vince Bertoni said. "In developing this program, we made it easier to enforce against any bad actors, while still giving small business owners a leg up."

Nightclubs, bars, and liquor stores would not be eligible to take advantage of the proposed program. They would continue to apply through a separate discretionary process that involves community input. To prevent the proliferation of alcohol-serving establishments, City Planning developed eligibility criteria to limit this program to restaurants meeting certain criteria, including having an operational kitchen and full menu, in addition to crafting strict standards to hold participants accountable. Any operator found to be in repeat violation of these standards would be suspended from the program.



City Planning is drafting a separate but related ordinance that would impose standards on operators who received a State license to serve alcohol before the City issued alcohol permits. These operators would be held to a similar standard as establishments that were required to undergo City review. The ordinance would empower the City to address issues that communities overburdened by alcohol sales often face.

The City Planning Commission will consider the Restaurant Beverage Program in the coming months. Prior to that public hearing, City Planning will host a webinar in May to share the details of the program and answer questions. Details for how to participate in this virtual session will be posted at Planning4LA.org/about/calendar once they are available. Sign up [here](#) for regular updates on the Restaurant Beverage Program and any other planning initiatives currently underway.

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