

## Communication from Public

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**Comments for Public Posting:** Los Angeles Says It Supports Small Business. Its Utility Policies Tell a Different Story. Leaders in Los Angeles speak often about protecting small businesses. We hear about resilience, recovery and equitable growth. City Hall celebrates neighborhood entrepreneurs as the backbone of our communities. But for many small operators still climbing out of pandemic-era debt, there is a widening gap between rhetoric and reality. Like thousands of businesses across the city, my neighborhood bakery survived COVID under government-mandated shutdowns and severe capacity restrictions. Revenue evaporated overnight. Fixed costs did not. Many of us accumulated arrears — not because we were irresponsible, but because we were legally prevented from operating. When restrictions lifted, we did what the city asked of us. We reopened. We rehired. We resumed paying down outstanding balances. Slowly, steadily, responsibly. Yet recently, despite ongoing payments toward a remaining balance, electrical service was disconnected to my business in the middle of production. For a food operation, that is not a minor inconvenience. It means immediate inventory loss, halted ovens, idle employees and cascading financial harm. It means being pushed backward just as stability begins to return. Utilities unquestionably have the right to collect what they are owed. But enforcement systems that treat an actively operating business making structured payments the same as an abandoned account reflect a troubling rigidity. This is where Los Angeles faces a “small business recovery gap.” If we truly believe small businesses are vital to our economic ecosystem, then policies must distinguish between willful nonpayment and structured repayment. There should be supervisory review before disconnecting power to a functioning enterprise with perishable inventory and employees on payroll. There should be safeguards that recognize the difference between delinquency and rebuilding. Otherwise, the city risks undermining the very recovery it claims to champion. Neighborhood corridors do not hollow out dramatically. They erode gradually — one interruption, one closure, one exhausted operator at a time. Los Angeles has invested significant political capital in branding itself as a city that stands with small business. That commitment should extend beyond speeches and grant programs into the mechanics of

enforcement. Recovery requires calibration. It requires systems that are firm but context-aware. Small businesses are not asking for forgiveness. We are asking for governance aligned with economic reality. If Los Angeles wants vibrant commercial streets, stable employment and local ownership, then it must ensure its policies do not unintentionally punish those who are actively doing the work of recovery. Alain Cohen Owner, Got Kosher? Bakery Los Angeles