

## Communication from Public

**Name:** David Feige

**Date Submitted:** 03/23/2026 12:48 PM

**Council File No:** 20-1074-S6

**Comments for Public Posting:** Re: Council File 20-1074-S6 Public Works Committee Meeting March 25, 2026, Agenda Item 3 Dear Members of the Public Works and Economic Development and Jobs Committees, I write in advance of the Public Works Committee meeting set for Wednesday March 25th to express our concerns regarding Council File 20-1074-S6 (L.A. Al Fresco Program / Permanent Sidewalk Dining Permits / Enrollment Barriers). While the Venice Neighborhood Council (VNC) will not have time to pass and file a specific CIS on this (though we may if it gets adjourned) the VNC has passed three separate motions which together make clear that while we all love Al Fresco Dining the VNC has deep and abiding concerns about the use of the Al Fresco program by a small group of extremely disruptive and problematic operators, as well as the complete lack of Al Fresco enforcement by the city. The relevant motions include: 1. That the VNC does not support the granting of any Al Fresco permit to an operator who is not currently in compliance with the temporary Al Fresco Dining Ordinance. (passed March 2025) 2. The deep and substantial opposition to the application of The Brig (passed February 2026) and 3. 20-26-VNC (passed March 2026) which expressed our opposition to state Assembly Bill 1740 and urged the city to attempt to limit the reach of that bill by providing that only establishments that do not serve alcohol or are in possession of a valid type 47 ABC license may utilize that program. Taken together these positions make clear the VNC's abiding concerns about this issue. Our problems with Council File 20-1074-S6 are that it utterly fails to make the crucial distinctions between decent and rogue operators, provides no enforcement mechanisms, and continues to attempt to streamline applications thus allowing the alcohol serving wolves into the restaurant chicken house. Sincerely, Just as we did with AB 1740, we urge you to draw reasonable distinctions when streamlining these applications. Rogue operators who are not in compliance with the ordinance should not get a pass. Places like The Brig which has racked up 186 calls to LAPD, well over a dozen LADBS complaints, and a constant stream of complaints from nearby residents are, as we have so often pointed out—not so much outdoor dining establishments as outdoor drinking establishments. Such places should not be included in the Al Fresco program and certainly should not receive the benefit of

subsidies and a streamlined, essentially ministerial application processes. The VNC has made clear that in all of these discussions, Al Fresco DRINKING should be distinguished from Al Fresco DINING, and that these programs, including those contemplated in your report, should only apply to establishments that do not serve alcohol or are in possession of a valid type 47 ABC license. We also wish to make clear that operators that have resolutely refused to abide by the ordinance (such as those that continue to have outdoor speakers and screens in violation of section 24(d)(1(iii) and 24(d)(1(iv) of the ordinance) should NOT be the beneficiaries of the subsidies and streamlined application processes you propose. What we ask is simple: to distinguish between the vast majority of good operators and the few extremely disruptive bad ones who continue to make life unlivable for their neighbors. This is not hard to do—it merely requires restricting these programs to operators that do not serve alcohol or are in possession of a valid type 47 ABC license (restaurant) rather than a type 48 or type 42 (Bar) licenses, and requiring a quick check to ensure basic compliance with the ordinance. Doing so will advance the legitimate concerns of considerate operators, while protecting our communities from the small number of bad actors who, through noise, mayhem and disregard for the rules enshrined in the Al Fresco Dining Ordinance, make life miserable for the residents around them. Thank you for your consideration of this matter. David Feige  
President Venice Neighborhood Council



# Venice Neighborhood Council

P. O. Box 550, Venice, CA 90294

*www.VeniceNC.org*



March 23, 2026

Public Works Committee  
Economic Development and Jobs Committee  
Los Angeles City Council  
City Hall, Room 401  
200 North Spring Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Council File 20-1074-S6  
Public Works Committee Meeting March 25, 2026, Agenda Item 3

Dear Members of the Public Works and Economic Development and Jobs Committees,

I write in advance of the Public Works Committee meeting set for Wednesday March 25th to express our concerns regarding Council File 20-1074-S6 (L.A. Al Fresco Program / Permanent Sidewalk Dining Permits / Enrollment Barriers).

While the Venice Neighborhood Council (VNC) will not have time to pass and file a specific CIS on this (though we may if it gets adjourned) the VNC has passed three separate motions which together make clear that while we all love Al Fresco Dining the VNC has deep and abiding concerns about the use of the Al Fresco program by a small group of extremely disruptive and problematic operators, as well as the complete lack of Al Fresco enforcement by the city. The relevant motions include:

1. That the VNC does not support the granting of any Al Fresco permit to an operator who is not currently in compliance with the temporary Al Fresco Dining Ordinance. (passed March 2025)
2. The deep and substantial opposition to the application of The Brig (passed February 2026) and
3. 20-26-VNC (passed March 2026) which expressed our opposition to state Assembly Bill 1740 and urged the city to attempt to limit the reach of that bill by providing that only establishments that do not serve alcohol or are in possession of a valid type 47 ABC license may utilize that program.

Taken together these positions make clear the VNC's abiding concerns about this issue. Our problems with Council File 20-1074-S6 are that it utterly fails to make the crucial distinctions between decent and rogue operators, provides no enforcement mechanisms, and continues to attempt to streamline applications thus allowing the alcohol serving wolves into the restaurant chicken house.



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Just as we did with AB 1740, we urge you to draw reasonable distinctions when streamlining these applications. Rogue operators who are not in compliance with the ordinance should not get a pass. Places like The Brig which has racked up 186 calls to LAPD, well over a dozen LADBS complaints, and a constant stream of complaints from nearby residents are, as we have so often pointed out—not so much outdoor dining establishments as outdoor drinking establishments. Such places should not be included in the AI Fresco program and certainly should not receive the benefit of subsidies and a streamlined, essentially ministerial application processes.

The VNC has made clear that in all of these discussions, AI Fresco DRINKING should be distinguished from AI Fresco DINING, and that these programs, including those contemplated in your report, should only apply to establishments that do not serve alcohol or are in possession of a valid type 47 ABC license. We also wish to make clear that operators that have resolutely refused to abide by the ordinance (such as those that continue to have outdoor speakers and screens in violation of section 24(d)(1(iii)) and 24(d)(1(iv)) of the ordinance) should NOT be the beneficiaries of the subsidies and streamlined application processes you propose.

What we ask is simple: to distinguish between the vast majority of good operators and the few extremely disruptive bad ones who continue to make life unlivable for their neighbors. This is not hard to do—it merely requires restricting these programs to operators that do not serve alcohol or are in possession of a valid type 47 ABC license (restaurant) rather than a type 48 or type 42 (Bar) licenses, and requiring a quick check to ensure basic compliance with the ordinance. Doing so will advance the legitimate concerns of considerate operators, while protecting our communities from the small number of bad actors who, through noise, mayhem and disregard for the rules enshrined in the AI Fresco Dining Ordinance, make life miserable for the residents around them.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

David Feige

President

Venice Neighborhood Council

[President@VeniceNC.org](mailto:President@VeniceNC.org)

(424) 299-9530

CC: Councilmember Traci Park, CD-11

Denise Knitner, Mayor's Office of Business & Economic Development

Jennifer Hull, Mayor's Office, West Area Representative

Craig Bullock, Planning Director, CD-11

Jeff Khau, Planning Deputy, CD-11

Sean Silva, Venice Field Deputy, CD-11

## Communication from Public

**Name:** Eddie Navarrette  
**Date Submitted:** 03/23/2026 02:27 PM  
**Council File No:** 20-1074-S6  
**Comments for Public Posting:** See attached letter of support



# Independent Hospitality Coalition

Los Angeles, California

<https://www.ihcla.org>

**March 24, 2026**

Los Angeles City Council  
Public Works Committee  
200 N. Spring Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

**RE: Council File 20-1074-S6 — Permanent L.A. Al Fresco Program: Implementation Barriers & Needed Reforms**

Dear Chair and Members of the Public Works Committee,

On behalf of the **Independent Hospitality Coalition (IHC)**, representing hundreds of independent restaurants, bars, and hospitality operators across Los Angeles, we write to express our strong support for improving the implementation of the City's Permanent L.A. Al Fresco Program.

Outdoor dining has proven to be one of the most effective economic recovery tools for small businesses in Los Angeles. It activates streets, improves public safety through increased foot traffic, and sustains local jobs and tax revenue. However, as currently implemented, the program is falling short of its potential due to systemic procedural and regulatory barriers.

Drawing from technical analysis conducted by FE Design & Consulting—based on more than 65 Al Fresco applications since the program's permanent rollout—we have identified clear patterns:

- **Sidewalk dining is working** — with near-universal approvals
- **Private property and on-street dining are not** — with extremely low approval rates and prolonged delays

This disparity is not due to lack of demand, but due to structural issues in how the program is administered.

## **KEY FINDINGS**

## 1. Private Property Outdoor Dining Is Overregulated and Inconsistent

- Requirements to update Certificates of Occupancy trigger unnecessary building code burdens
- Open-air patios are treated like enclosed buildings, leading to excessive egress, structural, and plumbing requirements
- Shade structures are misclassified as “buildings,” triggering costly and impractical compliance issues
- Fragmented plan check processes create delays of weeks to months

## 2. On-Street Dining Is Functionally Inaccessible for Most Operators

- Multi-agency approvals (LADOT, BOE, Planning, Fire, etc.) create overlapping and inconsistent requirements
- Applicants often face **6–7 rounds of corrections**
- Fees exceed \$2,000 plus per-seat costs before construction
- Lack of standardized templates forces costly custom design work

## 3. Sidewalk Dining Shows What Works — But Can Go Further

Sidewalk dining has demonstrated that a simplified process leads to high participation and compliance. However, even this pathway can be improved.

The current model still dedicates City staff time and consultant resources to reviewing minor furniture layouts and accessibility details that do not meaningfully improve safety outcomes.

## WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

Los Angeles small businesses are facing a convergence of economic pressures that are largely outside of their control:

- Rising food and supply costs driven by national tariff and trade policies
- Continued workforce instability tied to federal immigration enforcement patterns impacting the hospitality labor pool
- Declines in tourism and consumer confidence influenced by national political and economic conditions
- Ongoing local impacts from the Los Angeles fires, which have disrupted customer bases and neighborhood economies

At the same time, the City is preparing for global events including the **2026 World Cup** and **2028 Olympics**, where a vibrant, active streetscape will be essential.

Local government cannot control federal policy—but it can control how easy or difficult it is to operate a small business in Los Angeles. Right now, unnecessary local barriers are compounding national economic challenges.

## **RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR THE COMMITTEE**

### **1. Modernize Building Code Interpretation for Outdoor Dining**

- Establish a standardized definition of outdoor dining patios and accessory uses
- Create a local egress standard for open-air occupancies
- Reclassify shade structures as ‘non-building structures’ opposed to ‘building structures’
- Eliminate unnecessary triggers for additional restrooms and structural requirements

### **2. Streamline Plan Check and Permitting**

- Consolidate plan check into fewer reviewers with aligned interpretations
- Reinstate Over-the-Counter pathways for simple projects
- Integrate accessibility review into core plan check

### **3. Reform On-Street Dining Approval Process**

- Designate LADOT as the lead coordinating agency
- Reduce duplicative multi-agency review steps
- Reinstate and expand small business fee waivers
- Allow administrative flexibility for minor accessibility adjustments

### **4. Transition Sidewalk Dining to a Registration-Based Model**

- Replace the current review-heavy process with a **simple registration system** for compliant sidewalk dining
- Eliminate case-by-case plan review for standard sidewalk seating configurations
- Provide **clear, standardized education materials** on:
  - ADA-compliant furniture spacing

- Accessible path-of-travel requirements
- Best practices tailored to Los Angeles sidewalk conditions

This approach ensures compliance while dramatically reducing approval timelines and administrative burden.

## **5. Reduce City Costs Through Smarter Process Design**

- Eliminate low-value review steps that consume staff time without improving safety outcomes
- Redirect City resources toward higher-priority enforcement and safety issues
- Reduce reliance on third-party consultants for repetitive, low-impact reviews

A simplified system not only benefits small businesses—it also creates operational efficiencies that reduce costs for the City.

## **6. Strengthen the Local Economy Through Access, Not Barriers**

- Lowering the cost and time to participate in outdoor dining will:
  - Increase small business participation
  - Activate commercial corridors
  - Generate additional sales tax revenue
  - Improve neighborhood safety through increased street activity

Outdoor dining is not just a business amenity—it is economic infrastructure.

## **7. Close Remaining Ordinance Gaps**

- Clarify rules for loading zones, nonconforming parking lots, and expired alcohol entitlements
- Coordinate with State leaders to streamline Coastal Zone approvals

# **CONCLUSION**

The L.A. Al Fresco Program is a proven concept—but its success depends on implementation.

The City has already demonstrated that when processes are simple, participation follows. The next step is to apply that same approach across all program pathways.

At a time when small businesses are navigating significant national economic pressures, Los Angeles must ensure that its own systems are part of the solution—not part of the problem.

The Independent Hospitality Coalition stands ready to partner with the City to implement these practical, cost-effective reforms.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eddie Navarrette". The signature is stylized with a large initial "E" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

**Eddie Navarrette**  
Board President & Policy Director  
Independent Hospitality Coalition (IHC)  
[www.ihcla.org](http://www.ihcla.org)