

MOTION

Restaurants in Los Angeles have seen a surge in the popularity of outdoor dining since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. City programs like LA Al Fresco have sought to promote this shift by streamlining permitting requirements and bypassing many regulations included in the Municipal Code and Zoning Code. Outdoor dining has provided a lifeline for many businesses in the City in the midst of an unprecedented public health pandemic, with up to 80% of participating restaurants reporting that they would have closed had it not been for the success of these programs.

Yet barriers to outdoor dining remain. High up-front costs of enrolling in the permanent Al Fresco program are a major obstacle for small business owners. Despite programs like the Al Fresco Small Business Fee Reduction Program, enrollment in the permanent Al Fresco program citywide remains below 10%. With a final deadline for enrollment of July 31, 2024, more outreach and support from the City is urgently needed to preserve the outdoor dining landscape that has arisen since 2020.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the City Council instruct the Bureau of Engineering, Department of Building and Safety, Department of Transportation, Department of Sanitation, Department of Economic and Workforce Development, with the assistance of the Department of City Planning as well as other relevant agencies, in consultation with the City Attorney’s Office, report back within 60 days with recommendations to address the lack of enrollment in the permanent Al Fresco program. This report should include:

- Possible pathways to extend the L.A. Al Fresco Temporary Use Authorization Program;
- A discussion of the fees that are charged to businesses throughout the Al Fresco application process, including ways to alleviate the burden these fees present and any concerns associated with Proposition 218;
- An update on the Al Fresco Small Business Fee Reduction Program, including the number of businesses that have enrolled in the program and the amount of fee reductions distributed through the program;
- An identification of potential inefficiencies in the City’s administration of the permanent Al Fresco program that may be preventing higher enrollment, including, but not limited to, an assessment of the responsibilities of each Department involved in the permitting process and their ability to meet those responsibilities;
- An identification of engagement strategies the City can employ to support restaurant operators and help facilitate the transition from the temporary authorization program to the City’s permanent Al Fresco program at no additional cost to potential applicants, such as creating temporary Al Fresco public counters across the City’s Development Services Center for the first year of permanent phase-in; and
- Resources required across departments to effectively and efficiently administer this program.

PRESENTED BY: Nithya Raman
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