

MOTION PLANNING & LAND USE MANAGEMENT

Local small businesses are central to the cultural and economic fabric of Los Angeles' diverse neighborhoods. In recent years, outdoor dining has become a popular and effective way to activate public spaces, support small businesses, and foster vibrant, pedestrian-friendly corridors across the city.

To make outdoor dining more accessible for restaurant owners, the City should explore a permanent program that allows restaurants to self-certify compliance with outdoor dining requirements for low risk, small-scale installations. Self-certification programs have proven to be an effective tool for streamlining permitting processes and reducing administrative burdens. Major jurisdictions like the City of New York, City of San Diego and City of Bellflower have adopted self-certification processes that allow licensed professionals to certify compliance, allowing certain projects to move forward more quickly and efficiently while still maintaining compliance with applicable building and safety codes. The City of Los Angeles is already looking into self-certification programs for other types of uses under Council File 25-0043. The City should build upon that work with respect to the Al Fresco program.

By removing the requirement for full plan review and approval by the Department of Building and Safety for qualifying outdoor dining projects, self-certification programs can reduce administrative burdens and improve accessibility to dining establishments. They bypass the typical manual inspection and permit approval process by allowing eligible professionals to certify that the proposed work complies with all relevant safety, accessibility and zoning regulations. Oversight mechanisms, such as documentation requirements, random on-site inspections, and audits help ensure continued accountability and compliance.

These programs also have the potential to reduce costs for both businesses and the City by streamlining the approval process and reducing the need for staff time. Restaurant owners participating in self-certification programs can be required to indemnify and hold the City harmless for any loss or liability resulting from the project, ensuring legal and financial protections for the City.

Adopting a self-certification program in Los Angeles would promote local businesses development, reduce permitting bottlenecks, and enhance the use of public space through a regulated and efficient process.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the City Council INSTRUCT the Department of Building and Safety and City Planning Department, with the assistance of any other relevant departments, to report back within 60 days with options for a self-certification program to streamline permitting for outdoor dining and other improvements suitable for expedited review as it relates to outdoor dining. The report should evaluate potential time and cost savings, identify eligible project types and review best practices for cities such as New York, San Diego and Bellflower, and among others, which have implemented self-certification programs. Recommendations should include implementation strategies, oversight mechanisms and eligibility criteria.

PRESENTED BY:

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