

UCLA

Capstone Projects

Title

Al Fresco in the Time of COVID-19: Addressing the Barriers to Outdoor Dining in Los Angeles Communities

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9p54s4w8>

Author

Montaño, Brittany

Publication Date

2023-06-16

DOI

10.17610/T6SG7P



Al Fresco in the Time of COVID-19: Addressing the Barriers to Outdoor Dining in Los Angeles Communities

A comprehensive project submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Master of Urban & Regional Planning

Brittany Montaña • 2023

Client: Jaclyn Garcia, Los Angeles Department of Transportation

Faculty Advisor: Madeline Brozen



Technical Report Documentation Page

1. Report No.	2. Government Accession No. N/A	3. Recipient's Catalog No. N/A	
4. Title and Subtitle Al Fresco in the Time of COVID-19: Addressing the Barriers to Outdoor Dining in Los Angeles Communities		5. Report Date 2023-06-16	
		6. Performing Organization Code UCLA-ITS	
7. Author(s) Brittany Montañó		8. Performing Organization Report No. LA2214	
9. Performing Organization Name and Address Institute of Transportation Studies, UCLA 3320 Public Affairs Building Los Angeles, CA 90095-1656		10. Work Unit No. N/A	
		11. Contract or Grant No.	
12. Sponsoring Agency Name and Address UCLA Institute of Transportation Studies www.its.ucla.edu		13. Type of Report and Period Covered Final	
		14. Sponsoring Agency Code UC ITS	
15. Supplementary Notes DOI: 10.17610/T6SG7P			
16. Abstract Mayor Garcetti launched the temporary Al Fresco Program in the City of Los Angeles to allow outdoor dining to support economically distressed eateries in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic and stay-at-home orders. Since the program's inception, the City of Los Angeles has had a goal of a 50% participation rate in disadvantaged communities. The report aims to explore barriers disadvantaged communities face to apply to the L.A. Al Fresco program and finds solutions to increase program participation in these communities. The researcher conducted an eligibility survey of 7 and from that group 5 in-depth interviews with food and beverage establishment owners to understand the barriers to participating in the L.A. Al Fresco Program and the impact of COVID. Along with qualitative analysis, the report found that 27% of active eateries in the City of Los Angeles currently participate in the L.A. Al Fresco program. Interviewees expressed how they are still recovering economically from COVID-19, which has been compounded by inflation, leaving no interest in expanding their business through outdoor dining. The report recommends that the L.A. Al Fresco Program create a small restaurant outreach strategy through an L.A. Al Fresco ambassador program and develop partnerships with local economic development organizations to increase specialized support services for small businesses in under-invested communities to ensure access to the program without barriers.			
17. Key Words equity COVID-19 program design equity analysis Los Angeles		18. Distribution Statement No restrictions.	
19. Security Classif. (of this report) Unclassified	20. Security Classif. (of this page) Unclassified	21. No. of Pages 59	22. Price N/A



Acknowledgments

I thank my advisor Madeline Brozen for the continued support and guidance throughout this capstone research, especially with your expertise. Thank you to the UCLA Institute of Transportation Studies for my graduate student fellowship and support for this capstone. Thank you to the UCLA Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies for financially supporting me on this research journey. Thank you to Jaclyn Garcia for being an ever-supportive client that ensured I had all the resources and contacts to make this report possible. Thank you to the food-service workers who answered my outreach calls and shared their boss' schedule. Thank you to my cohort members who supported me through this Master's Program. I would also like to thank my family and especially my mother, a fellow bruin, Amalia, who fostered a space for my curiosity and embedded the importance of education. She is the woman that I admire the most, and I thank her for always taking me along to her classes.

As a land grant institution, the Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies and Institute of Transportation Studies at UCLA acknowledges the Gabrielino/Tongva peoples as the traditional land caretakers of Tovaangar (Los Angeles basin, So. Channel Islands).

Disclaimer

This report was prepared in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master in Urban and Regional Planning degree in the Department of Urban Planning at the University of California, Los Angeles. It was prepared at the direction of the Department and Los Angeles Department of Transportation as a planning client. The views expressed herein are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Department, the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs, UCLA as a whole, or the client.





Table of Contents

Executive Summary..... 5

 Key Findings 5

Introduction..... 7

 Origins of L.A. Al Fresco Program in the Wake of COVID-19 7

Background..... 9

 What is the L.A. Al Fresco Program? 9

 General Requirements 11

 Curbside Dining 11

 Sidewalk Dining 11

 Dining in Street 11

 Expanded Outdoor Private Property 11

 Low Participation of L.A. Restaurants in Underinvested Communities 12

 SB 535 Disadvantage Communities 12

 South Los Angeles 14

 San Fernando Valley 14

 Harbor Gateway 15

 Wilmington 16

Literature Review..... 17

 COVID-19’s Impact on Businesses 17

 Labor Conditions 17

 Eatery COVID Survival Strategies 18

 Planning Interventions During COVID-19 20

 Learning from NYC 21

Methodology..... 22

 Research Questions 22

 Data Collection 22

 Recruitment Strategy 24

 Study Limitations 25

Findings..... 27

 Comparative Analysis 27

 Pre-Pandemic - “R” Permit Approach 27

 L.A. Al Fresco Program 29

 Prolonged Impact of COVID-19 on Restaurants and Bars in L.A. 34

 Unsupportive Landlords 36





Parking, Lack of Space, and Parking	37
Safety	37
Interest in Support From the City of L.A.	38
Conclusion and Recommendations.....	39
References.....	42
Appendix A.....	48
Appendix B.....	50
Appendix C.....	52
Appendix D.....	54
Appendix E.....	57





Executive Summary

COVID-19 dramatically impacted every aspect of our society. As for the food and beverage serving establishments, there was a needed intervention to stay in business with no indoor dining allowed and stay-at-home orders in place. The temporary L.A. Al Fresco program introduced on May 2020 became a crucial emergency intervention for food and beverage serving establishments struggling during COVID-19 and stay-at-home orders. The program became successful by easing zoning regulations and onerous permitting process in the City of Los Angeles, ensuring economic and public health downturns do not upend businesses.

However, disparities increased for areas that are under-invested and compounded for eateries that opened during the start of the pandemic. Despite the demand and success, researchers reported disparities in L.A. neighborhood participation. The City of Los Angeles always had the goal of a 50% participation rate in disadvantaged communities. However, the L.A. Al Fresco program could not achieve that goal and has hovered around a 33% participation rate in disadvantaged communities (Office of the City Clerk, n.d.). Therefore, my research aims to study eateries' barriers to participating in the Al Fresco program. The analysis includes a literature review, spatial analysis, interviews, and surveys to understand the following study areas: South Los Angeles, Harbor Gateway, Wilmington, and San Fernando Valley and their low participation rates. Below are the key findings from my research.

Key Findings

- May 29th, 2020, marked the emergence of the L.A. Al Fresco program. Within six months, the program garnered 2,415 completed applications, highlighting the program as a needed intervention strategy for economic support.
- Opportunities for space reallocation are concentrated in higher-income neighborhoods, as seen in the City of Los Angeles and New York City outdoor dining program data.
- 27% of active eateries in the City of Los Angeles currently participate in the L.A. Al Fresco program.
- Downtown Los Angeles has a higher density of eateries per square mile than other neighborhoods across the City of Los Angeles.
- Interviewees expressed how they are still recovering economically from COVID-19, which has been compounded by inflation, leaving no interest in expanding their business.
- Interviewees also expressed safety concerns and a poor built environment being significant barriers to their business growth and decision to not apply to the L.A. Fresco program.





- Efforts to reallocate space for pedestrians and outdoor dining must be prioritized while revitalizing neighborhoods where commercial districts have been neglected to diminish barriers to applying to the L.A. Al Fresco program.

To address barriers low-participatory neighborhoods face, here are a couple of recommendations. Create a small restaurant outreach strategy through an L.A. Al Fresco ambassador program to demystify the program and have people in the community involved. Increase promotion of the program, especially in Spanish-speaking media platforms. The L.A. Al Fresco program can develop partnerships with organizations like LISC LA, Inclusive Action for the City, and The Center by Lendistry to increase specialized support services for small businesses in under-invested communities. By prioritizing and supporting underinvested communities, outdoor dining can be accessible to all communities.





Introduction

Origins of L.A. Al Fresco Program in the Wake of COVID-19

In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic reached an emergency status in the United States. Across the globe, every industry had to respond to ever-shifting protocols, the first of which were mandatory shutdowns. Eateries in the City of Los Angeles, whether restaurants or other places where people can be served food or drinks, were left uncertain and potentially upended their business' future.

Fortunately for the Golden State, the opportunity to capitalize on our warm climate while maintaining business activity during lockdown became a reality. The City of Los Angeles enacted a temporary outdoor dining program in May 2020, allowing businesses to provide outdoor seating in parking lots, sidewalks, and street right-of-way.

Al Fresco's expedited permit process became an attractive program quality compared to its predecessor. The sidewalk dining revocable "R" permit, the original sidewalk permit managed by the City of Los Angeles' Bureau of Engineering, entailed a lengthy process requiring onerous amounts of time and resources to apply. In contrast, the ease of an estimated twenty-minute temporary Al Fresco program application with less red tape, being a free program and open to all eligible eateries, streamlines the process. The continued interest by restaurateurs and restaurant owners has resulted in the City of Los Angeles's pursuit to make the program permanent (*Proposed Land Use Regulations | Los Angeles City Planning*, n.d.). As a result, BOE will continue the pre-pandemic sidewalk dining revocable permit process with new policies that allow the issuance of permits to be more streamlined. LADOT will have on-street dining authorized through revocable permits, and the department is developing permanent policies. City Planning was tasked with modifying the City ordinance to streamline permitting for outdoor dining on private property. As of May 9th, 2023, the City Planning Commission recommends the City of Los Angeles adopt the proposed L.A. Fresco ordinance for outdoor dining on private property (*L.A. Al Fresco | COVID-19: Keeping Los Angeles Safe*, n.d.).

Researchers reported disparities in neighborhood participation despite the temporary L.A. Al Fresco program being a crucial emergency COVID-19 intervention for food and beverage serving establishments. According to *Improving Access to Outdoor Dining Opportunities* report findings, L.A. Al Fresco has a higher participation rate in higher-income Los Angeles neighborhoods (Brozen et al., 2022). To compare, less than one-third of Los Angeles's Al Fresco outdoor dining program participants are in disadvantaged communities (*Home | Office of the City Clerk*, n.d.). The barriers that burden under-invested neighborhoods will continue as the City of Los Angeles





shifts to a permanent Al Fresco program. Therefore this report explores barriers to participation and finding solutions.

It should be noted that eateries and food and beverage serving establishments are used interchangeably throughout this report. This report defines *eateries* as food and beverage serving establishments that include but are not limited to businesses like bars, teahouses, coffee shops, and food vendors. This report provides background information on introducing the L.A. Al Fresco Program during COVID-19 and its requirements for dining types. Followed by a literature review on COVID-19 intervention strategies that small businesses and planners executed to maintain economic development and physical distance while exploring barriers they faced. Then, a mini case study on New York City's outdoor-dining program draws comparisons to the L.A. Al Fresco Program. Shifting to findings, it begins with a comparative analysis of the City of Los Angeles "R" permit, the sidewalk dining permit before COVID-19, and the L.A. Al Fresco Program. Quantitative analysis of the Al Fresco applications with the City of Los Angeles, modified safety protocols for indoor dining capacity, and the L.A. neighborhood's access to food and beverage serving establishments by neighborhood. Qualitative analysis on emerging themes from interviews conducted aids in developing recommendations to the L.A. Al Fresco and how to mitigate barriers facing establishments.





Background

What is the L.A. Al Fresco Program?

On May 29th, 2020, Mayor Garcetti launched the temporary Al Fresco Program to allow outdoor dining to support economically distressed eateries through two phases. The Al Fresco program operated through expedited permitting while temporarily halting the enforcement of certain zoning regulations. In phase one, the program provided businesses with a streamlined outdoor dining application process for sidewalk dining. It expanded outdoor private property, such as private parking lots (L.A. Al Fresco | COVID-19: Keeping Los Angeles Safe, n.d.). On June 26th, 2020, the program launched phase two, allowing on-street parking spaces to be converted to outdoor dining. The program allowed patrons to support eateries throughout the pandemic. In the sections below, I will review the general requirements to apply and specify by dining type.

General Requirements

To apply for the temporary Al Fresco Program, establishments must be licensed in the City of Los Angeles and have a Business Tax Registration Certificate (LADOT, 2020). Eateries must also have a \$500,000 minimum Liability Insurance policy, a \$500,000 Workers' Compensation and Employer's Liability policy, and \$500,000 Liquor Liability Insurance (Fresco, n.d.). In **Figure 1**, the graphic provides a visual understanding of the different outdoor dining types that food and beverage serving establishments can apply to. **Table 1** highlights the site requirements and responsible city departments and bureaus that oversee each dining type.

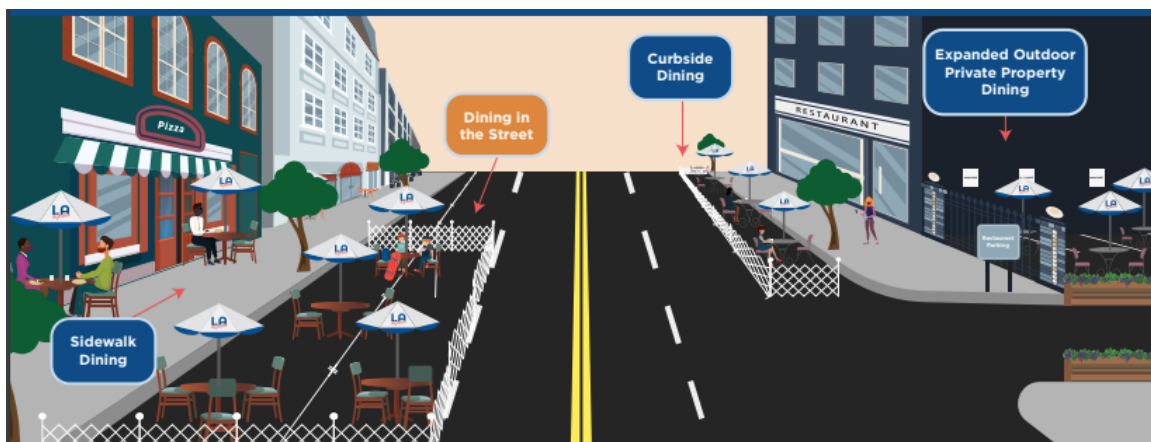


Figure 1. Visual Aid on Al Fresco Outdoor Dining Type (LADOT, 2020)





Table 1. L.A. Al Fresco Types and Jurisdiction.

Outdoor Dining Type	L.A. Al Fresco Requirements	Responsible City Department or Bureau
Curbside Dining	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Two on-street parking spaces or approximately 40 feet of curbside space adjacent to the restaurant, and bar. Parking spaces must be located on a street with a speed limit of 30mph or less. Only be installed on streets with two travel lanes or less in each direction. Dining area must not be immediately adjacent to a fire hydrant or in a prohibited zone (example: EV car charging station, carshare, bus stop, peak hour travel lane) 	Los Angeles Department of Transportation
Sidewalk Dining	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Beyond the general requirements applied to all outdoor dining types, sidewalks must be wide enough to provide a 5 feet clearance for pedestrian and ADA access. \$300,000 minimum Liability Insurance policy, a \$300,000 Workers' Compensation and Employer's Liability policy, and \$300,000 Liquor Liability Insurance (Fresco, n.d.) 	Los Angeles Bureau of Engineering
Dining in the Street	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Only be installed on a street with a speed limit of 35 mph or less. Only be installed on streets with three travel lanes or less in each direction. Eateries must also have a \$500,000 minimum Liability Insurance policy, a \$500,000 Workers' Compensation, and Employer's Liability policy, and \$500,000 Liquor Liability Insurance (Fresco, n.d.) 	Los Angeles Department of Transportation
Expanded Outdoor Private Property	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Beyond the general requirements applied to all outdoor dining types, it requires preserving 6' space for pedestrians and ADA access.¹ 	Department of Building and Safety Department of City Planning

Sources: (Kim & Richardson, 2023; Fresco, n.d.)

¹ Note that the Los Angeles City Planning department has approved and recommended to City Council an Al Fresco Ordinance for a permanent outdoor private property, that is different from the requirements stated above. For the purpose of this report, I maintained using Al Fresco's website definition in order to understand the site requirements during COVID-19.





Curbside Dining

Curbside dining is defined as setting up your tables and chairs for dining in the street using typically two parking spaces immediately adjacent to your business. LADOT reviews applications for feasibility. To have a Curbside Dining area, traffic safety equipment is required, and LADOT installs this equipment free of charge (LADOT, 2020).

Sidewalk Dining

Sidewalk dining, such as parking lane closures is defined as setting up your tables and chairs for dining on the sidewalk immediately adjacent to your business while preserving 5' of space for pedestrians (LADOT, 2020). This outdoor dining option was permitted before the pandemic but required weeks of review and fees. The L.A. Al Fresco program could issue permits within 20 minutes and was free of charge.

Dining in Street

Dining in the street is defined as allowing groups of restaurants, bars, or groups of street vendors to create dining or vending areas on the street. To successfully conduct dining on the street, they may use the on-street parking lane, a vehicle travel lane, or the entire street (LADOT, 2020). LADOT is also tasked with reviewing applications for feasibility, and upon approval, the department installs traffic safety equipment at no charge to the applicants.

Expanded Outdoor Private Property

Expanded outdoor private property dining, such as parking lots, patios, courtyards, walkways, and plazas, is defined as setting up your tables and chairs for dining in the restaurant's or bar's parking lot or other private outdoor space from the establishment (LADOT, 2020).





Low Participation of L.A. Restaurants in Underinvested Communities

According to the Los Angeles City Planning and Los Angeles Department of Transportation, participants noted multiple variables that prevented their businesses from participating in the Al Fresco Program (L.A. Al Fresco Participant Survey Results 2022). These variables include: neglected public infrastructure, denial from landlords, public safety issues, and lack of workforce capacity. Many of these barriers expressed have similar themes: deficiencies in the built environment and the long-term effect of COVID-19 on the restaurant industry. Improving Access to Outdoor Dining Opportunities report found that more than half of the city's sidewalk dining applications are concentrated in 11 neighborhoods: Downtown Los Angeles, Koreatown, Hollywood, Venice, Beverly Grove, Sawtelle, Sherman Oaks, Fairfax, Studio City, East Hollywood, and Silver Lake (2022). Most of the high-participatory neighborhoods in the L.A. Al Fresco program are higher-income and white-majority neighborhoods. The City of Los Angeles had a goal of a 50% participation rate in disadvantaged communities. However, unfortunately, the L.A. Al Fresco program was unable to achieve that goal and always hovered around a 33% participation rate in disadvantaged communities (Home | Office of the City Clerk, n.d.). Given this disparity, it's important to understand how to construct solutions to increase L.A. Al Fresco program applications in low-participatory neighborhoods.

In further understanding the low participation rate in particular neighborhoods of Los Angeles, my research scope includes South Los Angeles, San Fernando Valley, Harbor Gateway, and Wilmington. This will aid in understanding why businesses in these neighborhoods and areas did not benefit to the same extent as other neighborhoods. The subsections below will explore general research about these neighborhoods and regions in the City of Los Angeles.

SB 535 Disadvantage Communities

In 2012, the California State Senate passed Senate Bill (SB) 535 to direct at least a quarter of Cap-and-Trade proceeds to projects that benefit disadvantaged communities. SB 535 intends to invest in California's most vulnerable communities that are burdened and affected by pollution caused by climate change. These investments aim to improve public health, quality of life, and economic opportunity (Assembly Bill 32, Nunez, 2016). California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) is directed to "identify disadvantaged communities ... based on geographic, socioeconomic, public health, and environmental hazard criteria" (Rodriguez & Jr, n.d.). To identify disadvantaged communities, CalEnviroScreen, a screening tool, is used by CalEPA to measure the disproportionate pollution burden.





In 2016, Assembly Bill (AB) 1550 was passed, requiring Cap-and-Trade proceeds to include low-income communities and households alongside identified disadvantaged communities. Low-income communities and households are defined as the census tracts and households at 80% and below the statewide median income or below the threshold designated as low-income by the California Department of Housing and Community Development (*California Climate Investments Priority Populations 3.0 by Census Tract*, n.d.). The legislature requires 35% of California Climate Investments to address the needs of disadvantaged communities, low-income communities, and low-income households, collectively known as priority populations. Using priority population data provides a better understanding of Los Angeles communities that disproportionately lack investment capacity in low-carbon practices and Los Angeles communities hit the hardest by the effects of climate change. Priority population is crucial to use in future research. However, based on previous City of Los Angeles Transportation Committee reports used SB 535 data for their equity criteria. I will use the SB 535 disadvantage communities data for the following map. Below is **Figure 2**, where the disadvantaged communities' data is overlaid in Los Angeles neighborhoods. All study areas fall under the definition of priority populations.

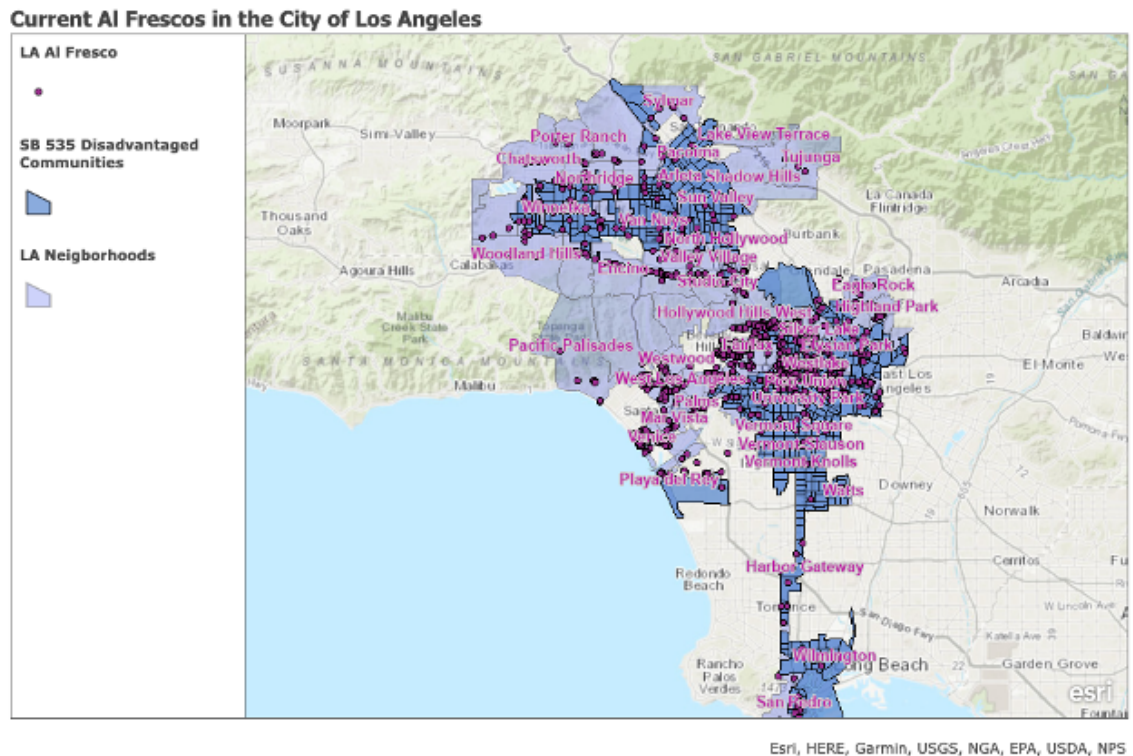


Figure 2. Current AI Frescos in the City of Los Angeles



South Los Angeles

South Los Angeles is a region in the City of Los Angeles comprised of 28 neighborhoods and has 51.08 square miles. (South Los Angeles Community Plan | Los Angeles City Planning, n.d.). South Los Angeles has a population of 288,678, with 23.8% below the poverty level (*Demographics | Los Angeles City Planning*, n.d.). The median household income is \$47,692 dollars, which is the lowest out of all the study areas. South Los Angeles' population is 64% Hispanic or Latino origin and 36% Non-Hispanic. From the Non-Hispanic group, the South L.A. demographics are 13.2% White, 66.7% Black or African-American, and 13.6% Asian. The *South Los Angeles Community Plan* reports that South Los Angeles commercial land use is 15 percent of the South L.A. area (*South Los Angeles Community Plan | Los Angeles City Planning*, n.d.).

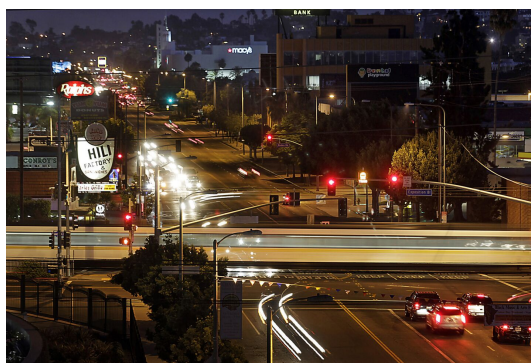


Figure 3. South Los Angeles

San Fernando Valley

The San Fernando Valley region includes a variety of cities in Los Angeles County with 224.56 square miles (San Fernando Valley, n.d.). The San Fernando Valley includes 27 L.A. neighborhoods (Wimberley, n.d.). The valley comprises 46.9% Hispanic, 28.9% White, 11.8% Asian or Pacific Islander, and 8.3% Black (*SFV_COI_2021 | Powered by Box*, n.d.) San Fernando Valley has a median household income of 62,142 dollars and 18% of the population is below the poverty level (*SFV_COI_2021 | Powered by Box*, n.d.). Compared to the other study areas, San Fernando Valley has a distinctive geography due to the mountain ranges that surround the area. The mountain ranges provide a natural barrier to many types of movement and isolate the region.





Figure 4. San Fernando Outdoor Market (*San Fernando Valley Guide*, n.d.)

Harbor Gateway

Harbor Gateway, a neighborhood in the City of Los Angeles, resides near adjacent cities, including Gardena, Torrance, and unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County with 5.14 square miles (*Harbor Gateway*, 2022). Harbor Gateway has a population of 42,010, with 15.3% below the poverty level (*Demographics | Los Angeles City Planning*, n.d.). The median household income is 69,408 dollars. Harbor Gateway's population is 58% Hispanic or Latino Origin and 42% Non-Hispanic. From the Non-Hispanic group, the Harbor Gateway demographics are 14.8% White, 35.8% Black or African-American, and 37.75% Asian.

According to Harbor Gateway's Community Plan, Harbor Gateway functions as the City's main economic hub for industrial uses such as recycling, clothing, goods, food production and distribution headquarters, metal plating, and goods movement (*Harbor Gateway*, 2022). The plan details goals to revitalize commercial corridors by providing all residents with commercial services and employment opportunities (*Harbor Gateway*, 2022).



Figure 5. Harbor Gateway and Green Line and Bus Service (Garner, 2018)



Wilmington

Wilmington, a neighborhood in the City of Los Angeles with 9.14 square miles, is situated at the southern portion of the Los Angeles Basin, which is near Los Angeles Harbor (*Wilmington - Harbor City Community Plan | Los Angeles City Planning*, n.d.). Wilmington has a total population of 82,170 people, with 18% of the population below the poverty level (*Demographics | Los Angeles City Planning*, n.d.). The median household income is 54,982 dollars. Wilmington's population is 77% Hispanic or Latino Origin and 23% Non-Hispanic. From the Non-Hispanic group, the demographics are 34% White, 20% Black or African-American, and 37.75% Asian.

According to the *Wilmington-Harbor City Community Plan*, one of their goals is to encourage mixed-used commercial corridors especially equitable distribution of goods and services to contribute to the community's well-being. One issue the neighborhood faces is the lack of continuity of complementary uses along commercial frontages. (Wilmington, n.d.). The plan also includes goals of revitalizing and strengthening the area's key commercial corridors (*Wilmington-Commercial Corridors*, n.d.) One of their proposed programs is the Small Business Assistance Programs which "promote[s] agency programs that assist small business owners such as low-interest loan programs, management assistance, business retention programs, and the establishment of incubation centers," with the support of City Administrative Officer and Employment and Workforce agencies (*Wilmington*, 64, n.d.).

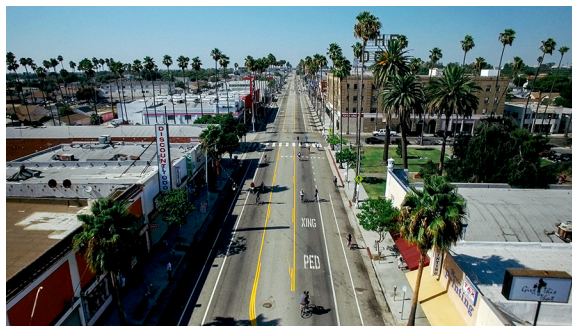


Figure 6. Avalon Blvd between M and C St, Wilmington, CA (*Exploring the Rich History and Local Gems Along Our Wilmington Route - CicLAvia*, n.d.)





Literature Review

The following literature review explores the prolonged ramifications of COVID-19 on eateries, how planning changed during COVID, and the exploration of planning-based interventions during COVID-19.

COVID-19’s Impact on Businesses

According to the Census Bureau’s Small Business Pulse Survey (SBPS), an initiative to measure the effect of changing business conditions during COVID-19, small business revenue in the Food Services and Drinking Places sector lost 13.7 billion dollars in 2020, **see Table 2** (Buffington et al., 2021). Employment in the Accommodations and Food Services sector fell by 3 million in 2020 (Buffington et al., 2021). Since August 2021, small food service businesses have seen a labor shortage, and the early months of COVID-19 resulted in massive layoffs. Frustrated by heightened poor workplace standards during the pandemic, food service workers began to look beyond Food Service jobs (*Restaurants Can’t Find Workers Because They’ve Found Better Jobs*, 2023). The continued labor shortage signifies a shift from the formerly restaurant industry to jobs that offer increased flexibility and better pay.

Table 2. Comparison of Pre-Pandemic and Pandemic Numbers for Food-Related Small Businesses

Concept	Sector	Pre Pandemic 2019: Q4	Pandemic 2020: Q4
Revenue (in millions of dollars)	Food Services and Drinking Places	65,085	51,346
Employment (in thousands, not seasonally adjusted)	Accommodations and Food Services	13,871.5	10,967.8

Sources: Buffington et al., 2021; Census Bureau’s Small Business Pulse Survey (SBPS)

Labor Conditions

Although my research does not include interviews with food service workers, it should be noted that food service workers played a critical role in maintaining businesses during the height of COVID-19. *L.A. Al Fresco Participant Survey Results* reported that one of the variables preventing businesses from participating in the Al Fresco Program is the lack of workforce capacity (2022).

To understand the food service workforce, we must understand who works in these sectors. Because of occupational segregation by gender, race, and ethnicity, White and Latina’s women have relatively high employment rates as waiters or related restaurant jobs (Huang et al., 2020).





Being a customer-facing service that requires “very close” physical proximity to others brings potential COVID-19 exposure (Huang et al., 2020). With workplaces being a central site for COVID-19 infection transmission, food service workers are exposed to potential health vulnerabilities (*Protecting Workers | Occupational Safety and Health Administration*, 2021). Therefore further exploration of reasons for the labor shortage in food services and the front-service worker experience during COVID-19 is crucial in this research.

Fast-food workers in Los Angeles County comprise over a third of restaurant workers in the County (Justie et al., 2022). According to Fast Food Frontline Report, the COVID-19 workplace for fast-food workers includes “high rates of injury, workplace violence, harassment, retaliation, and wage theft” (2022). Themes of health and safety hazards were explored, where over half (58%) of workers reported health and safety hazards such as broken equipment (27%) and pressure to work quickly by management (26%) (Justie et al., 2022). Many (37%) workers also experienced violence, such as threats (25%), racial slurs (24%), assaults (10%), and robberies (4%), cementing dangerous working conditions. While insufficient staffing is still an ongoing problem, the *Fast Food Frontline Report* recommended the need to include more fast-food workers’ voices in the decision-making for the industry; workers have concrete ideas that can improve morale and working conditions while potentially seeing a return in workers to the industry (2022).

Eatery COVID Survival Strategies

Many eateries endured mental whiplash from the ever-changing COVID-19 policies in California. L.A. Mayor Garcetti implemented the “Safer at Home” ordinance, which banned indoor dining on March 19, 2020, and indoor dining did not resume until almost a year later, on March 15, 2021, when Los Angeles County allowed indoor dining at 25% capacity (Bill Addison, 2021). With almost a year of no indoor dining, many eateries had to adjust to emerging strategies to maintain their business operation quickly. Appendix A provides a comprehensive timeline of COVID-19 policies impacting eateries in the City of Los Angeles. Although the temporary L.A. Al Fresco Program is an intervention strategy to support eateries during COVID-19, we must explore other methods that eateries used to maintain their business during in-door dining restrictions, especially for businesses that did not participate nor apply to the temporary L.A. Al Fresco program.

The stay-at-home orders brought an influx of eateries to update their technology for daily operations. Q-R code menus provided less customer-facing service at the beginning of a patron’s visit, cashless payments reduced transmission risks as patrons concluded their meals (Utama et al., 2022). Consequently, implementing technology provided restaurant and bar owners access to customer data to evaluate preferred food or drinks. Social media became a powerful tool for





eateries to have a digital presence and communicate with patrons about special discounts while highlighting eateries' policies on mask-wearing and social distancing (Utama et al., 2022).

For distribution, eateries had to rely heavily on third-party food delivery services like Postmates, UberEats, GrubHub, and more. Eateries had to pay added fees for the service since food delivery was essential for the survival of restaurants during COVID-19 (Reyes, 2020). In April 2020, the City of Los Angeles launched the Temporary Food and Retail Pick-Up Zone program with aid from the L.A. Al Fresco Program. The program intended to sustain local retail and food business activity by encouraging take-out during COVID-19. LADOT suspended parking meter collection and provided temporary signs indicating that customers have a 10-minute limit in the Food or Retail Pick-Up Zone (LADOT, 2023). Although a creative intervention strategy, the temporary pick-up zones were terminated after Los Angeles City Council ended the local state of emergency in February 2023 (LADOT, 2023).

Loans and grants were also a survival strategy to maintain one's business; the most common one to emerge during COVID-19 was the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan which was established by section 1102 of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act or the Act). The PPP loan incentivizes small business owners to keep their workers on payroll where no collateral or personal guarantees are required and no added fees (First Draw PPP Loan | U.S. Small Business Administration, n.d.). An important aspect of qualifying for a PPP loan during its first version is that the borrower's eligibility, whether a small business is seasonal or not, must be in operation on February 15th, 2020, or for eight weeks between February 15, 2019, and June 30th, 2019 (U.S. Small Business Administration | Final PPP FAQ Version 1, April 2020). Under the Small Business Administration, they provided many other loans for businesses to apply for, like the 7(a), 504, and micro-loans, all to support businesses in the United States. However, through the CARES Act, SBA was authorized to pay six months of principal, interest, and associated fees for the previously stated loan types (*SBA Debt Relief | U.S. Small Business Administration, n.d.*).

The City of Los Angeles also launched a Small Business Rental Assistance Program. The Rental Assistance program offers grants of \$2,500 up to \$15,000 to L.A.-based businesses that need financial assistance to aid in their recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic (*Small Business Rental Assistance Program, City of Los Angeles, n.d.*). The grant is intended to cover any outstanding rent payments incurred on or after March 1, 2020, through April 30, 2020; the grant program is on its third round as of Spring 2023 (*Small Business Rental Assistance Program, City of Los Angeles, n.d.*). Some eligibility requirements include being an active business on or before March 1, 2020. They must identify the negative economic impact of COVID-19 while demonstrating that the grant will be used to recover from the pandemic (*Small Business Rental Assistance Program, City of Los Angeles, n.d.*).





Planning Interventions During COVID-19

Urban and street design through initiatives like Slow Streets and outdoor dining were brought center stage due to diminished automobile use and increased advocacy for expanded sidewalks and entirely pedestrian streets during COVID-19 (Paul Hess et al., n.d.). Cities introduced planning interventions that reallocated street space for physically distanced activities, such as outdoor dining, parklets, and Slow Streets (Hess et al. 2022). Slow Streets intention in the City of Los Angeles was to create opportunities for Angelenos to reduce traffic speeding so pedestrians can walk, bike, and run safely (*Slow Streets*, 2020). The City of Los Angeles implemented temporary Slow Streets to respond to COVID-19 and the closures of recreational parks and trails (*Learn About Slow Streets LA*, n.d.). Parklets repurposed street space into multi-use spaces for pedestrians, which became a crucial COVID-19 intervention for restaurants to stay open.

Cities allowed infrastructure interventions to enable businesses to use adjacent curbside parking and street space to aid economic recovery and physical distancing for dining establishments. According to the 2020 *Menin Survey of Mayors*, 92% of Mayors across the United States reported reallocating parking lots, sidewalks, and streets for outdoor dining temporarily or permanently (Parks, 2020). In comparison, 34% of Mayors affirmed that they plan to permanently reallocate space for programs like outdoor dining proving a shift to pedestrian-centering planning (Parks, 2020). Researchers found that North American cities used tactical and temporary interventions compared to international cities like Paris, which promoted long-term street design and planning visions (Hess et al.2022). Even journalists noted the quick shift in interventions, where "ordinarily, acquiring a sidewalk cafe permit takes around six months and costs roughly \$5,000. In a single weekend, thousands of restaurants had been cleared with no application fee." (Wells, 2020). However, Schmidt notes how intervention strategies like Open Streets only focused attention and services on specific neighborhoods while neglecting others ("What the Pandemic's 'Open Streets' Really Revealed," 2022). This highlights the ongoing trends of inequitable planning programming and urban design.

COVID-19 exacerbated the many disparities in our society, from lack of health and food access to unequal access to green space. The crisis brought a new cultural consensus to address institutional barriers, especially the need to acknowledge planning's faulted history and practices that have contributed to racial segregation, redlining, and displacement through inadequate infrastructure (Grant, 2020). Grant emphasizes that "planners must re-evaluate our assumptions and recalibrate the models we have been using to project what communities need" (2020). The emergence of the L.A. Al Fresco Program and the extension of the program showcased the elimination of several bureaucratic issues by including recommendations from the city and business owner-led efforts, the Restaurant Reboot Working Group (Holmes, 2021). COVID-19 has sustained a critical juncture leading to longer-term changes in cities' allocation and management





of street space; however, apprehension grows with the possibility of returning to an onerous permit process (Hogan et al., 2022).

Learning from NYC

During the first three months of COVID-19, eateries in New York City saw a sales drop of more than 50%, leading to some businesses closing down (*Streets for Recovery*, n.d.). However, through Open Restaurants, initiated in June 2020, the program supported businesses throughout the pandemic.

The New York City Department of Transportation (NYC DOT) operates Open Restaurant Program. As of Spring 2023, 13,023 eateries are participating in the Open Restaurants program (*NYC Open Restaurants V2*, n.d.). Open Restaurants program has two options sidewalk adjacent and roadway space in front of their businesses for outdoor dining (Open Restaurants, n.d.). Similar to Los Angeles, they must comply with fire codes. However, New York has an 8 feet clearance requirement, whereas L.A. Al Fresco Program is 5 feet for pedestrian and ADA access. The continued requirements are similar to requirements for the City of Los Angeles' "R" permit for sidewalk dining, where the right-of-way and public entities such as a subway grate cannot be obstructed. However, like the L.A. Al Fresco program, there are no fees to apply for New York's Open Restaurant program. Due to the program's success, the New York Department of Transportation is transitioning to a permanent program (Open Restaurants, n.d.).

Similar to the findings in Brozen's work on the L.A. Al Fresco Program (2022), New York City has a continued inequity in participation in the program, whereas Open Streets, a similar program that allows businesses to operate outdoor dining in blocked-off streets set for walking, outdoor dining, and bicycling. Open Streets saw a 10% increase in new businesses during the pandemic. In contrast, nearby control corridors saw a 20% reduction (*Streets for Recovery*, n.d.). They are often located in wealthy neighborhoods with greater access to parks. According to a City Limits article, the average median income of New York City's 235 Open Streets locations is \$81,567 compared to \$60,762 for New York City overall (*Opinion: How to Make "Open Streets" Permanent and Equitable*, n.d.). Critics highlight the inequities within the program and call for "Open Streets to be placed in NYC neighborhoods where COVID deaths per capita surpassed any other place on earth and where residents have disproportionately suffered from childhood asthma due to trucking corridors or local 'peaker plants (*Opinion: How to Make "Open Streets" Permanent and Equitable*, n.d.) An evident call for equitable public space planning to address historical inequities.





Methodology

Based on findings from the *Improving Access to Outdoor Dining Opportunities* report and in consultation with my client, the following neighborhoods and areas were chosen due to their low participation rates in the L.A. Al Fresco Program: South Los Angeles, San Fernando Valley, Harbor Gateway, and Wilmington (Madeline Brozen et al., 2022). This study addresses the low participation rates through interviews and spatial analysis to explore the barriers qualifying eateries face when applying to the L.A. Al Fresco Program.

Research Questions

This report explores the following questions:

1. What are the main constraints under-invested communities face when learning about or applying for the L.A. Al Fresco program?
2. How did the COVID-19 pandemic affect eateries in Los Angeles and their decision-making to maintain business operations?
3. Does low participation in specific neighborhoods directly correlate to the lack of eateries in the neighborhoods?
4. How can the City of Los Angeles support restaurant owners participating successfully in the L.A. Al Fresco program?

Data Collection

My client and I requested data from the City of Los Angeles' Bureau of Engineering on their Sidewalk Dining "R" Revocable Permits issued from May 2017 to May 2020. Within the three-year time frame, 62 permits were issued, allowing an opportunity to compare permit numbers to the temporary L.A. Al Fresco Program, which started on May 29, 2020.

From the Los Angeles Department of Transportation, specifically their L.A. Alfresco program, I requested application data for Curbside Dining permits, Sidewalk Dining permits, and Expanded Outdoor Private Property Dining permits (in English and Spanish) from May 2020 to April 2023. Through this data, I filtered applications that have been completed, excluding any applications that were started but not submitted. From the completed applications, I calculated the number of applications that were submitted every six months. I also filtered eateries that have been issued a permit to calculate the percentage of eateries participating in the L.A. Al Fresco Program in the City of Los Angeles.



Literature Review



Spatial Analysis



Interviews



Surveys





I used active business data through the City of Los Angeles Open Data Portal, which lists all active businesses currently registered with the City of Los Angeles Office of Finance. The City of Los Angeles Open Data Portal defines an "active" business as a registered business whose owner has not notified the Office of Finance of a cease of business operations (*Listing of Active Businesses / Los Angeles - Open Data Portal*, n.d.). Although L.A. Al Fresco Program's initial intention was to provide more table service in light of COVID-19 and County Public Health orders, food and beverage serving establishments are the prominent participants in the L.A. Al Fresco program (LADOT Official, 2020). I focused on finding active businesses under that food and beverage serving establishments. Through the active business data, I filtered the following primary NAICS Description(s): 722211-Limited-Service Eating Places, 722210- Full-Service Restaurants, and 722110- Drinking places (alcoholic places). These NAICS descriptions fall under the definition of eateries or establishments that serve food or beverages. I excluded active eateries labeled "0" under the council districts column, which means the business locations are out of the City. From the three NAICS descriptions filter, I found 10,432 active eateries in the City of Los Angeles. This data was used to calculate the percentage of eateries participating in the L.A. Al Fresco and to map out eatery density per mile by Los Angeles neighborhoods. From the City of Los Angeles Open Data Portal, I used the City of Los Angeles zoning shape files to explore commercial land use. With the commercial zones, I looked at the percentage of the commercial zones in each neighborhood.

With guidance from my client, I researched and collected important dates from the L.A. County Department of Health, the Los Angeles Times, and the New York Times to determine the City of Los Angeles' reopening policies and allowed indoor dining capacity. This data collection was used to understand the L.A. Al Fresco application data through the three years its been active in conjunction with the return to indoor dining.

I conducted seven eligibility surveys with owners of eateries from the study area(s) who did not participate in the Al Fresco program. From those surveys, I conducted five qualitative interviews, all within a two-month time period. The interviewees were all men, mainly from Wilmington, Harbor Gateway, and South Los Angeles. The interviews were used to understand barriers to participation in the program and ways the City of Los Angeles can provide support. The complete interview instrument in English and Spanish can be found in **Appendix D** and **Appendix E**. I transcribed all the interviews and coded each interview to find emerging themes.



**Table 3.** Interviewee Participants Demographics

Demographics	N (%)
Gender of Owners (as identified by respondents)	
Men	5 (100%)
Women	0 (0%)
Location of Eatery	
Wilmington	2 (40%)
Harbor Gateway	1 (20%)
South Los Angeles	2 (40%)
San Fernando Valley	0 (0%)
Years of Operation	
0-3 years	3 (60%)
3-5 years	1 (20%)
5+ years	1 (20%)

Additionally, I interviewed a Principal City Planner from the Los Angeles Department of City Planning to provide additional insight into why certain neighborhoods have low participation and their department's role before and during the construction of the temporary L.A. Al Fresco Program. There was also a discussion on the current shift to a permanent ordinance for private property, stakeholder engagement throughout the planning process, and their impressions on how the planning field can improve the equitable provision of services.

Recruitment Strategy

For outreach, I created a list of eateries in the study area(s), excluding any businesses that were participating in Al Fresco. I screened interviewees through an eligibility survey to confirm that they:

1. Are a restaurant, bar owner, permitted street vendor, or food truck
2. Own an eatery in the San Fernando Valley, South Los Angeles, Wilmington, or Harbor Gateway neighborhood or area
3. Have not applied to L.A. Al Fresco Program.





Within the eligibility survey, I added questions about years of operation, whether or not they rent, and a list of impacts their eateries endured during COVID-19 and stay-at-home orders. The eligibility criteria were meant to capture how restaurant and bar owners with low participation neighborhoods maintained operations when legally meeting the L.A. County of Public Health requirements during COVID-19. The eligibility survey gave more background information on the owner's experience within the food-service industry and an overall understanding of COVID-19's impact on their eateries. Eligibility survey can be found in **Appendix B** (English Survey) and **Appendix C** (Spanish Survey). From the eligibility survey, establishments are asked if they are interested in participating in a 10-30 minute interview. In most cases, we scheduled a phone call where I conducted the eligibility survey and went straight into the interview.

Study Limitations

Outreach for restaurant(s) or bar owners posed various difficulties. Most owners were often heavily involved with their business taking on multiple roles such as cooking, taking orders, and general service, posing difficulty in being on the phone for 10-15 minutes at a time. When expressing my flexibility to go in person to interview, only one participant considered the option. Another limitation I encountered during the outreach process was when conducting outreach by phone and being unable to get connected to the restaurant owner(s), many front service workers remarked on how restaurant owners either split their time at their other establishments or how restaurant owners only come in two to three times a week. Some restaurant owners and workers were also suspicious of my research outreach, even with an explanation of the goal of the research, and would immediately hang up. Although I had a translated eligibility survey and interview questions, I had no success interviewing predominately Spanish-speaking eateries. Although I was able to conduct interviews with eateries in Wilmington, South Los Angeles, and Harbor Gateway, no interviewees were from the San Fernando Valley region, despite persistent outreach. Therefore my findings on the San Fernando Valley region came strictly from spatial analysis and general research on socio-demographics in the region.

However, I did encounter a quicker phone pickup rate from owners between 5:30 am to 9:00 am or 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm on weekdays. Otherwise, hours that fell within the traditional eating hours for breakfast, lunch, or dinner with expected restaurant rush created a tight window to conduct overall outreach and retention. The Los Angeles Open Data Portal did not include NAICS Description number 722330², a census description for MobileFood Services, which is used to

² The 2022 NAICS Manual, which is the North American Industry Classification System for CENSUS descriptions, defines Mobile Food Services as establishments that engage in preparing and serving meals and snacks for immediate consumption for motorized vehicles and non motorized carts. This also includes industries that engage in providing food services in vehicles such as mobile food carts and trucks (*Special Food Services - May 2022 OEWS Industry-Specific Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates*, n.d.).





describe mobile food carts and trucks (*NAICS Code, n.d.*) Therefore food vendors were not included in the calculation for active eateries in the City of Los Angeles.





Findings

Comparative Analysis

Pre-Pandemic - “R” Permit Approach

Before the L.A. Fresco program, there were two options to conduct outdoor dining: the construction of a permanent patio structure on private property or applying for a Revocable “R” permit. The Revocable Permit (“R” Permit) grants conditional encroachment of the public right-of-way, such as the sidewalk, by private parties currently not authorized to occupy the public right-of-way. The Bureau of Engineering describes the “R” Permit as,

A mechanism to allow, in special circumstances, placement of private structures in the public right-of-way where a hardship would be created due to topography or other constraints within private property. (1 - R-Permit Purpose & Definition | Los Angeles Bureau of Engineering Permit Manuals, n.d.).

The “R” Permit review process verifies that encroachments are checked for compliance with the City’s design, use, material, and inspection specifications. Revocable permits are granted with a construction and installation permit such as A, B, or Excavation E Permit. The application requirements for an “R” permit specifically for general sidewalk dining are listed below. Any bolded requirements are similar to the Sidewalk Dining Policy updated on October 20, 2021 (02 - Sidewalk Dining | Los Angeles Bureau of Engineering Permit Manuals, n.d.)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Sketch with dimensions2. Copy of the Deed or Lease Agreement3. Sidewalk Dining Permit Processing Fees<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Tier 1 Fee○ Tier 2 Fee○ Tier 3 Fee4. Sewerage Facilities Charge5. Proof of Sufficient Liability Insurance6. Waiver of Damages Signed and Notarized7. Technical Review | <ol style="list-style-type: none">8. Confirmation that the proposed location is in the Public Right-of-Way9. Minimum Clearance10. Umbrellas11. Planters12. Alcohol13. Smoking14. Noise Restrictions15. Compliance with Other Regulations16. Applicant Assistance17. LAMC 12.03 (Outdoor Eating Area within Private Property) Compliance18. Allowed Number of Seats19. Attached Railing/Fences20. Visibility Triangle |
|---|--|





21. Awning

22. Sidewalk Condition

23. Other Encroachments

24. Appeals to BOE Determination

25. Maintenance of Area

The “R” permit had twenty-five application items to thoroughly follow through, whereas fifteen conditions were maintained following the revised policy updated in October 2021. Some of the revised dining policy includes:

- *Added the ability to front neighborhoods properties with property owner permission*
- *Added a clarification of the Pedestrian Access Route*
- *Modified the sidewalk conditions requirements*
- *Reduced base application fee for more applications by eliminating field investigators when not required*
- *Added noise restrictions*
- *Added the ability of Businesses Improvement Districts and other approved third parties to satisfy some permitting requirements (Policy No. 812 Revised Policy on Sidewalk Dining, 2021).*

Before the updated policy, the “R” permit required a minimum of \$1,000,000 liability insurance. Compared to the temporary L.A. Al Fresco program, a \$300,000 minimum liability insurance policy is required, allowing more businesses to apply. The R-permit for sidewalk dining allows businesses one year after the Bureau of Engineering (BOE) releases R-permit requirements to abide by their list of conditions. However, it may be shorter, which the City Engineer determines. Due to additional outdoor seating, there will always be a permit fee and a sewerage facility charge.

however, depending on the conditions of the sidewalk, a tier 2 revocable permit fee could be added in cases where field investigation is required due to discrepancies in conditions. A tier 3 fee is required when the board must deviate from the sidewalk policy. Fees are common barriers, and that may affect eateries to apply. **Figure 7** displays the issued permits from May 2017 to May 2020. The onerous process for an “R” permit results in minimal numbers due to applicants needing time and access to capital to fulfill all requirements.



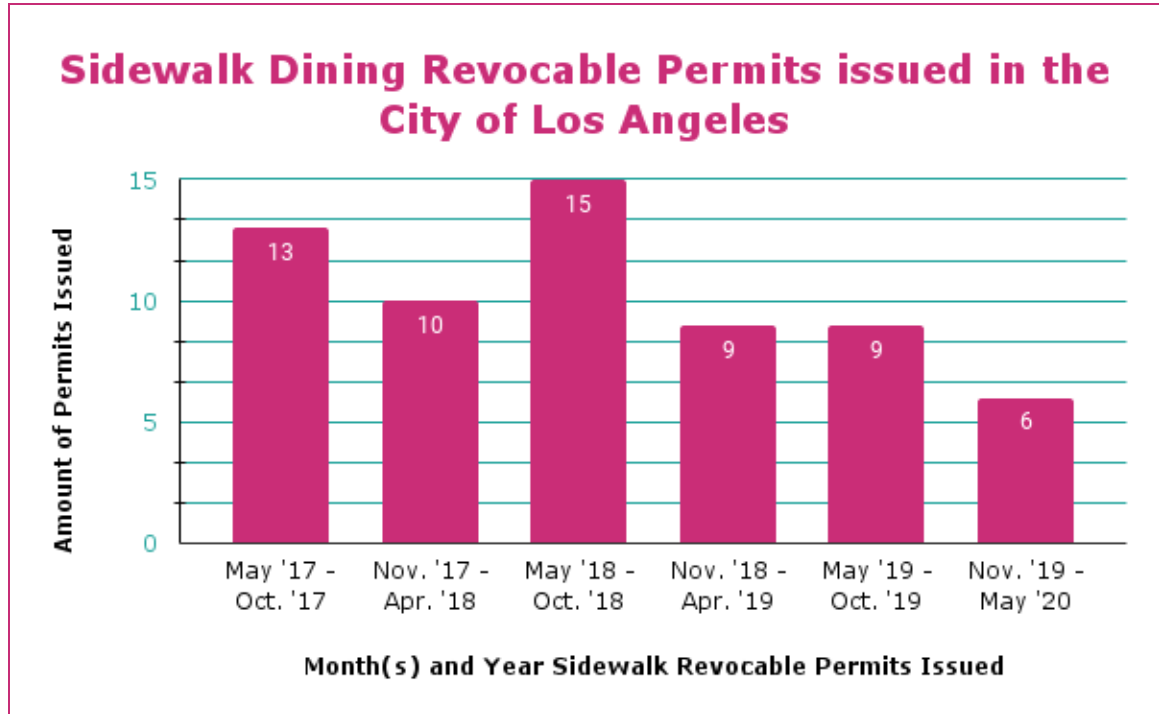


Figure 7. Sidewalk Dining Revocable Permit Data From May 2017 - May 2020

L.A. Al Fresco Program

As the City of Los Angeles imposed safety protocols against the spread of COVID-19, on March 15th, 2020, Mayor Garcetti imposed an indoor dining ban. California created the Blueprint for a Safer Economy system, a color-coded county tier system to evaluate the COVID-19 risk level to inform restrictions through the local health department (Blueprint for a Safer Economy, n.d.). The Los Angeles County Public Health Department set regulations for the City of Los Angeles, including what tier of restrictions were applicable, including indoor dining capacity. **Table 3** is the listed indoor dining max capacity dates that impacted eateries in the City of Los Angeles.

Table 3. City of Los Angeles Modified Safety Protocols for Indoor Dining Capacity

Indoor Dining Capacity	Date Issued
0% Max Capacity	March 15, 2020
25% Max Capacity	March 15, 2021
50% Max Capacity	April 5, 2021
100% Max Capacity	June 15, 2021



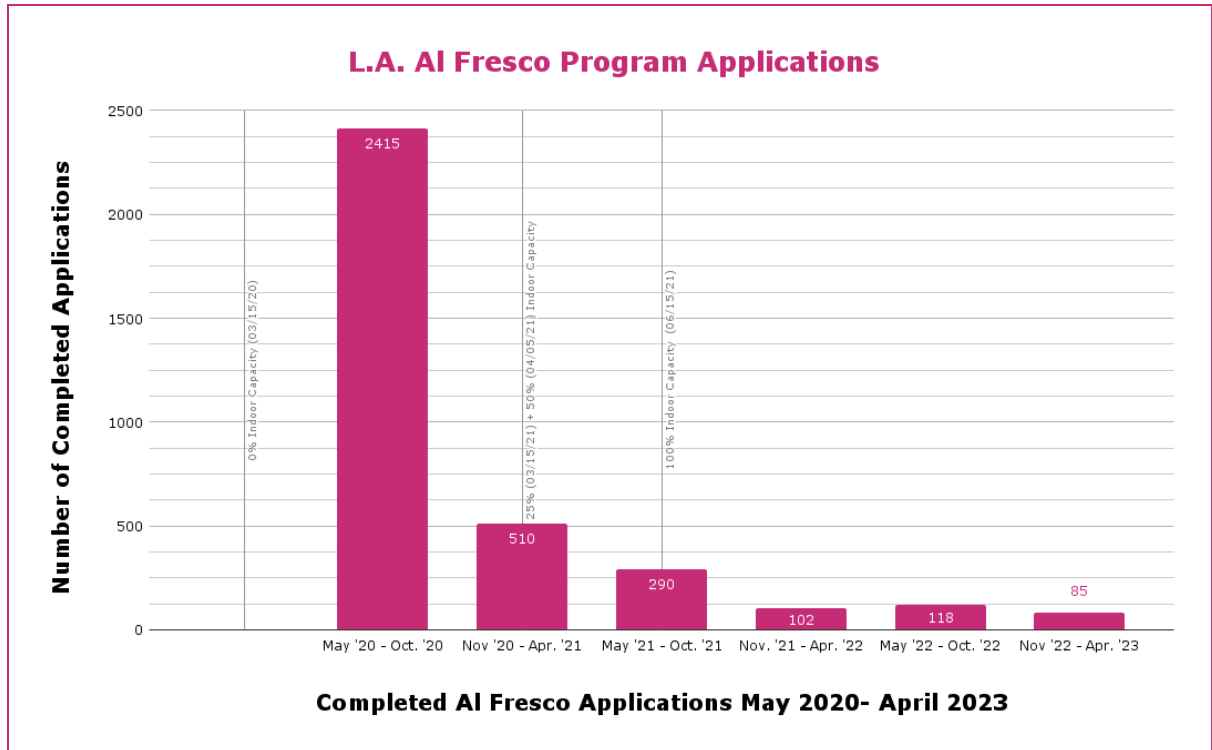


Figure 8 . L.A. Al Fresco Applications from May 2020 - April 2023

May 29th, 2020 marked the emergence of the L.A. Al Fresco program and within a six-month period the program garnered 2,415 completed applications, highlighting the program as a needed intervention strategy for economic support (Figure 8). As COVID-19 cases slowly dwindled and indoor capacity emerged, the application number lessened. Even in the most recent data from November 2022 to April 2023, the L.A. Al Fresco program had 83 applications, whereas the “R”-permit, the previous sidewalk dining application, had 63 permits issued within three years. The L.A. Al Fresco program's continued growth demonstrates interest in this opportunity. As for current participants in the program, out of the 10,432 active eateries in the City of Los Angeles, 27% of eateries are participating in the L.A. Al Fresco Program (Figure 9).





Figure 9. Percentage of Active Eateries Participating in the L.A. Al Fresco Program

I looked at the density of eateries per square mile to determine if low participation is connected to a lack of eateries within the neighborhood. In **Figure 10**, we see an eatery density map of the City of Los Angeles, the neighborhood with the highest eatery density are Downtown Los Angeles, Koreatown, and Fairfax. As for the neighborhood with the lowest eatery density, it includes neighborhoods like Broadway- Manchester, Playa Del Rey, Cheviot Hills, Beverlywood, Larchmont, Monetcito Heights, Mount Washington, Elysian Valley, Hollywood Hills, and most northern neighborhoods. As for the study area, Wilmington has ten eateries per mile, and Harbor Gateway has 14 eateries per square mile. In comparison, South L.A. and San Fernando Valley have a mixture of lower density per square mile.

In regards to the percentage of the commercial zone by neighborhood, Wilmington is 3.2% commercial zone, and Harbor Gateway is 3.6% commercial zone, as seen in **Figure 11**. At the same time, South L.A. has a higher concentration of commercial zone. San Fernando Valley has a lower percentage of commercial land area overall. However, North Hollywood is an outlier in the valley and emerges as the only neighborhood in the San Fernando Valley to be 9.09% of the commercial zone.



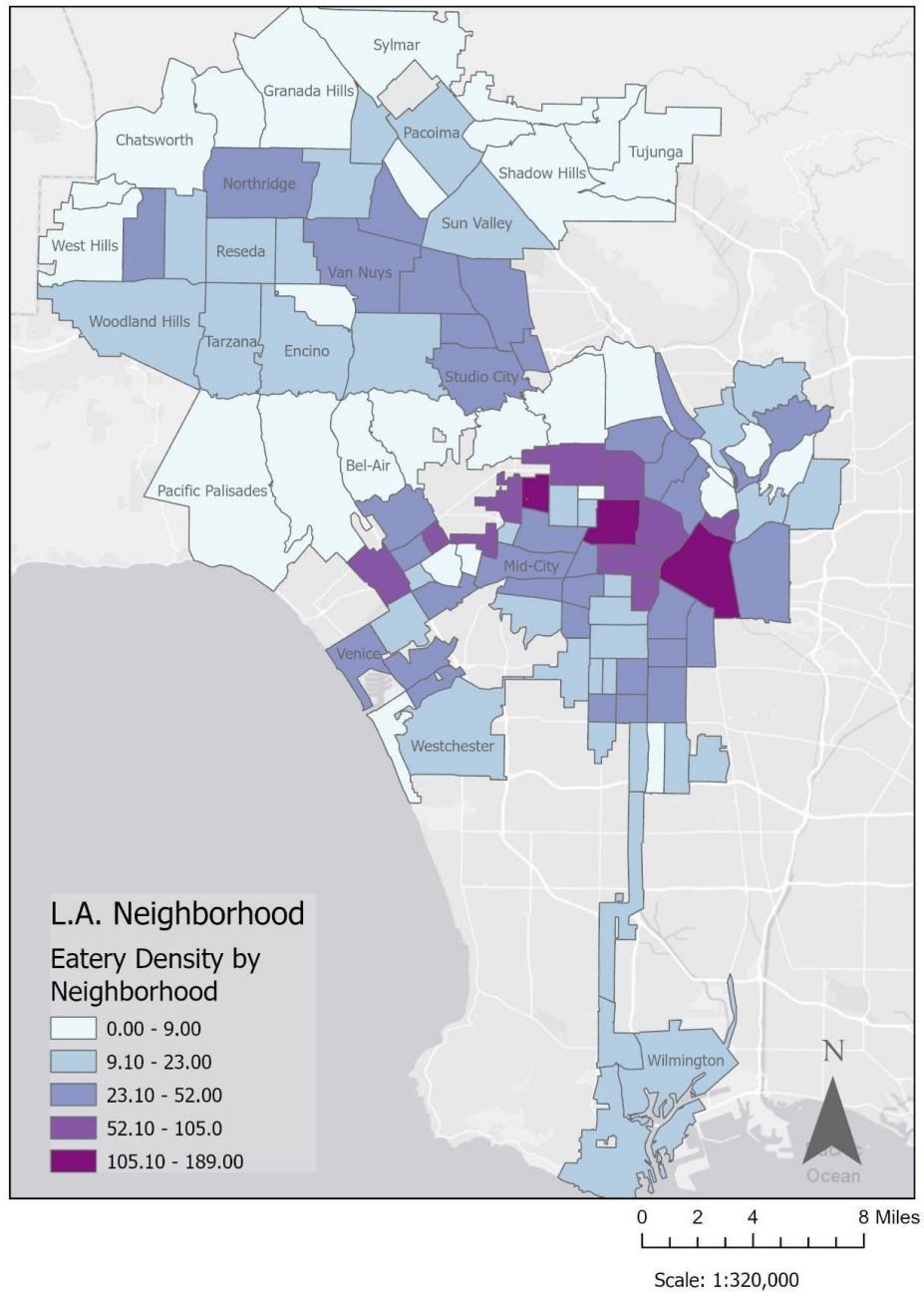


Figure 10. Eatery Density: Eateries per square mile by L.A. Neighborhood



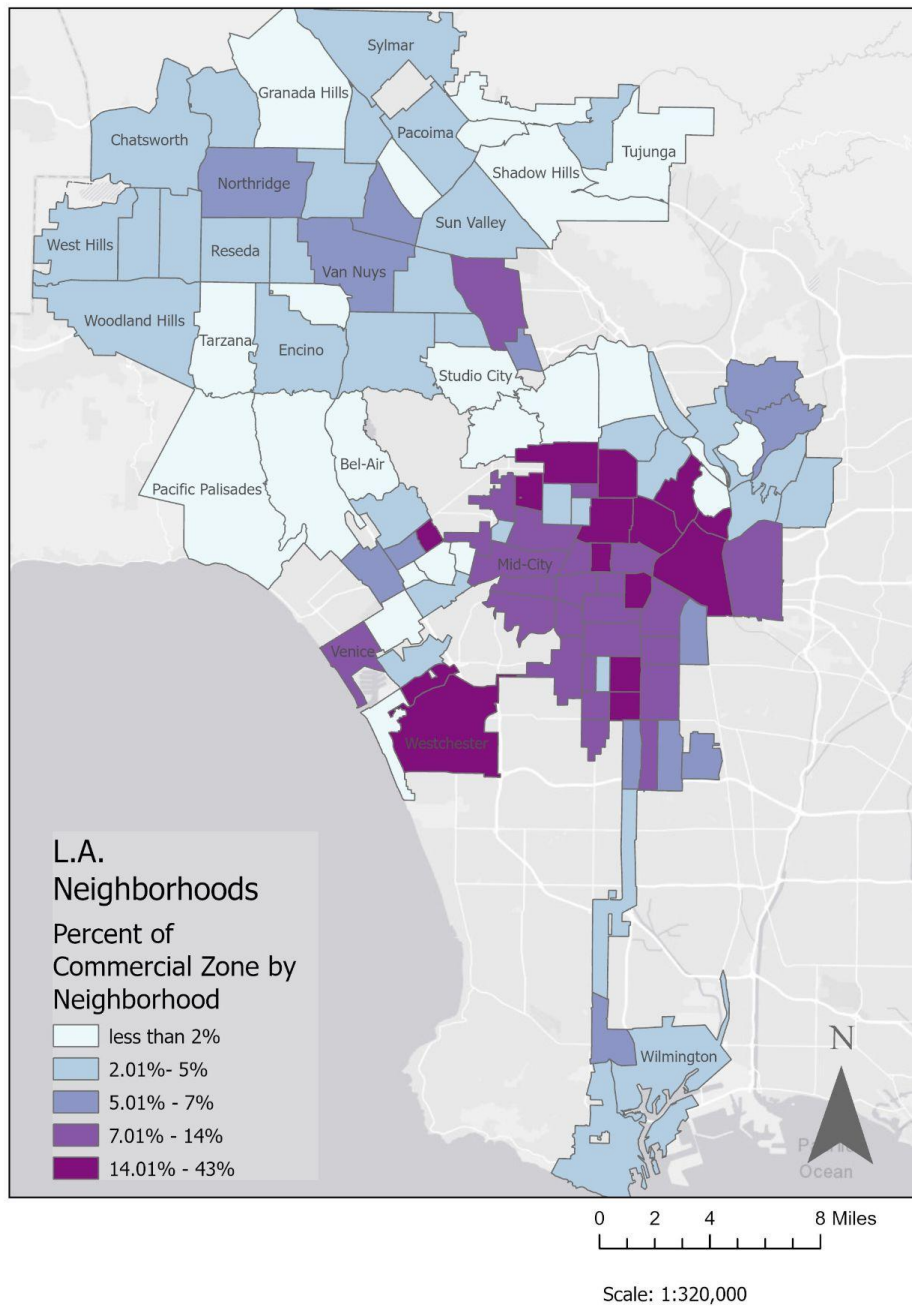


Figure 11. Percentage of Commercial Zone by L.A. Neighborhood





Figure 12. Barrier Themes Explored in Qualitative Interviews

Prolonged Impact of COVID-19 on Restaurants and Bars in L.A.

Through qualitative interviews, I engaged with owners of food-service establishments to further understand barriers in low-participation areas. With the seven owners of eateries surveyed and five owners of eateries interviewed, these were the findings.

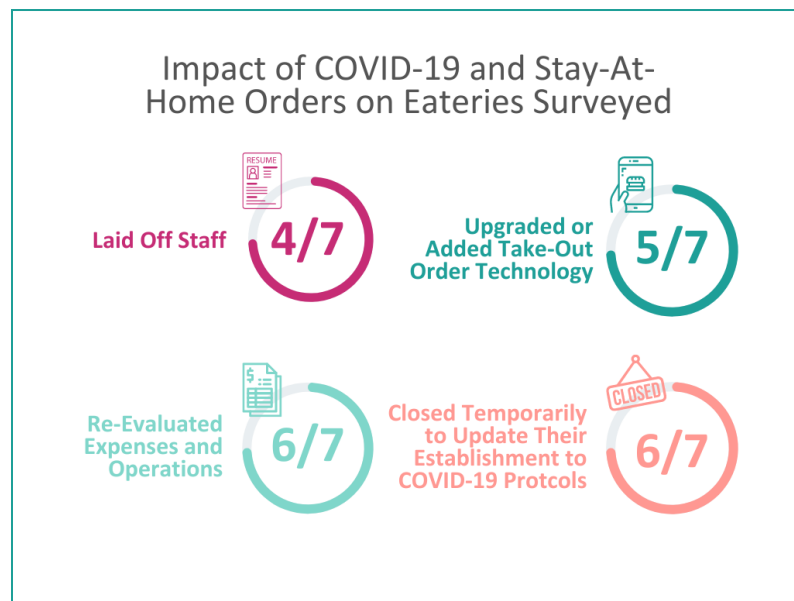


Figure 13. Impact of COVID-19 and Stay-At-Home Orders on Eateries Surveyed





As seen in **Figure 13**, from eligibility surveys, 6 out of 7 closed temporarily to update their establishment to COVID-19 protocols, and 6 out of 7 had to re-evaluate expenses and operations. Interviewees expressed how they are still recovering economically from COVID-19, which has been compounded by inflation, leaving no interest or capacity to expand their business.

The COVID experience impacted a majority of food and beverage serving establishments, both old and new. During COVID-19 and stay-at-home orders, they sought survival strategies to maintain their business. Interviewees expressed shifting heavily to take-out technology and pointed to this as a way to maintain operation during stay-at-home orders—5 out of 7 surveyors upgraded or added take-out technology. Three interviewees affirmed that technology was critical to their business model. Whether the eateries had 1-3 years of operation or 25+ years of operation, all interviewees implemented take-out programs through a third-party system like Grubhub or Postmates and expressed maintaining the usage of technology.

With four out of the seven surveyors laid off staff, one eatery discussed how they never recovered in staffing numbers due to COVID-19. However, take-out technology has provided needed support to automatically conduct take-out orders, leading to the decision not to seek out new hires. While some interviewees found supplements, two interviewees expressed needing more funds to bring in hires and struggling to keep afloat.

All eateries interviewed had to apply for a loan to keep their business afloat. Two interviewees expressed that despite applying for loans, they did not qualify since their business started during or near the start of COVID-19. Since they became operational after the cut-off date, February 19th, 2020, the first version of the PPP loan, their loan applications were denied. According to our survey, PPP loans were the highest applied by our surveyors at 80% (**Figure 14**). Some interviewees explained that pursuing creative ways to maintain their business, like selling bottled iced coffee, would work against them when applying for a loan like the City of LA Small Business Rental Assistance. The Small Business Rental Assistance required applicants to identify the negative economic impact of COVID-19.



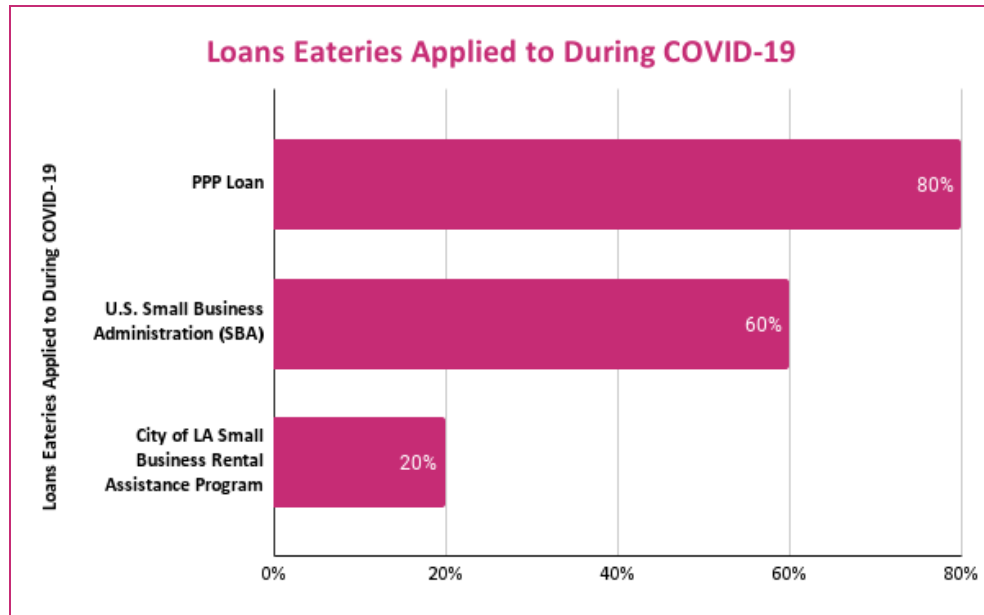


Figure 14. Loans Eateries Applied to During COVID-19 According to Surveyors

With, the lack of funds for those that didn't qualify for the loans, it created difficulties in growing their business, especially for eateries that opened during the pandemic.

We're still recovering. I added a lot of my personal funds into the business hoping that the economy can pick up... any extra funding now can help if we receive it, to helps us; gives us room to grow. Okay, now we're limited with the amount of foot traffic that we're getting. We're barely ordering just enough to get by. We don't have room to order new items to launch and grow (Interview #3, Owner of Eatery in Wilmington, personal communication, 2023)

The tension to stay afloat while trying to accumulate more foot traffic became the main focus for this eatery, despite attempting other strategies. Some strategies included having a social media presence for their establishment and cutting down on their menu items.

Unsupportive Landlords

All interviewees had difficulties, to a certain extent, with their landlord during the pandemic. Interviewees expressed that their landlord, whether an individual or property management company, was empathetic the first month into the pandemic. After that, they received no rental support, while others had difficulty reaching their landlord. The L.A. Al Fresco Program requires businesses to self-certify that they have the property owner's permission to participate, and the





City of Los Angeles takes their word for it. One interviewee shared their experience proposing to their landlord to apply to the L.A. AI Fresco program.

So we work[ed] with the city actually, Wilmington, the Chamber of Commerce. So they had helped us apply; we applied and then they needed approval from the landlord and the landlord said, No. (Interview #3, Owner of Eatery in Wilmington, personal communication, 2023)

Even with searching for support from the Chamber of Commerce to ensure they correctly applied, the main barrier was that their landlord denied their request to apply, despite the program being a solution to stay open during the pandemic.

Parking, Lack of Space, and Parking

Four out of the five interviewees expressed concerns about the lack of space and parking affecting their decision to apply.

We couldn't do outdoor. We did some outdoor temporarily, but it wasn't easy because of the parking situation and the outdoor elements. (Interview #2, Owner of Eatery in Wilmington, personal communication, 2023)

Although the interviewee attempted outdoor dining, they abandoned it due to parking concerns. This eatery shares parking within a strip-mall area, creating conflicts in a shared space. Other interviewees had perceived assumptions that the program was solely for parking lots and was fearful of losing parking spots, especially when close to major arterial streets.

We couldn't even do outdoor dining. If we wanted to. Indoor dining, we have some space for that, but outdoor dining, we wouldn't be able to do it (Interview #1, Owner of Eatery in Harbor Gateway, personal communication, 2023).

In contrast, some eateries have limited parking and indoor space, vocalizing their inability to participate in the program while hoping for better solutions.

Because outdoor eating most likely we'll lose parking space so I don't know, maybe they [LADOT] can figure out better parking, you know, for the business, like maybe 15 minutes on the busy street instead of no parking or something like that. I don't know. (Interview #4, Owner of Eatery in South Los Angeles, personal communication, 2023)

Safety

Three of the five interviewees expressed safety concerns that have impacted their establishment; it ranges from vandalism, gang violence, and unhoused encampments obstructing on-street parking. One interviewee described their area as unsafe for their





customers or workers, especially at night, and recalled an incident where one of their customers was attacked by a gang member when going back to their car. The interviewee also describes the challenges within the area:

This is an area [with in South Los Angeles] that is known for a lot of gang violence, prostitution. So it's not the friendliest family environment for outdoor dining. And so the only place that I know of happy enclosed outdoor dining is where it's not directly accessible from the street. (Interview #5, Owner of Eatery in South Los Angeles, personal communication, 2023)

Safety and a poor built environment have put food and beverage establishments in a problematic position, stunting their business growth. Another interviewee with an establishment that has operated for 45 years shared that they already have a ready and alert mentality regarding safety.

It's always in our minds [about safety] as always, we do our best not to become a victim but things happen. There's no way to control, but we are on top of it. (Interview #2, Owner of Eatery in Wilmington, personal communication, 2023)

Within this interviewee's establishment, being in operation for more than four decades, they expressed self-sufficiency due to years of personally navigating their business. Still, they affirmed that there should be resources to support food-services establishments.

Interest in Support From the City of L.A.

No matter how long the eatery has been in operation, all interviewees expressed interest in City of Los Angeles' support, whether general outreach, community partner organization guidance, or an economic program. Eateries struggling to gain foot traffic were enthused by the idea of an economic program, especially one that can provide solutions or strategies for their businesses to stay afloat or expand. Even when interviewing principal city planners on the L.A. Al Fresco barriers, they commented that providing technical assistance and resources can support food and beverage establishments in under-invested communities.





Conclusion and Recommendations

The COVID-19 pandemic unveiled unprecedented disparities burdening our Los Angeles neighborhoods, especially those coded as disadvantaged under SB 535. As the L.A. Al Fresco Program posed as a pandemic intervention strategy where 27% of eateries in the City of Los Angeles participate, neighborhoods like Wilmington and Harbor Gateway continue to face barriers to applying. Food and beverage serving establishments are still recovering from COVID-19, especially eateries that opened during the pandemic and didn't qualify for emergency business loans. Most barriers found from the qualitative interviews are concerns about the lack of space, customer safety, and poor built environment near eateries. Efforts to reallocate space for pedestrians and outdoor dining must be prioritized while revitalizing neighborhoods where commercial districts have been neglected to diminish barriers to applying to the L.A. Al Fresco program. Below is a list of recommendations for improving the L.A. Al Fresco program based on these findings.

1. **Create a small restaurant outreach strategy through an L.A. Al Fresco ambassador program.** Developing an ambassador program by recruiting enthused LA Fresco participants to represent their neighborhood can provide personable outreach to fellow business owners not participating in the program. The perspective of a business owner expressing the program's economic and social benefits can strengthen fellow business owners' trust to apply to the program.
2. **Develop partnerships with organizations like LISC LA, Inclusive Action For the City, and The Center by Lendistry to increase specialized support services for small businesses in under-invested communities.** Partnering with existing organizations focusing on small business advising, technical assistance, and micro-loans for underinvested will immensely support struggling food and beverage serving establishments in under-invested communities. Especially those facing economic barriers to participating in the L.A. Al Fresco Program. LISC LA currently manages initiatives like the Asset Building for Communities of Color (ABC) program designed "to create pathways for diverse small business owners across Los Angeles County to grow, scale, create jobs, and fuel wealth creation" (*Growth Capital Recipients | LISC Los Angeles*, n.d.). Inclusive Action for the City and LISC LA collaborate on other initiatives like the Entrepreneurs of Color Fund that supports diverse business owners in the Los Angeles area (*Los Angeles | LISC EOCF*, n.d.). The Center by Lendistry provides needed services such as on-demand entrepreneurial education and One-on-One Consulting services for business plan development, marketing, and procurement (*The Center by Lendistry | Services*, n.d.). All of the following programs listed can provide the needed economic support that was expressed in the interviews.





3. **Increase visibility by providing accessible graphics and informational videos in Spanish while partnering with local Spanish-language T.V. or radio to spread awareness of the L.A. Al Fresco Program.** A roadmap graphic in English and Spanish that provides a step-by-step guide on the application process and requirements for each dining type in one document will deliver a concise and legible account of the program. The roadmap graphic will demystify the application process for food and beverage serving establishments in Los Angeles, especially those worried about losing parking spaces or general misconceptions about the program. Infomercial videos, especially in Spanish, are essential and can also support Spanish-speaking eateries throughout Los Angeles. It could aid in better Spanish application completion rates. Partner with local Spanish television and radio programs to ensure widespread promotion. These initiatives can include promotional stories from Spanish-speaking participants in the L.A. Al Fresco program highlighting their positive experience and benefits of the program.
4. **Construct curated FAQs and talking points for landlords to stress the program's benefits for tenants and the program being the new normal in Los Angeles' commercial corridors.** Whether property management companies or a singular landlord, there should be curated material and talking points showcasing the economic benefits of the L.A. Al Fresco Program and why both tenants and landlords would benefit from the program. The L.A. Al Fresco program communicating its intention to landlords or property management companies sets the precedent that it is shifting to a permanent policy model and will be the new normal for the City of Los Angeles and its commercial corridors.
5. **Create an active L.A. Al Fresco eatery map to highlight eateries in neighborhoods participating in the L.A. Al Fresco program.** Showcasing eateries in Los Angeles Neighborhoods allows Angelenos to visit eateries with Al Fresco dining while providing visual evidence for apprehensive restaurant owners that the program is successful and pliant to their business model. NYC Open Restaurants provides an active Open Restaurants map that allows visitors to see which establishments are participating in outdoor dining, the type of seating offered, and if they serve alcohol (*NYC Open Restaurants V2, 2023*).
6. **Create a coalition to ensure stakeholders and decision-makers are discussing prevalent concerns facing under-invested communities in pursuit of revitalizing their commercial corridors for all Los Angeles neighborhoods.** Many interviewees reported needing help finding overall economic support during COVID-19 highlighting fewer economic support systems in low-income communities. BIDS, food and beverage serving establishments, Economic justice community non-profits, Ciclavia organizers, People St Program, and the Los Angeles Food and Beverage Working Group are coordinating with one another to provide. The coalition is there to ensure similar goals for reallocated space by revitalizing





the built environment and commercial corridors for Angelenos can be economically and socially beneficial. The coalition would ensure that all perspectives are included and heard.

In the face of a global pandemic, programs like the L.A. Al Fresco have shown how local governance can provide immediate support. However, even in an emergency, there must be protocols to ensure our most vulnerable members are not negatively impacted or barred. As the L.A. Al Fresco program shifts to a permanent program, implementing safeguards and outreach services to ensure no barriers to applying to economically supportive programs.





References

- Al Fresco Ordinance—Outdoor Dining on Private Property | Los Angeles City Planning. (n.d.). Retrieved May 16, 2023, from <https://planning.lacity.org/plans-policies/outdoor-dining>
- Bill Addison. (2021, March 18). One year of COVID-19: Timeline of L.A. dining culture—Los Angeles Times. <https://www.latimes.com/food/story/2021-03-18/timeline-los-angeles-dining-culture-march-2021-covid-19>
- Blueprint for a Safer Economy. (n.d.). Retrieved May 05, 2023, from <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/COVID19CountyMonitoringOverview.aspx>
- Buffington, C., Chapman, D., Dinlersoz, E., Foster, L., & Haltiwanger, J. (2021). High-frequency data from the U.S. Census Bureau during the COVID-19 pandemic: Small vs. new businesses. *Business Economics*, 56(3), 155–167. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s11369-021-00229-0>
- Buffington, C., Fields, J., & Foster, L. (2021). Measuring the Impact of COVID-19 on Businesses and People: Lessons from the Census Bureau’s Experience. *AEA Papers and Proceedings*, 111, 312–316. <https://doi.org/10.1257/pandp.202111047>
- CA to end mask requirement, vaccine mandate for health care workers. (2023, March 4). ABC7 San Francisco. <https://abc7news.com/california-covid-masks-healthcare-settings-vaccine-mandate-april-3/12914844/>
- California Climate Investments Priority Populations 3.0 by Census Tract*. (n.d.). Retrieved June 7, 2023, from <https://webmaps.arb.ca.gov/PriorityPopulations3/>
- California Reopens: A Coronavirus Timeline—The New York Times. (2021, June 16). <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/15/us/coronavirus-california-timeline.html>
- Can South L.A. re-brand again? How does “SOLA” sound? - Los Angeles Times. (n.d.-b). Retrieved May 18, 2023, from <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-south-la-could-be-renamed-sola-by-city-in-image-makeover-20150421-story.html>
- Cowan, J. (2021, June 15). A Timeline of the Coronavirus in California. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/15/us/coronavirus-california-timeline.html>
- CicLAvia—Wilmington. (n.d.). CicLAvia. Retrieved March 20, 2023, from <https://www.ciclavia.org/wilmington21>
- Exploring the Rich History and Local Gems Along our Wilmington Route—CicLAvia. (n.d.). Retrieved May 20, 2023, from https://www.ciclavia.org/localgems_wilmington





- First Draw PPP loan | U.S. Small Business Administration. (n.d.). Retrieved May 28, 2023, from <https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs/loans/covid-19-relief-options/paycheck-protection-program/first-draw-ppp-loan>
- Garner, S. (2018, November 16). Neighborhood Spotlight: Harbor Gateway has moved from a sparsely populated connector to an affordable, diverse community. Los Angeles Times. <https://www.latimes.com/business/realstate/hot-property/la-fi-hp-neighborhood-spotlight-harbor-gateway-20181117-story.html>
- Grant, J. L. (2020). Pandemic Challenges to Planning Prescriptions: How Covid-19 is Changing the Ways We Think about Planning. *Planning Theory & Practice*, 21(5), 659–667. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649357.2020.1853408>
- Hogan, J., Howlett, M., & Murphy, M. (2022). Re-thinking the coronavirus pandemic as a policy punctuation: COVID-19 as a path-clearing policy accelerator. *Policy and Society*, 41(1), 40–52. <https://doi.org/10.1093/polsoc/puab009>
- Holmes, M. (2020, August 5). Here's the Entire Crazy Timeline for Restaurant Reopening Policies in LA County. Eater LA. <https://la.eater.com/2020/8/5/21336331/restaurant-los-angeles-reopenings-guidelines-covid-pandemic>
- Holmes, M. (2021, June 29). LA Mayor Agrees to Keep Outdoor Dining Spaces for at Least a Year. Eater LA. <https://la.eater.com/2021/6/29/22556181/los-angeles-mayor-garcetti-emergency-ordinance-al-fresco-extension-outdoor-dining-covid>
- Home | Office of the City Clerk.* (n.d.). Retrieved June 8, 2023, from <https://clerk.lacity.gov/>
- Hopkins, L. D., & Zapata, M. (Eds.). (2007). *Engaging the future: Forecasts, scenarios, plans, and projects.* Lincoln Institute of Land Policy.
- <https://laist.com/people/elina-shatkin>. (2021, June 15). It's Official! LA's Restaurants And Bars Can Ditch Masks, Capacity Limits And Other Pandemic Protocols. LAist. <https://laist.com/news/food/its-official-las-restaurants-and-bars-can-ditch-masks-capacity-limits-and-other-pandemic-protocols>
- <https://www.latimes.com/people/luke-money>, <https://www.latimes.com/people/rong-gong-lin-ii>, & <https://www.latimes.com/people/emily-alpert-reyes>. (2022, March 9). L.A. moves to lift vaccine verification mandate at indoor businesses. Los Angeles Times. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-03-09/l-a-moves-to-lift-vaccine-verification-at-indoor-businesses>
- <https://www.latimes.com/people/rong-gong-lin-ii>, <https://www.latimes.com/people/luke-money>, & <https://www.latimes.com/people/phil-willon>. (2022, February 7). California will lift mask mandate for vaccinated residents in indoor public places next week. Los Angeles Times. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-02-07/when-will-california-ease-mask-vaccine-rules>
- Huang, K., Lindman, T., Bernhardt, A., & Thomason, S. (2020). Physical Proximity to Others in California's Workplaces:





- Ibarra, K. H., Ana B. (2022, October 17). California to end the COVID state of emergency. CalMatters. <http://calmatters.org/health/2022/10/california-state-of-emergency/>
- Interview #1, Owner of eatery in Harbor Gateway (Montano, Brittany, Interviewer). (2023). [Personal communication].
- Interview #2, Owner of eatery in Wilmington (Montano, Brittany, Interviewer). (n.d.). [Personal communication].
- Interview #3, Owner of eatery in Wilmington (Montano, Brittany, Interviewer). (2023). [Personal communication].
- Interview #4, Owner of eatery in South Los Angeles (Montano, Brittany, Interviewer). (2023). [Personal communication].
- Interview #5, Owner of eatery in South Los Angeles (Montano, Brittany, Interviewer). (2023). [Personal communication].
- Interview #6, Principal City Planner (Montano, Brittany, Interviewer). (2023). [Personal communication]
- Justie, B., Koonse, T., Macias, M., Ray, J., & Waheed, S. W. (2022). UCLA Labor Center | Fast-Food Frontline: COVID-19 and Working Conditions in Los Angeles. <https://www.labor.ucla.edu/publication/fast-food-frontline-covid-19-and-working-conditions-in-los-angeles/>
- Kim, B., & Richardson, M. (n.d.). Permanent Al Fresco Ordinance.
- Ko, Y. H., Son, J. H., & Kim, G. J. (2022). An exploratory study of changes in consumer dining out behavior before and during COVID-19. *Journal of Foodservice Business Research*, 0(0), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15378020.2022.2036569>
- Kuehl, K. (2021). The invention of public space: Designing for inclusion in Lindsay’s New York. *Journal of Urban Design*, 26(4), 536–538. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13574809.2021.1885974>
- L.A. Al Fresco | COVID-19: Keeping Los Angeles Safe. (n.d.). Retrieved May 15, 2023, from <https://coronavirus.lacity.gov/laalfresco>
- Los Angeles | LISC EOCF*. (n.d.). Local Initiatives Support Corporation. Retrieved June 8, 2023, from <https://www.lisc.org/eocf/impact/los-angeles/>
- LISTING OF DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH PRESS RELEASES. (n.d.). Retrieved May 27, 2023, from <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/phcommon/public/media/mediapubhpdetail.cfm?prid=3014>
- Lydon, M., Garcia, T., Woudstra, R., Fogt, S., Mikic, D., Allen, E., Ap, L., Planning, B., Miller, J., Samuelson, M., Grandstaff, J., Szczepanski, C., Hebbert, F., Cochran, A., & Abraham, C. (n.d.). Research, Publication, Website.
- Muniz. (2020, September 10). L.A. County and City Leaders Join Forces with Citizen to Launch Safepass Partnership. COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES.





<https://covid19.lacounty.gov/covid19-news/la-county-city-leaders-join-forces-citizen-launch-safepass-partnership>

NYC Open Restaurants v2. (n.d.-a). Retrieved May 26, 2023, from <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/ba953db7d541423a8e67ae1cf52bc698>

Open Restaurants. (n.d.). New York City DOT. Retrieved May 30, 2023, from <https://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/pedestrians/openrestaurants.shtml#map>

Opinion: How to Make “Open Streets” Permanent and Equitable. (n.d.). Retrieved May 30, 2023, from <https://citylimits.org/2020/09/30/opinion-how-to-make-open-streets-permanent-and-equitable/>

Parks, U. (2020). 2020 MENINO SURVEY OF MAYORS.

Paul Hess, Jason Brody, Anne James, & Kelly Gregg. (2022, May 17). Full article: North American street design for the coronavirus pandemic: A typology of emerging interventions. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17549175.2022.2071970>

Planning4LA (Director). (2023b, February 10). Al Fresco Public Hearing Recording Feb. 8, 2023. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BN4OIk_D6UE

Policy No. 812 Revised Policy on Sidewalk Dining. (2021, October 21). <https://cityclerk.lacity.org/CouncilAgenda/CoverSheet.aspx?ItemID=120480&MeetingID=5779>

Proposed Land Use Regulations | Los Angeles City Planning. (n.d.). Retrieved May 15, 2023, from <https://planning.lacity.org/plans-policies/proposed-land-use-regulations>

Protecting Workers: Guidance on Mitigating and Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 in the Workplace | Occupational Safety and Health Administration. (2021, January). <https://www.osha.gov/coronavirus/safework>

Raj, S. A., Angella, E. J., & Pooja, C. (2021). Impact of Covid-19 in shaping new resilient urban planning approach. IOP Conference Series: Materials Science

Restaurants can't find workers because they've found better jobs. (2023, February 3). Washington Post. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2023/02/03/worker-shortage-restaurants-hotels-economy/>

Reyes, E. (2020, May 20). L.A. moves to cap fees charged by Uber Eats, Postmates and other food delivery services. Los Angeles Times. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-05-20/los-angeles-fee-cap-ubereats-doordash-food-delivery>

Rhoads, D., Solé-Ribalta, A., González, M. C., & Borge-Holthoefer, J. (2021). A sustainable strategy for Open Streets in (post)pandemic cities. *Communications Physics*, 4(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s42005-021-00688-z>

Rodriguez, M., & Jr, E. G. B. (n.d.). CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY





- Rong-Gong Lin & Luke Money. (2022, March 4). L.A. County ends indoor mask rules: How will it affect you? Los Angeles Times.
<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-03-04/l-a-county-ends-indoor-mask-rules-how-will-it-affect-you>
- Rybak, G., Johnson, A. M., & Burton, S. (2023). How Restaurant Protective Ad Messaging Can Increase Patronage Intentions during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Conditional Serial Mediation and COVID-19 Consumer Concern. *Journal of Advertising*, 52(1), 145–156.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2021.1981502>
- SafePassLA - Putting the Pandemic Behind Us—Economic & Workforce Development Department, City of Los Angeles. (2022, April 1). <https://ewddlacity.com/index.php/recovery/safepassla>
- San Fernando Valley. (n.d.). Mapping L.A. Retrieved May 28, 2023, from <http://maps.latimes.com/neighborhoods/region/san-fernando-valley/>
- San Fernando Valley Guide. (n.d.). My Valley Pass. Retrieved May 18, 2023, from <https://www.myvalleypass.com>
- SBA debt relief | U.S. Small Business Administration. (n.d.). Retrieved May 29, 2023, from <https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs/loans/covid-19-relief-options/sba-debt-relief>
- Slow Streets*. (2020, August 12). National Association of City Transportation Officials.
<https://nacto.org/publication/streets-for-pandemic-response-recovery/emerging-street-strategies/slow-streets/>
- Small Business Rental Assistance Program—Economic & Workforce Development Department, City of Los Angeles. (n.d.). Retrieved May 28, 2023, from <https://ewddlacity.com/index.php/recovery/rentassist>
- South L.A. (n.d.). Mapping L.A. Retrieved May 28, 2023, from <http://maps.latimes.com/neighborhoods/region/south-la/>
- South Los Angeles Community Plan | Los Angeles City Planning. (n.d.). Retrieved May 15, 2023, from <https://planning.lacity.org/plans-policies/community-plan-area/south-los-angeles>
- Special Food Services—May 2022 OEWS Industry-Specific Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates. (n.d.). Retrieved May 19, 2023, from https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/naics4_722300.htm
- Streets for Recovery: The Economic Benefits of the NYC Open Streets Program. (n.d.).
- The Center by Lendistry | Services*. (n.d.). The Center by Lendistry. Retrieved June 8, 2023, from <https://thecenterbylendistry.org/services/>
- The Restaurant of the Future: Blending the Tech and Touch in a Post-Covid World? | Boston Hospitality Review. (n.d.). Retrieved May 23, 2023, from <https://www.bu.edu/bhr/2021/10/04/the-restaurant-of-the-future-blending-the-tech-and-touch-in-a-post-covid-world/>





Utama, I. G. B. R., Wiantara, I., & Sulastri, I. (2022). Survival Strategy Restaurant Business during the Covid-19 Pandemic. 5, 07–12.

Welcome to the Economic & Workforce Development Department, City of Los Angeles—Economic & Workforce Development Department, City of Los Angeles. (n.d.). Retrieved May 16, 2023, from <https://ewddlacity.com/>

Wells, P. (2020, August 23). Restaurant Dining Is Back, if You Can Find a Table—The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/23/dining/outdoor-restaurants-nyc-coronavirus.html>

What the Pandemic’s ‘Open Streets’ Really Revealed. (2022, January 3). Bloomberg.Com. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-03/the-unequal-geography-of-covid-s-open-streets>

Wilmington. (n.d.-a). Mapping L.A. Retrieved May 15, 2023, from <http://maps.latimes.com/neighborhoods/neighborhood/wilmington/>

Wimberley, L. (n.d.). LibGuides: Los Angeles & the San Fernando Valley: San Fernando Valley. Retrieved May 15, 2023, from <https://libguides.csun.edu/la-san-fernando-valley/sfv>

1—R-Permit Purpose & Definition | Los Angeles Bureau of Engineering Permit Manuals. (n.d.). Retrieved May 19, 2023, from <https://engpermitmanual.lacity.org/revocable-r-permits/permit-overview/1-r-permit-purpose-definition>

02—Sidewalk Dining | Los Angeles Bureau of Engineering Permit Manuals. (n.d.). Retrieved May 29, 2023, from <https://engpermitmanual.lacity.org/revocable-r-permits/technical-procedures/02-sidewalk-dining#>





Appendix A. COVID-19 Timeline

Date Ordered	Event	Issued By
03/15/20	Mayor Garcetti orders Los Angeles bars to close and forces restaurants to cease dine-in service, effective at midnight and (initially) through the end of the month. Restaurants are allowed to operate for pickup and delivery (Holmes, 2020).	City of Los Angeles
03/19/20	Governor Gavin Newsom orders all 40 million Californians to stay at home as much as possible, starting one of the largest-scale public health experiments in memory (Cowan, 2021).	State of California
03/19/20	Mayor Garcetti places the City of LA under a "Safer at Home" ordinance and extends the ban on indoor dining through April 19. California's Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control temporarily eases regulations, allowing restaurants, bars and wine and liquor stores to sell via carryout and delivery.(Holmes, 2020)	City of Los Angeles
04/15/20	Los Angeles County requires residents to wear face coverings outside their homes. The mandate is in step with city requirements and those of many Southern California counties	County of Los Angeles
05/20/20	The Los Angeles City Council moved to cap delivery fees at 15%, with a 5% maximum limit on additional fees charged by food delivery companies such as Uber Eats and Postmate.	City of Los Angeles
05/29/20	Mayor Garcetti launched the first phase of L.A. Al Fresco to support outdoor dining opportunities for restaurants hit hard by the COVID-19 crisis, in coordination with the L.A. County Department of Public Health allowing dine-in service at restaurants. Through L.A. Al Fresco Phase 1, the City started offering streamlined, immediate approval for eligible businesses to provide outdoor seating in the following areas: Sidewalks and Private Parking Lots (L.A. Al Fresco COVID-19: Keeping Los Angeles Safe, n.d.),	City of Los Angeles
06/18/20	Governor Newsom ordered face coverings mandatory due to local mandates facing pushback(California Reopens: A Coronavirus Timeline - The New York Times, 2021)	State of California
06/19/20	Bars, wineries, breweries and tasting rooms received the go-ahead to reopen	City of Los Angeles
06/26/20	Al Fresco Phase 2, was launched, the City began providing streamlined approval for outdoor dining in the following areas: Street Parking Spaces (Parklets), Lane Closures, and Street Closure (L.A. Al Fresco COVID-19: Keeping Los Angeles Safe, n.d.)	City of Los Angeles
07/01/20	Governor Newsom ordered seven counties, including Los Angeles, to close bars, breweries, and pubs that sell alcoholic drinks without also serving food. The state directs restaurants in 19 counties, including Los Angeles, to cease indoor dining. However, restaurants can still serve customers in outdoor spaces or in open-air patios.	State of California
07/13/20	Governor Newsom closed Indoor Dining and Bars Across the entire state	State of California
11/25/20	L.A. County Public Health officials suspend outdoor dining at restaurants. The halt on outdoor dining is initially set to be three to 11 weeks.	County of Los Angeles





01/29/21	L.A. County allows outdoor dining to resume for the first time since Thanksgiving. To discourage gatherings at establishments to watch the Super Bowl and other sports events, guidelines dictate that “televisions or other screens that broadcast programming must remain off until further notice” (Bill Addison, 2021).	County of Los Angeles
03/15/21	Los Angeles County officials give the go-ahead for indoor dining to resume with 25% capacity (with a maximum of 100 occupants)	County of Los Angeles
04/05/21	Eateries can increase indoor dining capacity to 50% or 200 people, whichever is less. Bars that do not provide meals: They will be allowed to open outdoors only, but with customers’ visits limited to 90 minutes and no counter seating allowed. The bars must also close for onsite consumption after 10 p.m. Masks are required except when people are eating or drinking, and people can only be doing that when they are seated. Tables have to be placed 8 feet apart, with a maximum of six people sitting together from up to three different households. The bars can have no live entertainment, and televisions are permitted outdoors only.	County of Los Angeles
05/12/21	Mayor Garcetti signed an emergency ordinance to extend several related COVID-19 measures, including L.A. Al Fresco (Holmes, 2021).	City of Los Angeles
06/15/21	Los Angeles County Department of Public Health issued an order rescinding most sector-specific COVID-19 protocols allowing 100% indoor capacity (California Reopens: A Coronavirus Timeline - The New York Times, 2021)	County of Los Angeles
10/07/21	Los Angeles County vaccine verification will be required for customers and employees at indoor portions of bars, wineries breweries, nightclubs, & lounges effective Oct 7th (at least one dose by the 7th & fully vaccinated by Nov 4th) (https://laist.com/people/elina-shatkin , 2021) .	County of Los Angeles, City of Los Angeles
11/08/21	SafePass LA requires patrons of businesses to show proof of vaccination. Employees are not included in the SafePass LA program and therefore employers are not required to verify proof of vaccination for their employees, although they are strongly encouraged to do so. SafePass LA became effective on November 8, 2021, and enforcement began November 29, 2021 ((https://covid19.lacounty.gov/author/rmuniz , 2020).	County of Los Angeles, City of Los Angeles
02/15/22	California ends a universal indoor mask mandate (CA to End Mask Requirement, Vaccine Mandate for Health Care Workers, 2023).	State of California
04/02/22	SafePassLA program is no longer a requirement for covered business locations. Individual businesses may choose to voluntarily require proof of COVID-19 vaccination or a negative COVID-19 test (SafePassLA - Putting the Pandemic Behind Us - Economic & Workforce Development Department, City of Los Angeles, 2022).	City of Los Angeles
04/04/22	Los Angeles County ends indoor mask requirements regardless of vaccination status. Indoor masking by County of Los Angeles and the City of Los Angeles is highly recommended (Rong-Gong Lin & Luke Money, 2022).	County of Los Angeles





Appendix B. Eligibility Survey (English) Form

As part of the [LADOT Al Fresco Program](#), eligible restaurants and bars can apply and receive a free permit to expand dining areas into the street, sidewalk, and private lots adjacent to the restaurant's establishment.

The Al Fresco Program is currently moving to make the program permanent. The program aims to help local restaurants, bars remain in business and in compliance with public health requirements by increasing the space restaurants, bars have for outdoor dining. The L.A. Al Fresco Program is currently moving forward to make the program permanent.

The study aims to address the barriers eligible restaurant and bar owners face to participate in the City of L.A. Al Fresco program and understand low participation in neighborhoods of Los Angeles. This study is a capstone research project conducted by a UCLA Urban and Regional Planning student in fulfillment of graduation.

You are being asked to participate in a research study based on your eligibility for the LADOT Al Fresco Program. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to partake in an interview that will be audio-recorded and conducted over Zoom unless requested to be in person. Please complete the following google form [as soon as possible](#).

If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Brittany Montano:
britmontanyo@g.ucla.edu

SCREENING QUESTIONS

- Name:
- Address of Restaurant:
- Phone Number to Contact:
- Email to Contact:
- Preferred Contact Method (Phone/Email)
- How many years has your restaurant operated at this location?
 - 0-3 years
 - 3-5 years
 - 5-8 years
 - 8+ years
- Are you the sole owner of the restaurant?
 - Yes
 - No





- How did COVID-19 and the stay-at-home orders impact your business? Check all that apply.
 - Laid off staff
 - Upgraded or added take-out order technology
 - Revaluated expenses and operations
 - Closed temporarily to update the restaurant to COVID-19 protocols or to save money
 - Shifted to selling wholesale foods (fruits, vegetables, etc.)
 - Applied for a PPP Loan
 - Applied for U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) Loan
 - Apply for the City of LA Small Business Rental Assistance Program
 - Other
- Have you heard of the L.A. Al Fresco program?
 - If no, end of the survey
- If yes: Has your business considered applying for L.A. Al Fresco?
- If not, what made you decide not to participate?
- We would like to know more about your concerns about or barriers that exist around outdoor dining at your business. Would you be interested in being interviewed about your experience considering the L.A. Fresco Program?
 - Yes
 - No

Thank you for your time, and for more information about the LA Al Fresco Program, please visit their website at [LADOT Al Fresco Program](#).





Appendix C. Eligibility Survey Form (Spanish)

El Programa LADOT Al Fresco es un programa desarrollado durante el COVID-19 para que los restaurantes y bares elegibles en la Ciudad de Los Ángeles puedan aplicar para expandir las áreas de comedor en la calle, la acera y los lotes privados adyacentes al establecimiento del restaurante. Los restaurantes y bares elegibles pueden solicitar y recibir un permiso gratuito para expandir las áreas de comedor en la calle, la acera y los lotes privados adyacentes al establecimiento del restaurante.

Este estudio tiene como objetivo comprender las barreras que enfrentan los propietarios de restaurantes y bares elegibles para postularse al programa Al Fresco. Este estudio es un proyecto de investigación final realizado por un estudiante de Planificación Urbana y Regional de UCLA en cumplimiento de su graduación. Se le pide que participe en esta investigación debido a su elegibilidad para participar en el Programa LADOT Al Fresco.

Si acepta participar, se le pedirá que participe en una entrevista que se grabará en audio y se realizará por zoom, por teléfono o en persona. Complete el siguiente formulario de Google lo antes posible

Si tiene alguna pregunta sobre el estudio de investigación, comuníquese con Brittany Montano: britmontanyo@g.ucla.edu

- Name//Nombre:
- Nombre del restaurante, panadería o bar:
- Número de teléfono:
- ¿Cuántos años ha operado su restaurante en este lugar?
 - 0-3 años
 - 3-5 años
 - 5-8 años
 - 8+ años
- ¿Es dueño de su propiedad?
 - Propiedad de arrendamiento
 - Alquilar Propiedad
 - Alquilar Propiedad
- How did COVID-19 and the stay-at-home orders impact your business? Check all that apply. // ¿Cómo afectaron el COVID-19 y las órdenes de quedarse en casa a su negocio? Marque todo lo que corresponda.
 - Personal despedido
 - Tecnología de pedidos para llevar mejorada o añadida
 - Gastos y operaciones reevaluados
 - Cerrado temporalmente para actualizar el restaurante a los protocolos COVID-19
 - Desplazado a la venta de alimentos al por mayor (frutas, verduras, etc.)
 - Solicitó Préstamo PPP
 - Solicitó un préstamo de la Administración de Pequeños Negocios de EE. UU. (SBA)





- Solicitó el Programa de Asistencia de Alquiler para Pequeñas Empresas de la Ciudad de Los Ángeles
- ¿Has oído hablar del Programa L.A. Al Fresco?
 - Si
 - No
- ¿Has oído hablar del Programa L.A. Al Fresco?
 - Si
 - No
- ¿Ha considerado su empresa postularse al Programa L.A. Al Fresco?
 - Si
 - No
- En caso afirmativo: ¿Cuáles han sido las razones por las que aún no ha solicitado?
- En caso no: ¿Qué te hizo decidir no participar?
- ¿Está interesado en ser entrevistado sobre las barreras que experimentó al considerar la solicitud para el Programa L.A. Fresco? (la entrevista es de aproximadamente 15-30 minutos)
 - Si
 - No
- La entrevista tomará aproximadamente 30 minutos y se realizará por zoom o por teléfono. Indique su disponibilidad para la entrevista:





Appendix D. Interview Questions (English)

Thank you for participating in this study. The purpose of the study is to address the barriers eligible restaurant and bar owners face to participate in the City of L.A. Al Fresco program and understand low participation in neighborhoods of Los Angeles. This study is a capstone research project conducted by a UCLA Urban and Regional Planning student in fulfillment of graduation.

The interview will take approximately 30 minutes. Your participation is voluntary. You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. You can stop the interview at any time. There are no costs to you for participating and no direct benefits.

The researchers will do their best to ensure that your private information is confidential. Information about you will be handled as confidentially as possible, but participating in research may involve a loss of privacy and the potential for a breach of confidentiality. As with any use of electronic means to store data, there is a risk of data security breaches. Study data will be physically and electronically secured, and no names or identities will be stored in the database or in any published reports from this interview. Your data, including de-identified data, may be kept for use in future research. The data will be viewed by UCLA researchers only. May I have your consent to record?

This section focuses on the perceptions of the neighborhood (crime, loitering)

- How long have you had your restaurant in this neighborhood, and how would you describe the neighborhood?
- Do you commonly see outdoor dining taking place in your neighborhood? If not, why do you think that exists?
- Are you concerned the safety of you, your staff, or your patrons in this neighborhood? Why or why not?
 - Have you dealt with crime, speeding, or loitering near your restaurant? How often?
 - How does this affect your daily operation and flow of customers?
 - Has this had an impact on your decision not to have outdoor dining?

This section focuses on unfamiliarity with the program

- Where did you obtain information about LA County and LA City protocols throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, especially as they relate to indoor and outdoor dining policies?
 - What were the recommendations for keeping your restaurant open?
- If the City were to create an economic program that would benefit your business, what is the best way the City could provide that information to you?
 - Would it be better through:
 - Phone?
 - Flyer?
 - Door-to-door?
 - Email?
 - News?





- Radio?
- Point of contact?
- Community partner organization?

This section focuses on the need of greater assistance (interpretation, application assistance)

- Conditional: Have you considered applying or heard for the AI Fresco Program?
 - If you heard and considered the program:
 - If no: move to the next section.
- What were your main concerns when looking over the application?
 - Did you have technological challenges with completing the application? (ex: lack of computer access, difficulty creating an account or using a website)
 - Did you need help reviewing the application?
 - Did you consider going to a council office, Business Improvement District, or a private contractor to help with the application process?
 - Did the application feel complicated or too wordy?
 - At any point, did you think your restaurant could not qualify? Why or why not?

This section focuses on the cost of furnishings.

- What were your priority expenses to maintain your business during the pandemic?
- Was there consideration for renovating your business or developing outdoor dining? Why or why not?
- Did the cost of additional furnishings discourage you from participating in the AI Fresco Program?

This section focuses on the perceived cost of participating

- Considering the AI Fresco Program, what did you assume the participation costs were?
 - Did you believe there to be participation costs?
 - Did the perceived cost discourage you? Please explain.
- What are other costs of permits your business has to consider?
 - How have these costs impacted your business?

This section focuses on the property owner.

- Was your property owner understanding or helpful during the beginning of COVID-19? Why or why not?
 - Do you believe your property owner would now be supportive if your businesses wanted to have outdoor dining?
- Did you bring your interest in expanding your restaurant outside to your property owner? What was their response?

This section focuses on insufficient staff.

- How did stay-at-home orders impact your business and staff?
 - Have staff numbers recovered back to pre-covid numbers? Why or why not?
- If you dealt with insufficient staffing, was that the reason you did not participate in the AI Fresco Program? Why or why not?
- How have low numbers of staff employment impacted your business development today?
 - What were the concerns of the staff?
 - What were the reasons staff quit from the pandemic till now?

Conclusion:

- What would you like the City's L.A. AI Fresco Program to consider to improve the program?





- Is there anything not covered in this interview that you would like to vocalize about the L.A. Al Fresco Program?

This concludes the end of the interview. Thank you for your participation. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the principal researcher: Brittany Montano, brimontanyo@g.ucla.edu





Appendix E. Interview Questions (Spanish)

Gracias por participar en este estudio. El propósito del estudio es abordar las barreras que enfrentan los propietarios de bares y restaurantes elegibles para participar en el programa Al Fresco de la ciudad de Los Ángeles y comprender la baja participación en los vecindarios de Los Ángeles. Este estudio es un proyecto de investigación final realizado por un estudiante de Planificación Urbana y Regional de UCLA en cumplimiento de su graduación.

La entrevista durará aproximadamente 10-30 minutos. Su participación es voluntaria. Puede negarse a responder cualquier pregunta que no quiera responder y aun así permanecer en el estudio. Puede detener la entrevista en cualquier momento. No hay costos para usted por participar ni beneficios directos.

Los investigadores harán todo lo posible para garantizar que su información privada sea confidencial. Los datos serán vistos únicamente por investigadores de UCLA. ¿Puedo tener su consentimiento para grabar?

.Esta sección se centra en las percepciones del vecindario (crimen, merodeo)

- ¿Cuánto tiempo hace que tiene su restaurante en este barrio y cómo describiría el barrio?
- ¿Ve comúnmente cenas al aire libre en su vecindario? Si no, ¿por qué crees que existe?
- ¿Le preocupa su seguridad, la de su personal o la de sus clientes en este vecindario? ¿Por qué o por qué no?
 - ¿Ha lidiado con delitos, exceso de velocidad o merodeo cerca de su restaurante? ¿Con qué frecuencia?
 - ¿Cómo afecta esto su operación diaria y el flujo de clientes?
 - ¿Ha tenido esto un impacto en su decisión de no tener cenas al aire libre?

Esta sección se centra en la falta de familiaridad con el programa.

- ¿Dónde obtuvo información sobre los protocolos del condado de Los Ángeles y de la ciudad de Los Ángeles durante la pandemia de COVID-19, especialmente con respecto a las políticas de comidas en interiores y exteriores?
- i. ¿Cuáles fueron las recomendaciones para mantener abierto su restaurante?
- Si la Ciudad creara un programa económico que beneficiaría a su negocio, ¿cuál es la mejor manera en que la Ciudad podría brindarle esa información?
- . Sería mejor a través de:
 - ¿Teléfono?
 - ¿Volantes?
 - ¿Puerta a puerta?
 - ¿Correo electrónico?
 - ¿Noticias?
 - ¿Radio?
 - ¿Punto de contacto?
 - ¿Organización social de la comunidad?

Esta sección se centra en la necesidad de una mayor asistencia (interpretación, asistencia en la aplicación)





- Condicional: ¿Ha considerado solicitar o escuchar para el Programa Al Fresco?
 - Si escucharon y consideraron el programa:
 - ¿Por qué eligió no postularse (aplicar a la programa)?
 - Si no: pase a la siguiente sección.
- ¿Cuáles fueron sus principales preocupaciones al revisar la aplicación?
 - ¿Tuviste desafíos tecnológicos para completar la solicitud? (por ejemplo: falta de acceso a la computadora, dificultad para crear una cuenta o usar el sitio web)
 - ¿Necesitas ayuda para revisar la solicitud?
 - ¿Consideró ir a una oficina del consejo, Distrito de Mejoramiento Comercial o un contratista privado para ayudar con el proceso de solicitud?
 - ¿La aplicación se sintió complicada o demasiado prolija (muchas palabras complicadas)?
 - ¿En algún momento pensó que su restaurante no podría calificar? ¿Por qué o por qué no?

Esta sección se centra en el costo de los muebles.

- ¿Cuáles fueron sus gastos prioritarios para mantener su negocio durante la pandemia?
- ¿Hubo consideración para renovar su negocio o desarrollar comidas al aire libre? ¿Por qué o por qué no?
- ¿El costo de los muebles adicionales lo desanimó de participar en el Programa Al Fresco?

Esta sección se enfoca en el costo percibido de participar

- Teniendo en cuenta el Programa Al Fresco, ¿cuáles asumió que serían los costos de participación?
 - ¿Creía que había costos de participación?
 - ¿El costo percibido lo desanimó? Por favor explique.
- ¿Qué otros costos de permisos debe considerar su empresa?
 - ¿Cómo han impactado estos costos en su negocio?

Esta sección se centra en el propietario.

- ¿Fue comprensivo o útil el propietario de su propiedad durante el comienzo de COVID-19? ¿Por qué o por qué no?
 - ¿Cree que el dueño de su propiedad ahora lo apoyaría si sus negocios quisieran tener cenas al aire libre?

Esta sección se centra en la insuficiencia de personal.

- ¿Cómo afectaron las órdenes de quedarse en casa a su negocio y personal.
 - i. ¿Se han recuperado los números de personal a los números anteriores al covid? ¿Por qué o por qué no?
- Si lidió con personal insuficiente, ¿fue esa la razón por la que no participó en el Programa Al Fresco? ¿Por qué o por qué no?

Conclusión:

- ¿Qué le gustaría que considerara el Programa L.A. Al Fresco de la Ciudad para mejorar el programa?
- Esto concluye el final de la entrevista. Gracias por su participación. Si tiene alguna pregunta, no dude en comunicarse con la investigadora principal: Brittany Montano, brimontanyo@g.ucla.edu

