



City of Rialto

Legislation Details (With Text)

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FOR: Economic Development Committee May 26, 2021
TO: Honorable Economic Development Committee Members
FROM: Alex Hamilton, Interim Community Development Director

Relief (Incentive) Program for Construction Work During COVID-19

BACKGROUND:

During the time of COVID-19 many businesses struggled to adapt their business model to stay economically viable given the restrictions on customer contact. In addition, some residential property owners, initiated improvements to their homes including but not limited to room additions, electrical, plumbing, mechanical work, installation of covered patios and fences, construction of accessory dwelling units and solar to name a few items.

Given the restrictions on access to City Hall, including the difficulty in applying for permits during this time, some property owners may have undertaken and completed such work without the required permits. Such work may have been performed either as an owner/builder or with a contractor.

In recognition of this and to incentivize compliance, the Mayor has suggested staff develop a program outline to encourage property owners to legalize their construction. Staff recommends the program would be based certain qualifying improvements done from March 12, 2020 (when the local emergency was declared for COVID-19) to the adoption of this program (at Council's discretion). The incentive program would create a mechanism to bring their improvements into full compliance with life/safety requirements. It would be a customer friendly approach that recognizes the hardships associated with COVID-19 and recognizes those that sought to improve their property's economic viability or habitability.

Below are suggested general parameters of the program:

- All qualifying improvements would be subject to the necessary plan check, permit issuance,

and inspection process (at no fee);

- The owner/contractor would be responsible for any necessary corrections to bring the improvements into compliance with codes/standards;
- Available for specific improvements done to any commercial, industrial, or residential properties/buildings without permits from March 12, 2020 to the program adoption date;
- Improvements must be **directly beneficial** to the business or residential properties wherein the work was done for adaptation to occupancy restrictions during COVID-19, to enhance safe social distancing or otherwise contribute to the overall safety or habitability of structures;
- For eligible improvements the city will waive any/all building, or trade permit and plan check, inspection fees;
- All work performed must be in full compliance with the City zoning code;
- Preparation of required plans and associated engineering calculations will be at the expense of the owner;
- The City will prepare a brochure outlining the types of eligible improvements however, the list will not be all inclusive and the approval of qualifying improvements will be at the discretion of the Community Development Director, Building Manager or his/her designee.

Eligible commercial/industrial projects items include but are not limited to:

- Tenant improvements or new construction to commercial/retail/industrial facilities to facilitate safe customer contact or safety of employees;
- Installation of drive thru or walk up windows;
- Mechanical, plumbing, or electrical systems;
- New counters or kitchen improvements;
- New or change out of signage;
- Outdoor seating/patio/break areas;
- Installation or change out of fixed/movable commercial windows or storefront systems; and
- Security/fire system upgrades or installations.

Eligible residential projects include but are not limited to:

- Room additions increasing the habitability of a residence to accommodate extended family or reduce overcrowding;
- Construction of Accessory Dwelling Units;
- Covered or enclosed patios;

- Fences, walls, gazebos;
- Garages;
- Solar systems; and
- Electrical, plumbing, or mechanical system upgrades or change-outs.

Staff recommends that the EDC review the above recommended program guidelines and provide direction to staff. The fiscal impact of this program would not be possible to quantify at this time, however if directed to proceed to Council, staff can analyze the code compliance cases during this time period and estimate the program cost. Conversely, if adopted by Council the legalization of construction and permit issuance will create positive benefits in the form of increased property taxes to the City.