



**For Immediate Release**

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## **L.A. City and County cut red tape to expedite opening of new restaurants**

***New “express” program enables businesses to open sooner, save money and create jobs***

***Streamlined permitting and inspection process cuts wait time by half***

**Los Angeles (June 3, 2010)** – Los Angeles First Deputy Mayor Austin Beutner and L.A. City Council President Pro Tempore Jan Perry today joined the Central City Association (CCA) of Los Angeles, L.A.’s premier business advocacy organization, to announce the launch of Restaurant & Hospitality (R&H) Express. Initiated by CCA, Restaurant & Hospitality Express is a new multi-government agency program that streamlines the entire permitting and inspection process for new restaurants, cafes, bars and other food establishments opening in the city of Los Angeles.

The goal of the R&H Express program is to make the permitting process more efficient, enabling new food venues to open on time and on budget, creating new jobs, boosting tax revenue and spurring economic growth. As a result, the average time to navigate through the process will be reduced by half, from 12 to 18 months to six to nine months.

“Restaurant and Hospitality Express is a perfect example of how public and private partnerships can work together to meet a common goal. We listened to our restaurateurs and heard their frustrations,” said Austin Beutner, First Deputy Mayor and Chief Executive for Economic & Business Policy, City of Los Angeles. “Most importantly, we took action and created a new way of thinking and working that provides measurable results for businesses and creates jobs in our city.”

“New restaurants and bars are significant job-creators. In Downtown alone, they have created 17,000 new jobs and millions of dollars in sales and tax revenues in the last decade,” said Carol E. Schatz, President and CEO, CCA. “That is why the status quo was not acceptable. In fact, it hampered economic growth and stymied job creation.”

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“Like many of our business advocacy efforts, CCA led the way. We jumpstarted and shepherded the entire process by making sure all the right players were at the table, facilitating numerous discussions and then translating those discussions into actual improvements at the city and county government levels,” Schatz added.

Upon request, the R&H program will assign each new establishment a dedicated case manager to provide one-on-one assistance throughout the design, permitting and construction stages of the development. This new approach allows increased communication between the government agencies, more efficient flow of documentation and faster resolutions to any anticipated problems. Much of the paperwork that used to take six to eight weeks to submit and review now can be completed “over-the-counter”, or in 24 hours or less, under the new program.

“In these tough economic times, we have to find creative solutions that meet the demands of more, for less,” said Los Angeles City Council President Pro Tempore Jan Perry. “Our government agencies met that demand in an unprecedented way, working side-by-side to develop a practical, solutions-oriented approach that accelerated the process while meeting important safety requirements and stringent inspections.”

The R&H Express network consists of the following government agencies working together in this new streamlined process: Los Angeles Department of Building & Safety, Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Los Angeles Bureau of Sanitation, Los Angeles Department of City Planning, Los Angeles Fire Department, and Los Angeles Bureau of Engineering.

In December 2009, local restaurateurs and food service industry representatives voiced their concerns and growing frustrations at a meeting organized by CCA regarding the complexity of the permitting process and difficulty in obtaining timely approvals from various agencies. Those difficulties resulted in significant losses in revenue and delays in openings.

In response to those concerns and at CCA’s request, the city and county government agencies began developing the new program. Fourteen new establishments participated in a pilot program for R&H Express. All reported positive experiences, and five are now open and operating. Currently, 25 restaurants and bars and 12 grocery stores are participating in the program.

“In terms of new businesses, permitting and inspecting restaurants and bars is by far the most complicated process. By demonstrating that we can successfully overhaul this approach, we believe it sets a new, more efficient standard for permitting and inspecting other kinds of establishments in the city,” said First Deputy Mayor Beutner.

“Over the last year, the owners and development team had been working hard to meet our opening plans,” said Steve Springer, General Manager, First & Hope Downtown Supper Club, one of the early participants who benefited from R&H Express. “This new program came along at the perfect time. Not only did it help us efficiently meet all the requirements, but it enabled us work on other important aspects of our opening.”

**About the Central City Association**

Central City Association of Los Angeles (CCA) is L.A.'s premier business advocacy organization, shaping public policy on a broad range of issues and leading the renaissance in Downtown Los Angeles. Established in 1924, CCA is a membership organization representing more than 450 businesses, trade associations, and non-profit organizations employing more than 300,000 people in Los Angeles County. Further information about the Central City Association can be found on their web site at <http://www.ccala.org/>.

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