



WHITTIER CITY COUNCIL APPROVES A LOCAL ECONOMIC STIMULUS AND BUSINESS ASSISTANCE PLAN

Permit Fee Reductions Effective July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2010

The Whittier City Council has approved a Local Economic Stimulus and Business Assistance Plan (Plan) which includes nine economic development activities. The Plan was designed to help stimulate the local economy and help businesses survive during the recession.

Some of the activities are temporary for the 2009-2010 fiscal year only—July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2010—to immediately assist businesses in saving money. Some programs in the Plan are new and will be on-going, such as the Storefront Glass Replacement Program within Uptown Whittier, which will help storefront retail businesses as well the overall improvement and elimination of blight in Uptown.

Most activities, including the fee reductions and subsidies, are effective beginning July 1, 2009. Two activities—display of temporary banners and the 18-month automatic extension of entitlements—will be effective beginning August 27th (date the Ordinance becomes effective) and the Glass Replacement Program will be available by September 1st, 2009.

Following are brief summaries of each activity:

1. **Zoning Entitlement Application & Building Permit Fees (temporary):** A 50% subsidy in permit fees for zoning entitlements and building permits are being offered for commercial projects within three Redevelopment Project Areas that have a minimum valuation of \$10,000.

The intent of the fee subsidies is to incentivize property owners to make improvements to their properties that may have been deferred because of limited funds. Developers considering new projects may also take advantage of the

temporarily subsidized fees and help stimulate more development in the Redevelopment Projects Areas.

2. **Banner Permit Processing & Review Fees Reduction (temporary):** Fee reductions will also apply to banner permit processing and review. The fees will be reduced from \$152 to \$25—a potential savings of up to \$300 per business—through the end of the fiscal year 2009-10.
3. **Revise Terms for Display of Temporary Banners (temporary):** The Whittier Zoning Code has been amended from allowing temporary signs such as “Sale” banners to be displayed for 30 days at a time, four times a year to allow banners to be displayed for up to 12 days per month through the end of the 2009-10 fiscal year. This would allow for more frequent banner use but for shorter periods of time and provide for an additional 24 days of banner display per year.

The new time limits are better suited to meet the needs of most businesses during this economic downturn. Most businesses do not have specials and sales that last for 30 days at a time and businesses can select the days and weekends to display the banner to coincide with their in-store specials and sales.

4. **Facilitate and Fund Business Assistance Seminars (on-going):** The City’s Economic Development staff will collaborate with various organizations to conduct workshops that are relevant and beneficial to local businesses. The City has designated \$5,000 to help pay for guest speakers such as retail consultants that will provide technical assistance to businesses.
5. **Partner with Local Universities and Colleges to Serve as a Resource to the Business Community (on-going)**
6. **Establish an Economic Development Team and Revise the Business Visitation Program (on-going)**
7. **Storefront Glass Replacement Program (on-going):** The Council directed staff to finalize a \$5,000 grant program for business and property owners to replace damaged storefront glass and install anti-graffiti film. It is expected this program will be available by September 1st, 2009 for Uptown businesses and property owners. The program may be expanded to other areas of the city next fiscal year (July 2010).

8. **Increase the Buy Whittier Policy Margin to 2% (on-going):** The City has increased the margin for preferential treatment for bids from Whittier businesses from 1% to 2%. If a Whittier business is placing a bid on a service for the City of Whittier and is within 2% of the lowest price (bid) then, under this Buy Whittier policy, the service or purchase shall be made from the Whittier business.
9. **Extension of Development Entitlements (temporary):** The Whittier Zoning Code has been amended to allow an automatic 18-month time extension beyond the initial two-year approval period for zoning entitlements, in lieu of the one-year extension, for a maximum entitlement of three and a half (3½) years.

The City wants to assist businesses in good standing, therefore, businesses or property owners with Code Enforcement or “Stop Work” citations will not be eligible for any of the activities under the Plan until violations have been corrected.

For complete details on the Local Economic Stimulus and Business Assistance Plan call the City of Whittier Community Development Department at (562) 464-3380.