



HAWTHORNE PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

DATE: April 16, 2025
FROM: Gregg McClain, Director of Planning
SUBJECT: Alcohol Regulations Ordinance

PROJECT AND APPLICANT

Summary: ZA-2025-0001 amends portions of Title 17 of the Hawthorne Municipal Code that address regulations for the sale of alcohol in the City.
Applicant: City of Hawthorne

OVERVIEW

The State of California's Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) issues various types of alcoholic beverage licenses, but defers to the local jurisdictions for land use approvals. In Hawthorne, this historically meant that all businesses intending to sell alcohol were required to obtain a conditional use permit (CUP) from the City prior to being issued the alcohol license by ABC. The City's intention when creating a CUP requirement was to minimize potentially harmful impacts to the community that the sale of alcohol may have in certain locations and circumstances. However, over the years, alcohol sales in conjunction with restaurants have uniformly been approved by the Planning Commission without any modification to the conditions of approval, and none have been denied.

In situations where all of a particular type of application are routinely approved with essentially identical conditions, it is legitimate to ask if the applications can be managed in a less time consuming and expensive way. In the case of alcohol sales, Staff believes the appropriate response is to codify the standard conditions of approval as operational standards in the chapter on alcohol sales, and make certain types of alcohol licenses administrative approvals.

One of the City's economic development goals is to encourage restaurants to open in the City, and this amendment will lower the cost of establishing a restaurant here. Certain other types of alcohol permits are also proposed to be exempt from the CUP requirement. These include wholesale alcohol sales, industrial alcohol, California winegrowers' agents, out-of-state shippers, temporary daily permits, at theaters, controlled access cabinets (such as in a hotel), and wine sales to the public through mail, telephone, or online. These types share the characteristic of either not providing sales to the general public, or under such conditions that are very unlikely to create negative impacts to the community.

One important addition to the chapter is a statement that indicates an exemption from the CUP requirement does not diminish the City's ability to address nuisances that may be related to the sale of alcohol.

The CUP requirement remains unchanged for bars, taverns, liquor stores, convenience stores, grocery stores, and all other businesses selling alcohol at retail or for on-site consumption.

GENERAL PLAN COMPLIANCE

The adoption of this ordinance does not alter the Zoning Code's compliance with the General Plan.

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

The Planning Commission public hearing for this ordinance was published in the March 20, 2025, edition of the South Bay Cities (Hawthorne Press Tribune). Additionally, notices were posted in accordance with HMC 17.06.050. See Exhibit 2.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

Staff's determination is that the adoption of this ordinance is a type of organizational activity involving the administration of the City that does not have the possibility to have a direct or indirect effect on the environment and is therefore exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), pursuant to Title 14, California Code of Regulations, Section 15379(b)(5). In addition, the actions taken by this ordinance are not a "project" under CEQA because the ordinance does not involve any commitment to a specific project which may result in a potentially significant physical impact on the environment to a specific project, which may result in a potentially significant physical impact on the environment and is also exempt from CEQA pursuant to the "common sense" exemption because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment. (Title 14, California Code of Regulations, Section 15061(b)(3)).

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt PC Resolution 2025-04 recommending the City Council adopt an ordinance to address alcohol regulations.

ATTACHMENTS

1. PC Resolution 2025-04 with attached draft Ordinance
2. Notice of Public Hearing Proof of Publication