



City of Seattle
Edward B. Murray, Mayor

Office of Economic Development
Stephen H. Johnson, Director

Memorandum

Date: April 17, 2014

To: Councilmember Sally Clark, Chair
Councilmember Tom Rasmussen
Councilmember Kshama Sawant
Councilmember Mike O'Brien

CC: Jesse Gilliam, Legislative Aide to Councilmember Clark

From: Steve Johnson, Office of Economic Development
Karl Stickel, Office of Economic Development

Subject: Seattle Restaurant Reform Update

The goal of the restaurant reform effort is to provide cross-agency assistance and informational resources to help restaurateurs successfully navigate through state and local regulatory requirements and processes as they plan and open restaurants within the city of Seattle. This is being accomplished through an ongoing, multi-year partnership of the State of Washington, King County, City of Seattle, and the restaurant industry.

BACKGROUND

An early survey of restaurants that opened in Seattle in 2012 highlighted prospective restaurateurs concerns that the current 'process' of opening a restaurant lacks transparency. We learned that applicants are not clear on where to begin or end the permitting process and are unsure about the requirements throughout. In June 2013, a meeting was convened with the cross-agency Executive leadership to discuss the development of this project, to agree to a joint work plan, and sign an inter-jurisdictional MOU between the agencies to move the project forward.

WORK PLAN UPDATE

Restaurant reform work continues to progress and is expected to continue throughout 2014. At this time, stakeholders from the jurisdictions and private sector are working together to produce a web portal to centralize information and provide a roadmap for restaurants regarding permitting and licensing. Additionally, multiple process improvement efforts outlined in the MOU have begun and will continue into 2015.

Specifically, progress highlights include:

- Development of a web portal to assist people through the regulatory process
The inter-jurisdictional partnership's initial product is *Restaurant Success, Your Guide to Opening a Seattle Restaurant*. The online guide provides a roadmap for navigating the multiple processes involved and integrates city, county, and state regulatory information for meeting the requirements in opening a restaurant in Seattle. The website includes checklists, links, tips and tools for understanding how to work through the requirements. The online guide is in final development and will be tested with users in April; a soft launch of the website will follow in May 2014.

- Development of a communications strategy to include marketing and outreach focused on this website/online guide and the process improvement efforts for this to be a success
As part of the communications and outreach planning, we are working with the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs to reach diverse communities with this information, using the Inclusive Outreach and Public Engagement best practices. Overall, this effort should provide better accessibility and more transparency to the permitting process, thereby helping all communities better understand the regulations and steps involved in restaurant permitting.
- Identified and began addressing process improvement efforts to help resolve conflicting, confusing and inefficient regulatory requirements for restaurants in Seattle as part of a formal implementation plan, including:
 - Confirming the synchronization of railing height requirements between Seattle building code and Liquor Control Board specifications, and working with Seattle Department of Transportation to pursue changes to outdoor café railing height requirements in the right-of-way.
 - Addressing City and County compliance requirements for fats, oils, and grease (FOG) management, and pursuing changes to the plumbing code.
 - Working with Seattle Department of Planning and Development on providing opportunities for building code flexibility.
 - Identification and communication about specific circumstances that trigger significant requirements or costs, such as zoning, occupancy, and menu choices.
- Agreement on the roles and responsibilities of a proposed business assistance service
The inter-jurisdictional partnership has reviewed and agreed to the duties of a restaurant liaison who would serve as the primary point of contact for Seattle restaurateurs navigating city, county, and state permitting processes. The duties include navigation support through the permitting and regulatory processes, proactive outreach to the restaurant community, and serving as a key advisory to senior management on restaurant policy issues. An agreement between the stakeholders which will satisfy lifting of a City Council budget proviso (105-1-A-1) is forthcoming and should be finalized in April 2014.

NEXT STEPS

OED facilitates the Restaurant Core Team partnership for implementing the action plan for the restaurant reform effort. The Core Team will continue to focus its efforts on completing the online guide and communication strategy, then will look to hire the restaurant liaison position and continue to address identified process improvement recommendations. Our 2014 timeline is envisioned as follows:

<u>May 2014:</u>	Soft launch of Restaurant Success website Advertise and hire Restaurant Liaison position
<u>June 2014:</u>	Launch outreach/communications strategy in conjunction with website
<u>Summer 2014:</u>	Begin implementing targeted process improvement efforts
<u>Fall 2014:</u>	Develop 2015 inter-jurisdictional work plan