



City of Arts & Innovation

Safety, Wellness, and Youth Committee Memorandum

TO: THE SAFETY, WELLNESS, AND YOUTH COMMITTEE DATE: July 16, 2025

FROM: COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT; FIRE WARDS: ALL

SUBJECT: PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO CHAPTER 9.60 OF THE RIVERSIDE MUNICIPAL CODE ESTABLISHING LIABILITY FOR FIRE AND COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EXTRAORDINARY CITY SERVICES OR RESPONSES

ISSUE:

Approve the proposed amendments to Chapter 9.60 of the Riverside Municipal Code ("RMC") to establish liability for Fire and Community and Economic Development Department services or responses to a business or property including the payment of the City's actual public safety response costs and recommend that the City Council adopt the proposed amended amendments.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Safety, Wellness, and Youth Committee:

1. Receive this report summarizing proposed amendments to Chapter 9.60 of the RMC.
2. Review and discuss the proposed amendments.
3. Recommend that City Council adopt the proposed amendments.

BACKGROUND:

City departments are frequently called upon to provide extraordinary services and respond to emergency incidents that exceed what they normally provide or that are otherwise covered by user fees. Departments responding to the same or similar incidents on multiple occasions or responding to certain emergency incidents, or dangerous properties are more than what Riverside taxpayers expect and are prepared to pay for. In addition, these incidents unreasonably divert vital and limited public safety resources including police, ambulance, code enforcement, building department, and fire safety services. Owners and/or occupants of certain businesses and properties who utilize a disproportionate amount of public safety resources thereby unreasonably diverting these vital resources from other parts of the City.

DISCUSSION:

The purpose of the proposed amended ordinance is to hold owners and occupants of certain businesses and properties responsible for the extraordinary city services or responses caused by criminal and/or nuisance activities associated with these properties and to deter or prevent future extraordinary city responses to these businesses or properties. The purpose of the proposed ordinance is to also recover all the costs expended in responding to and investigating false reports of an emergency or other criminal offense.

Under the proposed amended ordinance:

- Community and Economic Development Departments: Included in this chapter entail Code Enforcement and Building and Safety Divisions.
- Dangerous properties. If a building or property is determined by the Building Official or Fire Marshall to be uninhabitable or unoccupiable due to a dangerous condition existing on the property, and the building and/or property is posted by the City as “Do Not Occupy,” “Do Not Enter,” or equivalent, the property owner is liable for costs of emergency fire, medical, police, and public utility responses to the property, including without limitation the expenses of fighting a fire, which are determined by the Fire Chief, Police Chief, or Building Official to have been caused by or attributed to, in whole or part, the dangerous condition. This section shall only apply if the City notified the property owner of the dangerous condition prior to the response per the applicable code.
- Emergency incident includes responding to: a hazardous material incident or emergency; an illegal fire; a threat of harm to oneself or others; any person obstructing, removing, tampering with or otherwise damaging any fire hydrant or city fire appliance; a structure demolition or utility line failure; water rescue attempts; a bomb threat; or any other incident where emergency medical, public safety, police, or community and economic development services are necessary.
- Extraordinary fire service or response is defined as the response of fire/EMS crews to an Emergency Incident or Dangerous Properties; the response of fire/EMS crews to five or more false medical alarms within a one-year period; and the response of fire/EMS crews to the same property or business four or more times within a 30-day period.
- Extraordinary code service or response occurs after the issuance of the second or more administrative citations, for an identical violation(s) at the same business or property

Over the past year, the City has seen a significant increase in the number of extraordinary responses because of criminal and/or negligent and/or nuisance activity occurring at certain businesses or properties in the City of Riverside. The nuisance activities occurring on the premises create a very significant public health and safety threat and the Fire Chief and the Community and Economic Development Director believe that the adoption of the proposed ordinance would effectively deter or prevent future extraordinary responses to these businesses or properties and the diversion of critically important public safety resources.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This item aligns with each of the five Cross-Cutting Threads as follows:

1. **Community Trust** – Community trust may be enhanced by holding parties responsible for extraordinary responses, currently paid tax dollars, accountable.
2. **Equity** – Proposed amendments will benefit the entire community by recovering tax dollars expended because of extraordinary use of city resources.
3. **Fiscal Responsibility** – Amendments can provide a budget savings by recovering extraordinary response costs of city staff.
4. **Innovation** – Amendments will allow city staff to recover their cost through technology.
5. **Sustainability & Resiliency** – Amendments may enhance City's preparedness for the future by recovering city staff costs for extraordinary city responses.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no direct fiscal impact to the City as a result of referring to this proposed ordinance to the Public Safety Committee for review and consideration of a recommendation to the City Council. Should the ordinance be adopted as presented, the City may realize some cost savings with a reduction in false response alarms, or cost reimbursement through the billing of assessable costs as described in the proposed ordinance.

Prepared by:	Rahman Gerren, Senior Deputy City Attorney
Approved by:	Mike Futrell, City Manager
Approved as to form:	Rebecca McKee, Interim City Attorney

Attachments:

1. Ordinance in Redline
2. Presentation