

WORKSHOP – SMOKE SHOPS AND TOBACCO RETAIL

Community & Economic Development Department

Land Use Committee

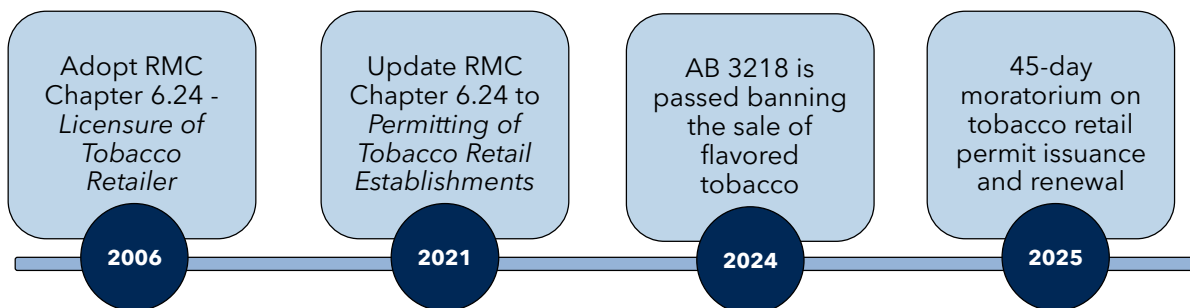
November 10, 2025

1



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BACKGROUND



2



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BACKGROUND

226

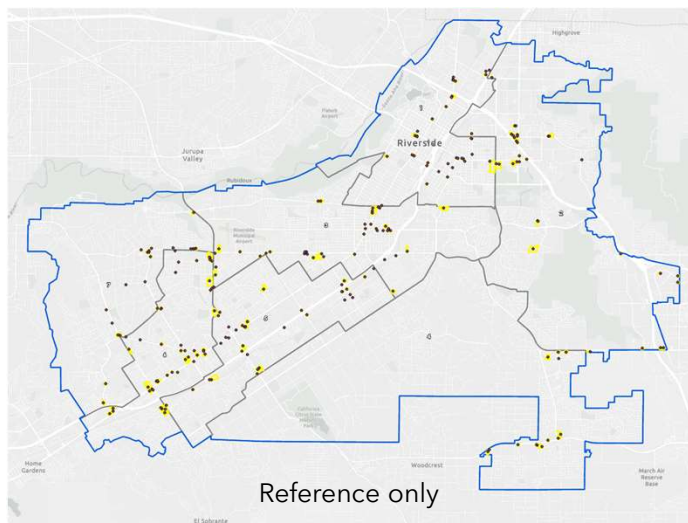
Known locations with active tobacco retail use

20

Locations operating without a valid Tobacco Retail Establishment Permit

13

Of the 20 businesses are smoke shops



3



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RMC CHAPTER 6.24

Tobacco Retail Establishment Permit

- Required for all tobacco retailers
- Nontransferable
- Renewed every 2 years
- Must obey all applicable local, state, and federal laws
- No sales between the hours of 2:00am and 6:00am
- Permits may be revoked if violation is determined
- Operators without necessary permits are subject to closure of the facility



Image source: pa-tobaccomerchantid.org

4



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RMC TITLE 19 – ZONING CODE

Tobacco retail considered “retail sales”

- Retail sales permitted all commercial and mixed-use zones
- No operating standards, site standards, or land use permits specific to tobacco retail



Image source: koronapos.com

RMC Smoke Shop Definition:

A business with sales of tobacco, either loose or prepared as cigarettes and products for the smoking of tobacco constituting more than 30 percent of gross sales and/or 30 percent of net lease area

RMC Retail Sales Definition:

A commercial enterprise that provides goods and/or services directly to the consumer. Where such goods are normally available for immediate purchase and removal from the premises by the purchaser

5



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PEER CITY COMPARISON

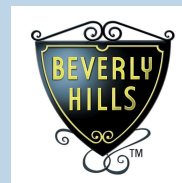
Approach 1:
Tobacco Sales
= Retail Sales



Approach 2:
Distance
requirements
and/or
discretionary
review



Approach 3:
Prohibited,
phases out
tobacco licenses
citywide



6



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[illegible]

Image source: New York Times.

7

An illustration of a street scene. On the left is a building with a large clock face. In the center, an American flag flies on a pole. Two orange silhouettes of a man and a child are walking across a crosswalk. On the right is a building with a sign that says "TOBACCO SOLD HERE" and another sign above the entrance that says "OPEN 24hrs". The image is credited to "Image source: Countertools.org".

Image source: Countertools.org

Cons: Must establish procedures for existing compliant smoke shops that may not meet distance requirement

8

APPROACH 2B – DISCRETIONARY REVIEW

- Pasadena: CUP is required in addition to distance requirements
- Moreno Valley: In addition to distance requirements, CUP is required when:
 - Within 600 feet of a school, daycare, park, nonprofit youth facility; or
 - Within 300 feet of residential



Pros

- Allows for more regulatory oversight on a case-by-case basis
- Is an inherent time/cost investment for applicants

Cons

- Entitlements mean a vested development right
- Difficult to revoke
- May not limit smoke shops, and instead allow the use under any operator on a given property

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APPROACH 3 - PROHIBIT

Prohibit Tobacco Sales Citywide

- Phase out tobacco retail permits completely over the course of 1.5 years
- Considerations for impacts to stakeholders
- Would require outreach and engagement with business/property owners.
- Would need to establish legal amortization/termination procedures



Image source: City of Beverly Hills



Image source: PNGkey.com



10

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RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Land Use, Sustainability, and Resilience Committee:

- 1. Receive and file** Workshop on the existing Tobacco Retail regulations within Chapter 6.24 and Title 19 of the Riverside Municipal Code (RMC); and
- 2. Provide staff direction** to maintain current code or explore any potential changes to policies or regulations.



11

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