



Community & Economic Development
Department

City of Arts & Innovation

June 4, 2026

Subject: Proposed Riverside Municipal Code amendments regarding standalone tobacco retail establishments (smoke shops)

To whom it may concern:

This letter is to inform you that the Riverside City Council will consider an ordinance amending the Riverside Municipal Code to establish new regulations for businesses that sell tobacco products and related items as their primary business (smoke shops). You are receiving this letter because you have been identified as either 1) an owner of a smoke shop business; 2) a holder of a Tobacco Retail Permit issued by the Riverside Police Department; or 3) an owner of property on which a smoke shop business is located. The City Council will hold a public hearing on this matter on **Tuesday, July 14, 2026**. More information on the hearing and how to participate are provided below.

On September 16, 2025, the City Council adopted an urgency ordinance imposing a 45-day moratorium (temporary pause) on the issuance of any licenses, permits, or other approvals for the establishment or expansion of smoke shops. Existing smoke shops with permits in good standing were permitted to continue operating and to renew their Tobacco Retail Licenses with the Riverside Police Department. On October 20, 2025, the City Council extended the moratorium for up to a full year (through September 16, 2026).

The purpose of this moratorium was to study updated regulations for where and how smoke shops should be permitted to operate. Since then, City Staff have worked with the Council to develop proposed new regulations for smoke shops to protect the public health, safety and welfare and to reduce exposure of minors to harmful tobacco products and advertising. A copy of the proposed regulations is attached. In sum, the proposed regulations will require:

- **New smoke shops** to be located at least:
 - 1,000 feet away from a school, childcare facility, public park, or place of worship;
 - 100 feet from a residence; and
 - 1,000 feet from another smoke shop.
- **Existing smoke shops** that do not comply with these location requirements will be required to relocate or cease operations within two years from the date the ordinance becomes effective (known as *amortization*).

A copy of the proposed Zoning Regulations is attached.

Frequently asked questions:

- **How is “smoke shop” defined?**

The City's Zoning Code defines a smoke shop as 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. This includes tobacco-derived nicotine products including vapes and e-cigarettes.

- **In which locations will smoke shops be permitted if these changes are approved?**

Under the proposed regulations, smoke shops would be permitted in any zone that permits retail businesses, including the Commercial Retail (CR), Commercial General (CG), Commercial Regional Center (CRC), and all Mixed Use (MU) zones (Mixed-Use Neighborhood, Mixed-Use Village, and Mixed-Use Urban), plus any Specific Plan district that permits retail businesses, provided that the location complies with the minimum distance requirements from sensitive uses and other smoke shops.

- **How can I find out if my business is subject to amortization?**

Planning Division Staff can assist with review of your business location to determine whether it would be subject to amortization (closure or relocation) under the proposed regulations. Contact the Planning Division as shown below for more information.

- **What happens if two existing smoke shops are located within 1,000 feet of one another?**

If two existing smoke shops are located within 1,000 feet of one another, Planning Division Staff will consult available records to determine when the smoke shop business was established, including business tax certificate and building permit records, where available. The business that is determined to have been established later will be subject to amortization.

- **What if I need more time to comply?**

The proposed regulations include a process for granting of a hardship exemption for businesses subject to amortization that cannot comply within the proposed amortization period, which is proposed to be within two years of the effective date of the new regulations. Hardship extensions will be granted at the discretion of the City Manager and may be appealed to the City Council. Decisions of the City Council will be final. Hardship extensions will be limited to a maximum of one year.

- **When will a decision on the new regulations be made?**

The City Council is tentatively scheduled to consider the proposed new regulations at a public hearing scheduled for the afternoon of Tuesday, July 14, 2026. A formal Notice of Public Hearing will be sent to you at least twelve days prior to the hearing. If approved, the changes will not take effect until approximately 45 days later.

- **How can I give feedback or make a public comment?**

Staff will accept comments in writing up to the day before the City Council hearing. Comments can also be made in writing to the City Clerk, or in person or by video call during the hearing, by following the instructions provided by the City Clerk in the Notice of Hearing. Written comments may also be submitted electronically directly on the City Council Agenda website once the agenda is published by clicking the eComment link.

- **How can I be notified of future public meetings or opportunities to get involved?**

For questions regarding the proposed moratorium or to request to be notified of future updates and actions related to smoke shops, please contact:

City of Riverside Community & Economic Development Department
Planning Division
951-826-5800
cddinfo@riversideca.gov

Sincerely,



Laurel Reimer
City Planner

Cc: City Manager
City Attorney
Mayor and Council
Chief of Police
Community & Economic Development Director
Code Enforcement Manager

VERSIÓN ESPAÑOL**Asunto: Propuestas de enmiendas al Código Municipal de Riverside relativas a establecimientos minoristas independientes de tabaco (tiendas de tabaco)**

A quien pueda corresponder:

Esta carta es para informarle de que el Consejo Municipal de Riverside considerará una ordenanza que enmiende el Código Municipal de Riverside para establecer nuevos reglamentos para las empresas que vendan productos de tabaco y productos relacionados como su actividad principal (tiendas de tabaco). Ud. está recibiendo esta carta porque ha sido identificado como 1) propietario de un negocio de tienda de tabaco; 2) titular de un Permiso de Venta de Tabaco emitido por el Departamento de Policía de Riverside; o 3) propietario de una propiedad en la que se encuentre un negocio de tabaco. El Consejo celebrará una audiencia pública sobre este asunto el **martes 14 de julio de 2026**. A continuación se proporciona más información sobre la audiencia y cómo participar.

El 16 de septiembre de 2025, el Consejo adoptó una ordenanza de urgencia que impone una moratoria de 45 días (pausa temporal) para la concesión de licencias, permisos u otras autorizaciones para el establecimiento o expansión de tiendas de tabaco. Las tiendas de tabaco existentes con permisos en buen estado fueron permitidas seguir operando y renovar sus Licencias de Venta de Tabaco con el Departamento de Policía de Riverside. El 20 de octubre de 2025, el Consejo extendió la moratoria hasta un año completo (hasta el 16 de septiembre de 2026).

El propósito de esta moratoria era estudiar los reglamentos actualizados sobre dónde y cómo debían permitirse operar las tiendas de tabaco. Desde entonces, el Personal Municipal ha trabajado con el Consejo para desarrollar nuevos reglamentos propuestos para las tiendas de tabaco, con el fin de proteger la salud, seguridad y bienestar públicos, y para reducir la exposición de menores a productos de tabaco dañinos y a la publicidad. Se adjunta una copia de los reglamentos propuestos. En resumen, los reglamentos propuestos requerirán:

- Nuevas tiendas de tabaco se ubicarán al menos:
 - A 1,000 pies de una escuela, guardería, parque público o lugar de culto;
 - A 100 pies de una residencia; y
 - A 1,000 pies de otra tienda de tabaco.
- Las tiendas de tabaco existentes que no cumplan con estos requisitos de ubicación estarán obligadas a reubicarse o cesar sus operaciones en un plazo de dos años desde la fecha en que la ordenanza entre en vigor (lo que se conoce como amortización).

Se adjunta una copia de la propuesta de Reglamentos de Zonificación.

Preguntas frecuentes:

- **¿Cómo se define "tienda de tabaco"?**

El Código de Zonificación de la Ciudad define una tienda de tabaco como un negocio con ventas de tabaco, ya sean sueltos o preparados como cigarrillos y productos para el consumo de tabaco, que constituyen más del 30 por ciento de las ventas brutas y/o el 30 por ciento de la superficie neta del arrendamiento. Esto incluye productos de nicotina derivados del tabaco, como vapeadores y cigarrillos electrónicos.

- **¿En qué lugares se permitirán las tiendas de tabaco si se aprueban estos cambios?**

Según los reglamentos propuestos, se permitirán tiendas de tabaco en cualquier zona que permita negocios minoristas, incluyendo las zonas de "Commercial Retail" (CR), "Commercial-General" (CG), "Commercial-Regional Center" (CRC) y todas las zonas de Uso Mixto (MU) ("Mixed Use Neighborhood," "Mixed Use Village" y "Mixed Use Urban"), además de cualquier distrito del Plan Específico que permita negocios minoristas, siempre que la ubicación cumpla con los requisitos de distancia mínima de usos sensibles y otras tiendas de tabaco.

- **¿Cómo puedo saber si mi negocio está sujeto a amortización?**

El Personal de la División de Planificación puede ayudar en la revisión de la ubicación de su negocio para determinar si estaría sujeta a amortización (cierres o reubicación) según los reglamentos propuestos. Contacte la División de Planificación que se muestra a continuación para más información.

- **¿Qué ocurre si dos tiendas de tabaco existentes están situadas a menos de 1,000 pies una de la otra?**

Si dos tiendas de tabaco existentes se encuentran a menos de 1,000 pies de distancia, el Personal de la División de Planificación consultará los registros disponibles para determinar cuándo se estableció el negocio de la tienda de tabaco, incluyendo certificados de impuestos comerciales y registros de permisos de construcción, cuando estén disponibles. El negocio que se determine que se ha establecido posteriormente estará sujeto a amortización.

- **¿Y si necesito más tiempo para cumplir?**

Los reglamentos propuestos incluyen un proceso para conceder una exención por dificultades a empresas sujetas a amortización que no puedan cumplir dentro del periodo propuesto, que se propone que sea dentro de los dos años posteriores a la fecha de entrada en vigor de los nuevos reglamentos. Las extensiones por dificultades se concederán a discreción del Gerente de la Ciudad y podrán ser apeladas ante el Consejo. Las decisiones del Consejo serán definitivas. Las extensiones por dificultades estarán limitadas a un máximo de un año.

- **¿Cuándo se tomará una decisión sobre los nuevos reglamentos?**

El Consejo tiene previsto provisionalmente considerar los nuevos reglamentos propuestos en una audiencia pública prevista para la tarde del martes 14 de julio de 2026. Se le enviará un Aviso formal de Audiencia Pública al menos doce días antes de la audiencia. Si se aprueban, los cambios no entrarán en vigor hasta aproximadamente 45 días después.

- **¿Cómo puedo dar mi opinión hacer un comentario público?**

El personal aceptará comentarios por escrito hasta el día anterior a la audiencia del Consejo. Los comentarios también pueden hacerse por escrito al Secretario Municipal, en persona o por videollamada durante la audiencia, siguiendo las instrucciones

proporcionadas por el Secretario Municipal en el Aviso de Audiencia. Los comentarios escritos también pueden enviarse electrónicamente directamente en la página web de la Agenda del Consejo una vez publicada la agenda, haciendo clic en el enlace de eComment.

- **¿Cómo puedo ser notificado de futuras reuniones públicas u oportunidades para participar?**

Para preguntas sobre la moratoria propuesta o para solicitar ser notificado de futuras actualizaciones y acciones relacionadas con las tiendas de tabaco, por favor contáctese con:

Departamento de Desarrollo Comunitario y Económico de la Ciudad de Riverside
División de Planificación
951-826-5800
cddinfo@riversideca.gov

Chapter 19.405 TOBACCO RETAIL (SMOKE SHOP)

19.405.010 Purpose.

The purpose of regulating standalone tobacco retail establishments (smoke shops) is to promote public health, to ensure security and compatibility with surrounding uses and properties, and to avoid any impacts associated with such uses.

19.405.020 Applicability and permit requirements.

- A. Standalone tobacco retail establishments (smoke shops), as defined in Article X (Definitions), are permitted as set forth in Article V, Base Zones and Related Use and Development Provisions subject to the requirements contained in this chapter.
- B. Tobacco retail establishments shall be subject to the provisions of Chapter 6.24 (Permitting of Tobacco Retail Establishments) including but not limited to any permit, renewal, location, operation or other procedures, limitations or requirements established by the Riverside Police Department as may be amended from time to time.
- C. The provisions of this chapter shall not apply to incidental retail sale of tobacco products associated with another primary permitted use.

19.405.030 Site location, operation and development standards.

The standards set forth in Article V, Base Zones and Related Use and Development Provisions, shall apply to standalone tobacco retail establishments unless otherwise specified here.

A. Site location standards.

1. The business shall not be located within 1,000 feet of a public or private school (kindergarten through twelfth grade), licensed childcare facility, assemblies of people—non-entertainment use, public park, or another standalone tobacco retail establishment.
2. The business shall not be located within 100 feet of any existing residential dwelling or property zoned for residential uses, excluding Mixed Use Zones.
3. The business shall be in a location that is fully visible from a public street with an unobstructed view from the public street for public safety.
4. All measurements made for the purpose of determining compliance with the provisions of this section shall be taken from any point upon the outside walls of the building or building lease space containing the business to the nearest property line of the use from which separation is required.

B. Operation and development standards.

1. The business shall have lighting to provide illumination for security and safety of parking and access areas in accordance with Chapter 19.556 of the Zoning Code.

-
2. A security plan shall be provided to the Riverside Police Department and Planning Division for review and approval.
 3. The business window shall not be tinted or obscured in any way, including by temporary or painted window signs, and the interior lighting of the business shall remain at adequate levels to clearly see into the business from the exterior of the business.
 4. A sign shall be posted in the front of the business indicating that no loitering is permitted per the Riverside Municipal Code.
 5. Prior to occupancy of the business, the business owner shall sign a trespass authority letter authorizing the Riverside Police Department to enforce trespass law. A copy of this letter shall be provided to the Planning Division.

19.405.040 Amortization.

- A. As of the effective date of this chapter, standalone tobacco retail establishments that do not comply with the site location standards set forth in 19.405.030(A) are prohibited and subject to amortization.
- B. Existing, legally established smoke shops that do not comply with the standards in 19.405.030(A) may continue to operate for a period of no longer than two (2) years from the effective date of this ordinance or December 31, 2028, whichever is later.
 1. During this amortization period, Tobacco Retail Establishment Permits granted pursuant to Chapter 6.24 of the Riverside Municipal Code may be renewed pursuant to the normal renewal procedures established for such permits established by the Riverside Police Department.
 2. Any tobacco retail permit renewed for a noncompliant location during the amortization period shall become void upon the end of the amortization period.

19.405.050 Hardship extension.

- A. The owner or operator of a smoke shop subject to the amortization provisions of this chapter may petition for a hardship exemption not to exceed 12 months from the end of the amortization period.
- B. The City Manager or his/her designee shall have the authority to grant hardship extensions to the amortization period.
- C. The hardship extension petition shall be submitted in writing no later than 120 days prior to the end of the amortization period along with necessary documentation and evidence to support the claim of hardship as may be deemed necessary by the City Manager or his/her designee.
- D. The decision of the City Manager or designee shall be appealable to the City Council.
- E. In no case shall a hardship extension be granted that exceeds the duration of the amortization period plus 12 months.

19.405.060 Modifications.

Modifications to the above site location, operation and development standards may be considered through application for a Minor Conditional Use Permit.