

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR KATHRYN BARGER
AND SUPERVISOR HILDA L. SOLIS

JULY 7, 2020

SUPPORT FOR THE CONSTRUCTION AND HOME BUILDING INDUSTRIES

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused untold amounts of disruption to the lives of the residents of Los Angeles County. Hundreds of thousands of people across the County have experienced serious disruptions to their jobs and workplaces due to the impacts of this pandemic, including the public health orders instituted to slow the spread of the virus. While necessary to prevent our health care system from being overwhelmed, the business reductions and closures forced by these orders have had a severe economic impact on the County's economy.

The economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to be felt as we move through the County's Roadmap to Recovery and reopening of our businesses. Real estate construction and finance jobs have been reduced by almost 11% in the County over the last two months, and nearly 50,000 workers from the construction industry alone have filed for unemployment since the start of the pandemic.

Ensuring that the construction industry can continue operating seamlessly will benefit the countless additional industries that support it, including labor, suppliers, manufacturers, etc. While safety will be prioritized, the County must find solutions to not only allow these industries to continue working but must find ways to provide relief from the temporary disruptions caused by the pandemic.

Over the past few years, the County has been investing heavily into platforms such as EPIC-LA, the County's online permitting system. This has provided a much-needed stopgap while County buildings remain closed in accordance with public health orders. In addition, the quick and seamless transition by County Departments, including Regional Planning and Public Works, to teleworking has ensured that services to our communities and private industry partners have continued mostly uninterrupted.

- MORE -

MOTION

SOLIS _____

RIDLEY-THOMAS _____

KUEHL _____

HAHN _____

BARGER _____

However, the closure of County buildings has had an impact on how contractors, home builders, and homeowners interact with the County Departments. Collaboration between the County and our constituents and their projects is also done in-person. While the County has been able to pivot from normal operations to remote interactions, this may not be a completely sufficient replacement for the effectiveness of in-person meetings. Extending the life of building, highway, and other plans and permits will provide constituents with future opportunities to meet with County staff in-person, once offices are safely reopened, and more effectively move their projects forward.

Before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the County was facing another emergency, in the form of an increasing population of persons experiencing homelessness and decreasing housing affordability throughout the region. The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated this issue. Statewide, over 1.3 million additional housing units are needed and approximately 100,000 units are needed in the County. Expiring permit applications for building permits and plans are another threat to the County's ability to build vitally needed new housing. Extending these permits will remove an unnecessary barrier caused by the pandemic.

County Departments are reporting that applications for planning entitlements have stabilized and we are now at pre-pandemic levels. These entitlements lead to building permit activity, so there are positive signs of recovery for the industry. However, despite these encouraging signs, we believe it is prudent to provide limited relief on timelines for our constituents and industry partners.

WE, THEREFORE MOVE, that the Board of Supervisors, direct the Departments of Regional Planning and Public Works to:

1. Automatically extend the expiration date of building permits and plan check applications, pending as of March 1, 2020, or filed between March 1, 2020, and January 1, 2021, for a period of 12 months.
2. Automatically extend the expiration date for approved plans by Fire, Public Health, and for storm drain, grading, landscape, street, and sewer, expiring between March 1, 2020 and January 1, 2021, for a period of 12 months.
3. For highway permits issued as of January 1, 2020, authorize the Road Commissioner to provide additional extensions of up to 12 months from the initial expiration date.
4. Automatically extend the time limit to effectuate and utilize planning entitlements approved and still valid as of March 1, 2020, or approved between March 1, 2020, through January 1, 2021, for a period of 12 months except the time limits to record final tract maps because those time limits are set by the Subdivision Map Act.

###