
Legislative Review: BOS File #240474 Existing Awning Amnesty Program
Sponsor: Mayor
Date Introduced: 5/7/24
Scheduled for BOS Committee: Land Use and Transportation Committee

Legislative Overview: This legislation makes the Awning Amnesty Program and simplified permit application permanent. It also extends the fee waivers associated with the Awning Amnesty program through July 1, 2025.

Amendments to Current Law

The Awning Amnesty Program expired on June 1, 2024. This legislation makes the Awning Amnesty Program permanent, and extends applicable fee waivers through July 1, 2025.

Under this legislation, any awning that existed prior to August 20, 2023 will be eligible for the Awning Amnesty Program. Applicants will go through a simplified application process to bring their awning into compliance without requiring professional drawings.

Background, Issues, and Considerations

In 2023, the City received several hundred complaints regarding commercial awnings and signs installed without permits from the City. The Awning Amnesty Program offered a pathway for business and property owners to legalize existing awnings and signs without requiring professional, costly drawings of their existing awnings.

The Awning Amnesty Program serves as an example of how simplification of City permit processes can benefit small business owners, who would otherwise spend additional time, money and resources to respond to complaints and City regulations. A continuation of the Awning Amnesty Program will help small business owners resolve future complaints quickly and efficiently.

Who benefits from or will be burdened by your proposal (geographically, ethnically, linguistically)?
What are your strategies for advancing racial equity or mitigating unintended consequences?

- The Awning Amnesty Program offers all small business owners with existing awnings a path to get proper permits efficiently, with little cost. Many of the original awning complaints were focused on small businesses in certain neighborhoods of the City, including Chinatown, the Richmond District, and along Haight Street.

What was the development process of this proposal? Whose input have you sought out? What feedback did you hear and did you incorporate it into this proposal? If not, why not?

- This legislation makes permanent a program that was developed by the Department of Building Inspection, the Planning Department, San Francisco Fire Department, and the Office of Small Business after input from business owners that the current permitting process is onerous and costly.

Is this proposal punitive or enforcement based? What are the other alternatives for proactive compliance?

- The Awning Amnesty Program was created to alleviate punitive enforcement on small businesses with existing, unpermitted awnings.

Given the diversity of San Francisco, how would this policy play out in different cultural settings? How does it accommodate cultural norms?

- The City's permitting processes can be challenging for anyone, but can be especially daunting for those whose native language is not English. Simplifying the process for anyone seeking regulatory approvals from the City is imperative to serving the diversity of individuals who live, work and do business in San Francisco.