



## RETAIL & HOSPITALITY

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# Light Firm Sees Bonanza in Pandemic

Nightclubs and concert halls rush to remodel their fixtures.

By **ANDREW FOERCH** Staff Reporter

As live events around the country remain on pause due to the coronavirus pandemic, venues are finding an opportunity to remodel or refurbish old fixtures.

That's good news for Valley architectural and industrial designer **Gerald Olesker**, who told the Business Journal he's doing more projects for nightclubs and concert venues than ever.

Olesker is founder and chief executive of **ADG Lighting**, a boutique manufacturer of lighting fixtures and other home furnishings with a factory in Chatsworth and office headquarters in Agoura Hills. It employs 18 people.

Much of ADG's club work comes through a relationship with one of the country's premier venue operators: **Live Nation** in Beverly Hills.



North Hollywood: Diners and drivers enjoy evening on Magnolia Boulevard.

# No Money for In-Street Dining Permit Program

But city initiative for sidewalks, parking lots on track.

By **ANDREW FOERCH** Staff Reporter

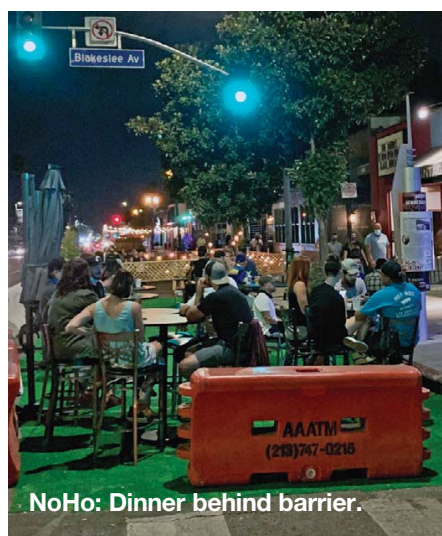
Funding for Phase 2 of Los Angeles' Al Fresco program has run out, resulting in a temporary pause on the issuance of in-street dining permits for restaurants, Deputy Press Secretary for the Mayor's Office **Harri-son Wollman** confirmed to the Business Journal.

That doesn't mean Al Fresco dining in the city is done – far from it.

Wollman said Phase 1, which expedites the permit process for restaurants to set up tables and serve diners on sidewalks and in private parking lots, has no external cost to the city and won't stop anytime soon.

"We have continued to offer permits," he said. "That has not stopped."

Mayor **Eric Garcetti** activated Phase 1 in May in an effort to help local restaurants survive the coronavirus pandemic



NoHo: Dinner behind barrier.

by creating new outdoor dining options as indoor dining rooms remained closed. He expanded the program in late June to allow for the creation of in-street Al Fresco zones in Phase 2.

According to Wollman, the city had repurposed \$750,000 from the Department of Transportation's budget to pay for Phase 2 expenses, including closing street lanes

and installing concrete barricades to protect diners and tables from vehicle traffic. That funding has run out, resulting in a freeze on new permits for in-street dining.

Wollman said the "vast majority" of Al Fresco applications are for parking lot and sidewalk dining permits.

So far, he said, the city has issued 1,859 permits for Al Fresco dining, more than 1,000 of which are for sidewalk dining and a few hundred of which are for parking lots.

He said the city has received 286 applications for "curbside" dining – or the in-street dining categorized as Phase 2. Of them, 144 were not eligible for in-street dining for reasons such as high speed limits, proximity to fire hydrants or infringement on private property.

He said just 50 in-street applications have been approved, and that installing the necessary infrastructure for those 50 restaurants to serve patrons in the street exhausted the initial \$750,000 allotment.

"We're looking for new funding opportunities. I don't have additional info where that's happening, but we're looking at a few potential sources," Wollman said.

The only Valley neighborhood to establish an in-street Al Fresco zone is North Hollywood, which did so last month along a densely populated stretch of Magnolia Boulevard. The Department of Transportation removed the center turn lane and blocked off a parking lane and an eastbound travel lane on Magnolia Boulevard between Lankershim Boulevard and Vineland Avenue to make way for about a dozen restaurants to expand into the roadway. The street retains two eastbound lanes and a westbound lane for through traffic.

Other in-street Al Fresco zones in Los Angeles include 1st Street in Little Tokyo, Sunset Boulevard in Silver Lake, Degnan Boulevard in Leimert Park and Windward Avenue in Venice.

Wollman confirmed restaurants that have already been approved for in-street dining can continue to serve customers while the city looks for more funding.

Existing Al Fresco permits for both Phase 1 and Phase 2 are set to expire Dec. 31.

# 'Mandalorian' Toys Coming On Mondays

'Star Wars' product releases to last through December.

By **ANDREW FOERCH** Staff Reporter

**Walt Disney Co.** is capitalizing on the popularity of its Star Wars spinoff series "The Mandalorian" with "Mando Mondays," an upcoming retail campaign in which the company will release a toy, book, comic or other collectible item inspired by the show every Monday.

The first product will drop Oct. 26, just four days before the Burbank entertainment and media giant releases season two of the hit series – which took home seven Emmy awards earlier this month – on its streaming platform Disney+. The campaign will run for nine weeks, ending Dec. 21.

"The Mandalorian," which debuted last November, tells the story of an armored bounty hunter protecting precious cargo from myriad threats as he travels the outer reaches of the galaxy following the collapse of the autocratic Galactic Empire.

Several Mando Monday products are already available for pre-order, including three pop vinyl bobblehead figurines made by **Funko Inc.**, in Everett, Wash.; action figures from **Hasbro Inc.**'s Black Series Credit Collection; and a **LEGO** Star Wars construction kit.

According to a statement from Disney's President of Consumer Products, Games and Publishing **Kareem Daniel**, the success of Mandalorian toy products last fall inspired the forthcoming campaign.



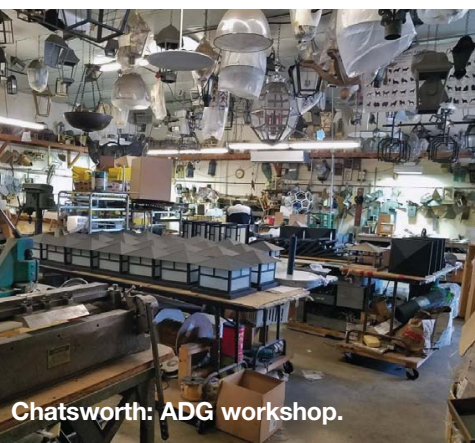
Best Seller: Disney's Baby Yoda in crib.

"When 'The Mandalorian' debuted last year on Disney+, the show became an instant phenomenon, with fans of all ages expressing excitement for products related to its iconic characters – particularly the Child," he said.

The "Child" character is colloquially known as "Baby Yoda."

A Funko Pop bobblehead of Baby Yoda became one of the most in-demand toy products released last year, and was the highest pre-selling toy in Funko's history. The figurine, which cost \$8.78, temporarily became the No. 1 toy sold on Amazon.com in December – and it wasn't even out yet. A plush Baby Yoda toy made by **Mattel Inc.** in El Segundo also cracked Amazon's list of top 100 toys.

"This fall, as the world continues to watch the narrative unfold, we will further bring this unique Star Wars story to life through a must-have selection of toys, books, comics, digital content and more," Daniel added.



Chatsworth: ADG workshop.

"Some nightclubs are taking advantage of being able to come in, do reconfigurations or reboots. We are super busy," Olesker said.

ADG's roster of pandemic-time club projects includes the **Hollywood Palladium**, a historical 1940s Gordon Kaufman building on Sunset Boulevard for which ADG is engineering chandeliers with what Olesker described as "reflective glazed cylinders and a nod to the Hollywood noir aesthetic"; the **Belasco Theater** downtown, for which ADG is making "cloudlike" light shades inspired by Spanish designer Mariano Fortuny for the venue's dancefloor; and **HiFi**, a newly built club co-owned by billionaire entrepreneur **Mark Cuban** in Dallas' Design District.

"We did the private club room with 8-plus-foot-diameter stacked golden rings, kind of reminiscent of a record stack but getting smaller and smaller, like a speaker cone," Olesker said. "It looks like a million bucks."

Olesker explained these projects are done in partnership with **Bandit Lites**, which provides the electrical work and effects programming that result in the "thumping lights" necessary for a club environment.

"We incorporate their technology into our fixtures," he added.

An uptick in club and concert hall work isn't the only way ADG has seen business grow during the pandemic.

"On the residential side, it's gangbusters," Olesker said. "We've gotten 65 projects this quarter and growing."

He said being a small manufacturer with expertise in architectural design gives ADG the ability to thrive when others have struggled.

"We can pivot very easily," he said. "We can have an uptick when there's a downturn."