



Sidewalk Café Guidelines

Sidewalk cafes add vibrancy to our community and provide a welcoming place for people to meet, relax and dine. They can transform our streets by creating energy and drawing people into the area.

In the City of Victoria, sidewalk café licenses allow businesses to expand their restaurant or café to provide outdoor seating in some public spaces including sidewalks. The sidewalk café guidelines are intended to clarify and provide standards for sidewalk cafes in order to enhance the quality and safety of the pedestrian experience and to encourage economic vitality and street activity.

General

The main function of sidewalks is to support the movement of people throughout the city.

- Locations and design of sidewalk cafés should enhance the pedestrian experience along sidewalks and not negatively impact the movement of people or vehicles in the area.
- A sidewalk café can be allowed only if its location and construction will maintain a safe, secure and comfortable environment for pedestrians using the public right-of-way.
- A sidewalk café should reinforce the character of the area. The design and materials should respect the setting of the surrounding streetscape, buildings and neighbourhood.
- Sidewalk cafes should not negatively impact key public view corridors noted in other City policies.

Open Appearance

Sidewalk cafes should have an open appearance and contribute to a feeling of vibrancy and activity on the street. Sidewalk cafes cannot be fully enclosed. While it is important that Sidewalk Cafes contribute to street vitality, it is equally important that they do not cause noise issues, particularly at

night. To ensure that Sidewalk Cafes comply with the Noise Bylaw, applicants may be required to provide more information, such as a noise assessment report, and/or make design changes to mitigate potential noise issues.

Maintain Accessibility

Sidewalk cafes should be designed to be accessible both inside the café and in the surrounding areas.

- A minimum horizontal clearance of 1.5 m from the sidewalk café to the nearest sidewalk obstruction, such as a tree, bike rack, sign post, utility pole, bench, portable sign or bus shelter, is required to allow pedestrian passageway. A clearance greater than 1.5 m may be required in high pedestrian flow areas. The clearances for pedestrian passageway should remain as straight and clear as possible.
- Access and passageway for pedestrians must only be on sidewalks or hardscaped surfaces for pedestrian safety and to avoid damage to grass, trees, and other vegetation. Access and passageway must not include tree grate surfaces or other tree well areas covered by pavers or other material.
- Unless the sidewalk café has permission

to occupy the adjacent parking stall, a minimum clearance of 1.0 m from the nearest curb is required to separate the sidewalk café from traffic and parked cars. A distance greater than 1.0 m may be required in high traffic areas to ensure public safety.

Maintenance and Operations

The business with the sidewalk café licence is responsible for its maintenance.

- The business holding the license is responsible for the proper maintenance of the sidewalk café at all times, including repairs, painting, cleaning, and hazards.
- No cooking is allowed in the sidewalk café area.
- Trash receptacles are not permitted within the sidewalk café area.
- All objects associated with a sidewalk café such as furnishings, awnings, umbrellas, signage, lighting, and planters should be located within the sidewalk café area at all times with no parts overhanging outside of the area.
- Sidewalk cafés may be built only in locations where they do not obstruct access to public utilities, service connections, access for emergency vehicles and exits from buildings.

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Maintenance and Operations, continued

- A sidewalk café must not obstruct delivery access to buildings.
- Sidewalk cafes must not obstruct access to hanging basket lamp poles.
- The design must promote visibility to passing traffic and maintain clear sightlines at intersections and crossings.
- The design, location, and area of the sidewalk café must not adversely affect boulevard vegetation such as grass and trees or prevent City access and maintenance.
- Trees which have tree grates or other tree well areas covered by pavers and other materials should not be included in a sidewalk café area without additional fencing to keep patrons and site furniture away from these areas.
- Roadway and curb drainage must be maintained.
- All objects fixed in place, such as fences and railings, must be of significant strength yet allow easy removal within two working days.
- A removable deck may be approved if there is a need to level a steep incline (more than 5%) or to harmonize indoor and outdoor seating levels.

Impacts to Neighbouring Trees and Boulevards

Consideration for neighbouring trees and boulevards should be taken into account with the design of sidewalk cafes.

- A sidewalk café must not cause damage to a street tree.
- No items including, but not limited to, signage, banners and lighting may be hung, attached, draped or affixed to a street tree.
- No liquids or cleaning products shall be dumped, allowed to flow or to drain in to a tree well or City drains.

- No pesticide or fertilizer applications shall be applied to street trees.

Furnishings

- Furnishings such as tables, chairs, and accessories should be moveable and of a solid weight for stability.
- Furnishings should be commercial grade, safe, sturdy, durable material and manufactured for outdoor use.
- All furnishings and accessories must be contained within the perimeter of the sidewalk café area.
- Furnishings must be limited to dining purposes only (e.g. tables, chairs, and accessories) and not obstruct the entrance to the café.

Weather Protection

- Awnings should be mounted on a removable wall bracket and be retractable.
- Weather protection, such as awnings, umbrellas or other similar solutions should be constructed of flame-resistant and fade-resistant canvas.

Heating

- Heaters must not be placed within the dripline and/or closer than 2 metres from any part of adjacent street trees.
- The visual impact of heating devices/ systems should be considered and arranged to be as unobtrusive as possible.
- All outdoor heating devices should be appropriate for use in a sidewalk café and complement the character of the business to which it is associated.
- All outdoor heating devices must conform to safety standards established by the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) and certified by Underwriters' Laboratories of Canada (ULC), where necessary.

Lighting and Signage

Lighting fixtures should complement the character of the business.

- Lighting levels should be low and directed into the café rather than out towards the street.
- Light fixtures should complement the character of the business to which it is associated.
- No signage or third party advertising, other than for the business operating the café, is permitted.

Use of Adjacent Parking Stall

Cafés or restaurants may apply to the City to use an adjacent parking stall for a sidewalk café. In these cases, the following guidelines apply in addition to the guidelines above.

A sidewalk café must:

- Provide a one metre buffer between the outer edge of the sidewalk café and adjacent travel lane and should not extend more than 2.5 m from the curb into the street.
- Have railings that are a minimum of 1.07 m in height from curb elevation on all sides that are exposed to the street with reflectors for visibility to traffic.
- Only be located where permanent parking or loading is permitted. It must not occupy a lane used by moving traffic at any time.
- Provide adequate space to allow vehicle access to adjacent parking stalls.
- Not be located on a street exceeding a running slope of 5%.

These guidelines provide guidance to applicants and City staff when reviewing applications.

For further detail, please refer to the Sidewalk Café Bylaw (No. 16-038). Additional City Permits may be required.