



SIDEWALK DINING & OUTDOOR MERCHANDISING

Sidewalks and adjacent areas are important spaces within the street environment for commercial activity.

Sidewalks outside of many storefronts are vital to the success of many types of businesses. Where sidewalks are sufficiently wide, businesses may request to use sidewalk space in front of their establishments for café dining and outdoor retail.

Sidewalk dining, also called café dining, enables restaurants, coffee shops, bars, and other establishments to provide outdoor seating space for patrons. Café dining is distinct from a parklet. Café dining is reserved for the exclusive use of particular dining patrons, whereas parklets are available to the general public. Outdoor merchandising enables the display and sale of retail goods within the public right-of-way. Both have demonstrated positive effects on patronage, commercial sales, and productivity.

Sidewalk dining and outdoor merchandising help to animate a street, adding life, vitality, and safety to the public environment.

USE

- Space for café dining and outdoor merchandising is encouraged in commercial areas. Businesses must request and receive permission in the form of an encroachment permit before utilizing the sidewalk space for private activity.
- Café dining and outdoor merchandising is most common in the Urban Center and Neighborhood Business streets but may also be considered for Maker/Industrial Streets, Crosstown Connector streets, and mixed use areas along Network Residential streets. In residential areas, however, loud activities and hours of permitted use should be limited.

DESIGN

- Sidewalk cafes and outdoor merchandising may be located in either the amenity zone or frontage zone of the street. The location for sidewalk dining or retailing should be consistent for all properties along that block face to ensure a straight path of travel for the pedestrian clear zone.
- A consistent pedestrian clear zone width must be maintained that does not intrude in the through space. Sidewalk dining or merchandising must maintain at least the minimum six feet of effective sidewalk width for pedestrian traffic.
- Café seating in the parkway zone must extend at least two feet from the edge of

curb to permit use of curbside parking spaces or other uses.

- Sidewalk cafes and outdoor merchandise displays may only occupy space directly in front of the storefront with which they are associated and may not encroach on other frontages.
- A-frame or sandwich board signs should be placed to avoid obstructing the pedestrian through zone to allow pedestrians to pass.
- Sidewalk café furniture may vary and is subject to approval. Furniture must be durable and appropriate for outdoor use. Café tables may be no larger than three feet wide (or in diameter).
- Outside merchandise may be displayed only while the associated storefront is open and must be removed daily.
- By City Ordinance, outdoor merchandise is limited to fresh flowers, food, original artwork, or temporary displays by local businesses.

OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE

- Most sidewalk occupancy uses are not well-suited for the winter, unless heaters are provided. All furnishings and fixtures of sidewalk cafes should be removed from the sidewalk zone and stored when not in use.

- Occupied areas must make note of where utility access panels, vault covers, and other utility connection points are located and provide ready access to utilities if needed for maintenance or other utility operations.
- Sidewalk occupants are required to ensure that their occupancy conforms to the layout stipulated in their permit at all times. Sidewalk occupants should ensure that a clear path of travel is maintained and sandwich boards do not impede pedestrian travel.
- Sidewalk occupants are required to keep areas free from trash, debris, food scraps, or other refuse on a daily basis.
- Street trees shall not be trimmed by the business owner or adversely affected in any way.

REFERENCES

- Downtown Alliance – Downtown Streetscape Design Guidelines
 - Section 5. Streetscape Design Guidelines: Private Effort; Sidewalk Cafes
- Downtown Grand Rapids Inc. Parklet Manual
 - http://s3.amazonaws.com/downtowngr.org/general/DGRI_Parklet_Manual_April_2014.pdf?mtime=20150407190535

