



**DOWNTOWN
LONG BEACH
ALLIANCE**

June 7, 2017

Ms. Amy Bodek
Director of Development Services
City of Long Beach
333 West Ocean Boulevard, 3rd Floor
Long Beach, CA 90802

RE: Sidewalk Dining and Streetdecks

Dear Ms. Bodek,

On behalf of the Downtown Long Beach Alliance (DLBA) and its Public Realm and Economic Development Committees, I would like to thank you and your staff for providing us an overview of the City's efforts to update and streamline the permitting process and standards for the development of sidewalk dining and streetdecks. The DLBA Public Realm and Economic Development Committees serves in an advisory capacity to the Board of Directors providing guidance on issues pertaining to public spaces, urban design, and economic development.

Areas designated for sidewalk dining in Downtown Long Beach provide many benefits to both the public at-large and individual businesses. These areas are typically within the public right-of-way and can help to enliven the street while offering restaurants an opportunity for additional seating. As a representative for over 1,500 businesses and an advocate for vibrant pedestrian friendly public spaces, the DLBA understands the importance of having standards and guidelines in place that ensure sidewalk dining areas are of high quality design and contribute to the creation of a functional and aesthetically pleasing streetscape. Equally important is providing business owners with a clear, consistent, and responsive permitting process. Over the past year the DLBA has researched best practices related to sidewalk dining, met one-on-one with business owners, consulted with City Staff, conducted an on-line survey of businesses, and hosted a meeting attended by City Staff and restaurant owners. Based on the research we conducted, feedback we received and comments made at our April 20 Public Realm Committee meeting, DLBA identified the following recommendations for the City's consideration:

1. Eliminate the requirement that all sidewalk dining permits must be approved by City Council

Currently all Public Walkway Occupancy Permits (PWOP) must be presented to City Council for approval, which adds time to the permitting process. It is recommended that the Director of Development Services or City Manager be granted the authority to approve PWOP when they meet the requirements of the City's zoning ordinance.

2. Extend the length of sidewalk dining permits

Currently a PWOP must be renewed on a yearly basis. We recommend this renewal period be extended beyond one year if no changes to the sidewalk dining area are proposed and the permit holder is in compliance with the terms

of their existing permit. This change will free up City Staff time that would be spent processing renewal permits and be less of a burden on business owners.

3. Provide business owners with clear and concise instructions for implementing sidewalk dining and streetdecks

An often heard critique from businesses that have gone through the PWOP process is that information pertaining to sidewalk dining standards is not easily accessible on the City's website and the information once obtained is not very clear. Along with an update to the regulating ordinance it is recommended that the new standards, guidelines and permit application forms be readily available online, such as on the City's business portal BizPort, in a clear and concise format.

4. New sidewalk dining standards and guidelines should foster a safe and pleasant pedestrian experience

The current sidewalk dining standards often result in an unfriendly and inconvenient pedestrian experience due to awkwardly and inconveniently located sidewalk dining areas. New sidewalk dining standards should consider the natural flow of pedestrian travel along the entire block. Often pedestrians must zig zag along the sidewalk due to placement of sidewalk dining barriers and other obstructions such as utilities, street furniture, and landscaping.

Where sidewalk widths permit and along designated streets, restaurants should be allowed to use the area between the curb and the pedestrian path of travel for sidewalk dining purposes. Minimum width standards and maintaining a consistent pedestrian path of travel would apply. The goal should be to ensure a consistent sidewalk layout among adjacent restaurants within a single block face.

5. The use of removable umbrellas in sidewalk dining areas should be encouraged

Ground supported awnings and canopies often detract from the pedestrian experience and add to the visual clutter of the streetscape. Ground supported canopies should be prohibited except along designated streets (e.g., The Promenade). The use of removable umbrellas in sidewalk dining areas should be encouraged. If the depth of the outdoor dining area is seven (7) feet or less from the building, an awning attached to the building should be allowed to extend over the dining area.

6. New sidewalk dining standards should allow for the use of portable barriers

Requirements for fixed barriers for all outdoor dining does not consider the variation in sidewalk types and often contributes to a poor pedestrian environment when the sidewalk dining area is not in use. The use of portable barriers will allow for expanded sidewalk space during non-business hours. Limit clues, such as corner posts or planters or surface markings could be used to ensure dining areas remain within the permitted area. These portable barriers should be of high quality that positively contribute to the character of the street. Several cities including San Diego, Santa Clarita, Pasadena, Santa Monica, and Murrieta allow for moveable barriers that consist of railing, fencing, or planter boxes.

A barrier should not be required if the food provider limits outdoor tables and chairs to one row abutting the wall of the establishment and no alcohol is served or consumed. Comparable cities within the Southern California region, such as Santa Barbara, Pasadena, San Diego, and Newport Beach do not require usage of barriers if a restaurant is only serving food and is not providing alcohol.

7. Sidewalk dining barriers should be of high quality

Sidewalk dining barrier are sometimes of poor quality and diminish the character of the streetscape. Barriers should complement the building facade as well as any street furniture and be somewhat

transparent. Cheap plastic furnishings should be prohibited. Non-permanent or non-affixed barriers including railing, fences, or planter boxes can be constructed of high quality materials and help distinguish the dining area from the pedestrian flow of traffic.

8. Upon implementation of new sidewalk dining standards provide incentives and a grace period to existing sidewalk dining permit holders who may be out of compliance with the new standards

Downtown Long Beach has 41 businesses and/or property owners that have approved or pending PWOPs. With the adoption of new sidewalk dining standards, and absent of any grandfather clause that may be considered, some existing permit holders may subsequently be out of compliance. Prior to adopting new design standards a analysis should be completed to determine typical costs an current permit holder may incur in order to comply with proposed design standards and guidelines. To assist businesses with compliance, an incentive program should be developed to help alleviate costs that may be associated with implementing the new standards. Businesses should also be given a grace period before being required to comply with the new standards.

9. Encourage the development of public streetdecks

Public streetdecks or parklets are often used to expand the pedestrian realm and outdoor space in urban environments. These spaces are often sponsored and maintained by businesses or business improvement districts as an open public amenity available to the general public. The updated permit process and standards for streetdecks should incentivize the development of public streetdecks through low cost or no cost occupancy fees.

As the improvement district representing commercial property owners, businesses, and residents in Downtown Long Beach, the DLBA actively works to promote a vibrant and healthy pedestrian environment. We are excited at the City's efforts to update and streamline the permitting process and standards for the development of sidewalk dining and streetdecks.

We would welcome the opportunity to provide clarification or additional input as this project progresses and appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,



Kraig Kojian
President and CEO

cc: Craig Beck, City of Long Beach, Director Public Works
Linda Tatum, City of Long Beach, Planning Bureau Manager
Councilwoman Jeannine Pierce, First District
Councilwoman Lena Gonzalez, Second District
DLBA Public Realm Committee