



**CITY OF TACOMA, WASHINGTON
OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL
COUNCIL CONSIDERATION REQUEST**

TO: Mayor & City Council
FROM: Council Member Robert Thoms and Council Assistant Lynda Foster
COPIES TO: Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager; Tadd Wille, Deputy City Manager; Bill Fosbre, City Attorney
SUBJECT: **Directing the City Manager to Develop A Permanent Outdoor Dining Program**
DATE: April 29, 2021

I ask for your support for a Resolution.

LEGISLATIVE INTENT:

Resolution Request: I respectfully ask for Council Concurrence on a resolution directing the City Manager to bring forward a recommendation to the Economic Development Committee to allow reasonable permanent outdoor dining options in addition to sidewalk cafes, including parklets, and streateries, in time for the proposal to go into effect before the Curbside Café and Market Pilot program expires.

Background

During the early phases of the COVID-19 pandemic, PDS and PW undertook several initiatives to assist the business community in addressing the impacts caused by the pandemic. In Phase 1 Stay Home, Stay Safe, the City introduced temporary Food Loading Zones and ADA parking stalls. In Phase 2 Safe Start, the City promoted the temporary Curbside Café and Market Program and existing temporary Sidewalk Café Program. The Community and Economic Development Department and Downtown Tacoma Partnership also partnered on the 8th Street Eatery that opened a street to pedestrians and customers.

Curbside café/markets, also known as streateries or parklets, are similar to sidewalk cafés but located in a parking space in the right-of-way. They function as an extension to an existing restaurant's seating area or retail store. Curbside cafes/markets are permitted to be used only during the regular operating business hours of the host establishment. Private use of the public right-of-way typically requires entering into a formal agreement with the City; however, as a pilot program, this requirement was waived in an effort to support local businesses affected by closures related to COVID-19.

The intent of these pilot programs are to increase the capacity for businesses to comply with the requirements of Governor Inslee's Safe Start phased reopening plan. A permit for the Curbside Café and Market Pilot and Sidewalk Café programs can accommodate temporary structures such as tables, chairs, planters, merchant displays, and shade coverings.

Policy direction

The City of Tacoma has historically invested in the public right of way in ways that support additional outdoor commerce. Outdoor dining options have proven to be successful economic drivers that activate outdoor spaces across the City. However, a number of problems have been identified:

- Current permanent outdoor dining options have more barriers and higher costs than the temporary pilot options rolled out during the COVID-19 emergency.

- The temporary nature of the current pilot disincentives businesses from investing funds in outdoor dining infrastructure.
- While businesses speak highly of the City’s permit staff, they have described barriers to finding the right permit information and have requested a smoother entry point.
- Spaces right outdoors of restaurants are sometimes ineligible for outdoor dining options due to minimal sidewalk space, slope of sidewalk, or other characteristics.

This policy recommendation should include a review of all outdoor dining options across the City, including sidewalk cafes, parklets, streateries, and other options allowed during the COVID-19 pandemic. The policy should include consideration of how to reduce barriers to outdoor dining, including:

- Creating one point of entry for City permitting for all outdoor dining options,
- Reviewing restrictions based on size of sidewalk available outside of restaurants and proposing potential alternatives to remove barriers for these restaurants, and
- Considering how to reduce any other startup costs for restaurants.

When forming the recommendation, City staff should include outreach to a broad group of stakeholders, including the Downtown Tacoma Partnership, the Cross District Association of Tacoma, the Commission on Disabilities, and the Transportation Commission. These stakeholders should participate in the review of the future program considerations staff identified and shared at the April 27, 2021 Economic Development Committee meeting: parklet locations, program and design approach, race and social justice, community support, parklet operation and maintenance, accessibility, parking demands, cost to construct, competing City priorities, and staffing.

The Economic Development Committee will review the recommendation and decide whether to move it forward to the full Council for a vote.

ALIGNMENT WITH TACOMA 2025 KEY FOCUS AREAS:

This program, project, or event is best aligned with the following:

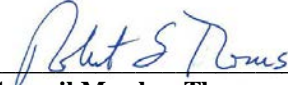
Economy/Workforce: *Equity Index Score:* Moderate Opportunity

Decrease the number of vacant properties downtown and in the neighborhood business districts. Increase the number of diverse livable wage jobs.

Livability: *Equity Index Score:* Moderate Opportunity

Increase positive public perception of safety and overall quality of life.

If you have a question related to the Council Contingency Fund Request, please contact Lynda Foster at 253.591.5166 or Lynda.Foster@CityofTacoma.org.

SUBMITTED FOR COUNCIL CONSIDERATION BY: 
Council Member Thoms

SUPPORTING COUNCIL MEMBERS SIGNATURES

1.  POS# 7
2.  POS# 8