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INTRODUCTION

A sidewalk café is when a private business is permitted to place tables and seating in the public sidewalk zone. Designers may need to consider sidewalk cafes as they design the street. It is one example of how the City supports and regulates use of public right of way for commercial use. Work closely with Regulatory Services for the successful planning, design, and implementation of zones used for retail or other similar uses. The [license application for sidewalk cafes](#) includes the permit requirements. Sidewalk cafes can substantially improve the walking environment; however, it is necessary to balance their placement with the need to maintain the pedestrian clear zone.

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

The City's [Sidewalk Café regulations](#) including the following requirements that may impact street design decisions:

A. Clear zones

1. For sidewalks 12' or narrower: a minimum of 4' of clear, unobstructed pedestrian clear zone must be maintained between all obstructions and the edge of sidewalk cafés. The pedestrian clear zone must widen to 6' for a minimum of 6' every 30' to provide ample room for two or more wheelchairs, strollers, or pedestrians to pass. When two neighboring cafes fall within the 30' zone, both will equally share the 6' zone.
2. For sidewalks wider than 12': A minimum of 6' of clear, unobstructed pedestrian clear zone must be maintained between all obstructions and the edge of sidewalk cafés. Tables and heating elements must be aligned as straight as possible.
3. For cafes adjacent to the roadway on streets without on-street parking, a 2' clear zone from back of curb must be maintained at all times when tables and chairs are occupied.

Unless specifically exempted, cafes must be in a physically delineated area, either marked by structural devices such as planters or stanchions or with painted markings on the sidewalk.

B. Parking and loading zones

Delineator-protected bike lanes directly adjacent to the curb should generally include a minimum of 4 feet of smooth, rideable surface, excluding any adjacent gutter pan. In very constrained right of way where every consideration has been taken to narrow roadway street zones, 3.5' of smooth, rideable surface can be used for short stretches.

C. Location restrictions

1. Sidewalk cafes are not permitted curbside if parking meters or active loading zones are present anywhere on the block face.
2. Sidewalk cafes typically may not be located within 10' of a designated bus stop, taxi stand, traffic signal, crosswalk, pedestrian curb cut, or active loading zone. Public Works can grant an exception in some situations.

In addition to these regulations, the following guidelines are recommended:

D. Pedestrian clear zones

1. The pedestrian clear zone widths in the [sidewalk zone design guidance](#) are wider than the existing sidewalk café regulations. These wider widths should be used when possible, particularly in activity centers and other locations with high pedestrian activity.
2. A straight and continuous pedestrian clear zone from one end of the block to the other should be maintained to the greatest extent possible.

E. Fences

Fences should be continuous, stable and rigid. A continuous edge should be provided no more than 6 inches from the ground, and an upper rail should be provided at a minimum of 3' above the ground. Support members should not protrude into the pedestrian clear zone.