



Eileen M. Donoghue
City Manager

Kara Keefe Mullin
Assistant City Manager

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 9, 2020

Contact: Phil Geoffroy
Executive Assistant-Communications
978-674-4400 | pgeoffroy@lowellma.gov

City Council Approves Ordinance Allowing Expanded Outdoor Dining

LOWELL - In a unanimous vote on Tuesday evening, the City Council adopted an [ordinance](#) authorizing the creation of a temporary program allowing Lowell restaurants, cafés, and coffee shops to expand outdoor seating options to allow for adequate social distancing among patrons and to meet compliance with state guidance on restaurant operations during Phase II of reopening. The ordinance enables participating restaurants to establish dining space in public right of ways adjacent to their business, specifically within designated portions of City sidewalks or within curbside parking spaces, or on authorized private property, including off-street parking lots. Outdoor dining areas permitted under the ordinance will be required to close by 10PM on Sundays-Thursdays, and by 11PM on Fridays-Saturdays. The program will remain in place through October 31, 2020, the traditional end of Lowell's outdoor dining season.

The City of Lowell's Office of Economic Development has engaged in extensive preparation efforts in anticipation of the passage of this ordinance and the beginning of Phase II, which permits restaurants to offer outdoor dining. In coordination with Development Services, the Office has solicited and is [continuing to accept](#) proposals from businesses seeking to expand outdoor dining into public right of ways and has worked to accommodate all requests for expanded space. This week, the Department of Public Works began placing temporary barriers around parking spaces that will be reserved for outdoor dining in order to enable businesses to begin taking advantage of the program immediately.

"The Office of Economic Development has remained in close contact with Lowell restaurants throughout the public health crisis, offering guidance, resources, and information whenever possible to help support them through this difficult period," **said Director of Economic Development Christine McCall**. "While many Lowell restaurants have continued to offer take-out service, we know that restaurant owners are eager to begin serving customers in-person again. We are hopeful that allowing restaurants to expand outdoor dining through Streateries and Sidewalk Cafés will provide an immediate boost to restaurants after several challenging months."

"Lowell's restaurants are an integral component of the City's vitality and we recognize that they have encountered severe hardship as a result of restrictions imposed in response to the coronavirus crisis," **said City Manager Eileen Donoghue**. "This plan will support business as they seek to recover and will provide opportunities for Lowell residents to safely get out of their homes after being asked to make many sacrifices during the public health crisis. The timely passage of this ordinance is a credit to the City Council, which has been fully supportive of expanding outdoor dining in the City."

Under Phase II of the state's reopening plan, which began on June 8, restaurants are permitted to offer outdoor dining services. Tables must be 6 feet apart or separated by a wall or plexiglass divider. Restaurants may not serve parties larger than six, and must follow a series of enhanced safety protocols, including the use of disposable menus and sanitization of tables after each use. Restaurants are expected to be allowed to resume indoor dining under similar restrictions at a later point in phase II.

The City intends to compliment expanded outdoor dining with City-sponsored entertainment, including music and other performances, at outdoor venues throughout the summer months. The Office of Cultural Affairs and Special Events is developing a plan to offer outdoor entertainment opportunities that allow for proper social distancing.

###