



May 23, 2020

Apex Town Council
73 Hunter Street
P.O. Box 250
Apex, NC 27502

Mayor Gilbert, Mayor Pro Tem Dozier, Council Member Killingsworth, Council Member Gantt, Council Member Stallings and Council Member Mahaffey:

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 emergency and related economic challenges, the Apex Downtown Business Association (ADBA), representing dozens of small businesses in Historic Downtown Apex, encourages the Town to consider allowing downtown businesses increased flexibility to endure this crisis by temporarily repurposing some on-street parking along North Salem Street to dedicated private dining spaces, maintained by downtown restaurants and eateries, and coordinating the associated project resources.

Many storefront retail businesses in downtown have made clear that their success is dependent upon foot traffic driven by food-serving establishments, and this traffic is down significantly. At the same time, some restaurant owners have indicated that they are likely to keep their dining rooms closed until they find ways to safely compensate for their 50 percent loss in dining capacity. In other words, a continuation of the current scenario could set up downtown retail stores for more “zero-dollar days,” which obviously is unsustainable.

When presented with the concept of temporarily repurposing some on-street parking to dedicated private dining, at least six downtown restaurants indicated their strong desire to participate in this potential project, in part because it would offer much more seating capacity than by expanding sidewalk seating and moving the pedestrian walkway to the curbside parking. Proposing partial street closure also was considered by the ADBA, however, the “parking-to-dining” concept seems more likely to achieve our goal of encouraging a moderate increase in foot traffic along Salem Street without creating a festival-like atmosphere that could become crowded and unsafe. Also, designating these parking spaces as private dining spaces as opposed to public seating supports our efforts to limit crowd size.

The “parking-to-dining” project could be implemented by assigning one to four parking spaces to each restaurant for a 120-day period to begin soon, if safety protocols and responsibilities are formally agreed upon. It is recommended that the project be evaluated 60 days after launch. Likely participating establishments are as follows: A Taste of Brooklyn, Anna’s Pizzeria, The Beer Dispensary (potentially after Phase Two, per the Governor’s Executive Order), La Rancherita, Mission Market, The Peak on Salem, The Provincial, and Salem Street Pub. It is estimated that two café-style tables would fit safely in each parking spot. Also, not every one of these establishments has street parking spots directly adjacent to its property, so a process would need to be established to match them to their respective parking spots.

This concept if supported by the Town would likely require it to offer coordination efforts and in-kind support to restaurants to optimize success, including some or all of the following:

- **Installation of temporary parklet infrastructure.** This could include barricades, ADA-compliant street risers, railings, sanitation equipment, and limited tables and chairs. However, some downtown restaurants may have the capacity to install outdoor seating and safety measures at their assigned spots.
- **Assistance with ABC permitting and enforcement.** While legislation currently under consideration at the state legislature may offer some ABC permit flexibility, it is unclear if it is possible for restaurants to serve alcohol in their assigned parklet dining spaces. Restaurant participation is likely to rely heavily on whether they can do so.
- **Assistance with walkway enforcement.** It could be necessary to have one or more Apex Police Department officers walk the street from time to time in the evenings to prevent pedestrians from congregating or blocking the walkways and ensure a safe downtown atmosphere.

The ADBA appreciates your consideration of this temporary “parking-to-dining” project and related efforts, and looks forward to collaborating on this project if approved. Thank you for your leadership during these challenging days.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'SR', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Shane Reese
President
Apex Downtown Business Association