



## Town of Bristol Rhode Island

# Outdoor Dining Design Guidelines and Manual

March 2023





These Outdoor Dining Design Guidelines were developed  
for the Town of Bristol Economic Development Department.

The Guidelines were prepared with  
the assistance of Pare Corporation.

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## Section 1:

# APPROVAL PROCESS

The outdoor dining area is to be an extension of an existing restaurant's "dining area" and is not to be considered a public space. There's now an entire culture around outdoor dining. From beer gardens to extravagant rooftop restaurants, people seem to enjoy eating outdoors more than ever, whether it's for the unique ambiance or just to get some fresh air.

Many communities are benefitting from allowing outdoor dining opportunities by capitalizing on the demand by allowing new outdoor spaces to establishments or taking their existing outdoor spaces to the next level.

Allowing outdoor space for dining allows more room for tables, more customers, and more revenue. But that's not the only benefit. There are a few other reasons why an outdoor area has been good for restaurants:

- Some people feel more comfortable being outdoors since the pandemic.
- Being outdoors, particularly in spaces with plants, can make people feel happier.
- Both patrons and employees can benefit from the opportunity to be outside.
- People may feel more comfortable bringing their young children to an outdoor dining space, so they don't have to worry as much about noise levels.
- Outdoor areas can be pet-friendly, which encourages more business from dog lovers.

It is the business's responsibility to ensure that minimum life safety requirements and Americans with Disability Act (ADA) requirements are maintained at all times. While the Town encourages the use of outdoor dining arrangements, restaurant operations must be mindful of two other important considerations: the safety and flow of pedestrian traffic and the visual appropriateness within the Town of Bristol. The addition of outdoor dining



Outdoor Dining at Pomodoro Pizzeria

areas must follow the application and approval process detailed in this document as well as operational and design guidelines included within this manual.

The steps necessary to obtain approval for adding outdoor dining areas include:

- Obtain and submit an application form for an Outdoor Dining Permit by following the steps below. If you have any questions about the application process or the requirements, address them to the Town of Bristol Department of Community Development Director.
- Submittals must include information about the restaurant, proposed number of seats, a design layout with as much detail as possible, including dimensions and noting all obstructions (trees, fire hydrants, signs, etc.) within 15 feet of the dining area and representation that indicates at least 4 feet of unobstructed sidewalk space will remain for pedestrians.
- Photos or other graphic representation (including color and material of furniture and shade structures) needed for the Town to verify that the proposed furniture conforms to these guidelines.
- A schedule for operations is to be provided.
- The identified Town Departments will evaluate proposals for conformance with the Design Guidelines and Manual Requirements stated within.
- Once approved, the dining area shall be permitted to remain open in the specified times approved, except during special events that the dining areas may impact or if there is a need for street maintenance or a significant storm event.
- The operator must construct and complete (including assembly, painting, signage, accessories, plantings) within 4 weeks of approval within the permit issuance. Pre- and post-construction inspection of the site will be required by the Town.
- The operator must reapply yearly in the winter or early Spring for outdoor dining usage.



Outdoor Dining at Aidan's Pub

## OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Once the Outdoor Dining Permit is approved, the applicant or property owner will need to be sure that the Town of Bristol is added as additional insured to your premises liability insurance and deliver a copy of the insurance certificate to the Town's Community Development Director. This applies whether the outdoor dining area will be placed in a previously approved dining encroachment area or not.

Outdoor dining areas shall comply with the following performance standards for restaurants and the Town of Bristol Zoning Ordinance:

- An establishment whose function is the preparation and selling of unpackaged food and beverages, including alcoholic beverages, to the customer in a ready-to-consume state, where the customer consumes those foods and beverages while seated at tables, the principal method of operation includes one or both of the following characteristics:
  - Customers are to be provided with an individual menu and served their food and beverages by an employee of the restaurant at the same table where the items are consumed; or
  - A cafeteria type operation where food and beverages generally are consumed within the building.
- An outdoor restaurant shall not provide live entertainment unless approved by the Town, but pre-recorded background music may be played at an acceptable sound level. Loud or electronically amplified music is not allowed. The music shall not create a nuisance that will disturb the tranquility of the surrounding neighborhood.
- Outdoor dining areas will close before or at the same time that the existing business closes.
- Outdoor trash receptacles that are provided must be maintained by the staff. The receptacles must have a lid and the garbage bin must not overflow. Receptacles are to be emptied

and properly disposed of every evening before closing.

- Patrons must have access to indoor restrooms.
- Outdoor dining areas shall comply with any applicable building codes, health department regulations, and Rhode Island Department of Business Regulations (DBR) requirements. The permittee is fully responsible for obtaining all required license additions or modifications.
- Smoking and vaping are not to be permitted in outdoor dining areas. Operators shall post signage to that effect.
- The owners of the restaurant must keep clean the area no longer accessible by street sweepers and clear debris from the gutter channel to maintain stormwater flow.
- Non-permanent furniture must be secured each night. The owner is responsible for theft and vandalism.
- The owner is responsible for the care and maintenance of all landscaping within the outdoor dining area. Plants should be watered as necessary. Drought resistant plants should be considered when designing the outdoor dining areas.
- The owner is responsible for patrons being respectful to all neighbors.



Outdoor Dining at Leo's Ristorante



### Section 3:

## CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS - GENERAL

General construction requirements are as follows:

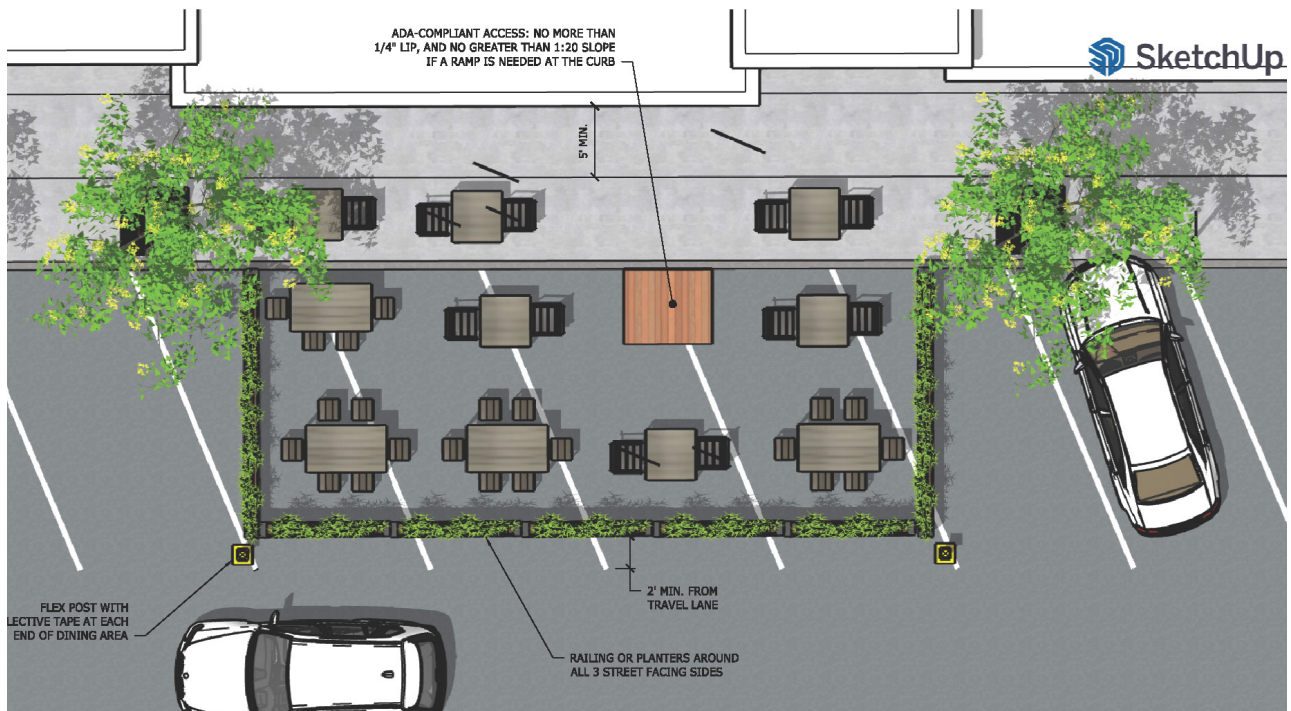
- The outdoor dining area must be constructed according to the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) to the extent that such guidelines apply. Adequate and unobstructed pedestrian flow of at least 4 feet is required. A 3-foot minimum clearance at obstructions within the sidewalk areas is necessary. Cross slopes of sidewalks and seating areas must not exceed a 2.0 percent grade.
- Outside dining areas are to be allowed per an application submission and approval by the Bristol Town Council. The outdoor dining areas may only be constructed by applicants with a currently operational restaurant in reasonable proximity to the location requested. The dining area must be located within a distance of the established restaurant to satisfy the Rhode Island DBR and the Rhode Island Department of Health requirements, and it cannot block access to any other establishments.
- Outdoor dining areas can only be built within a street with a posted speed limit of twenty-five (25) miles per hour or less.
- The outdoor dining area must be contained within existing parking areas.
- Outdoor dining areas must be constructed to ensure proper clearance is maintained for fire access to buildings.
- Outdoor dining locations are to have high visibility from adjacent businesses and existing pedestrian activities.
- Outdoor dining areas must be able to be removed in one day. Outdoor dining areas along special event routes may have to be disassembled to accommodate special events. The Town will notify the owner in advance when needed to be disassembled.
- The addition of sidewalk or other similar surfaces across a landscaped area is to be provided for access to an outdoor dining area in the



Guidelines for Street and Sidewalk Accessibility

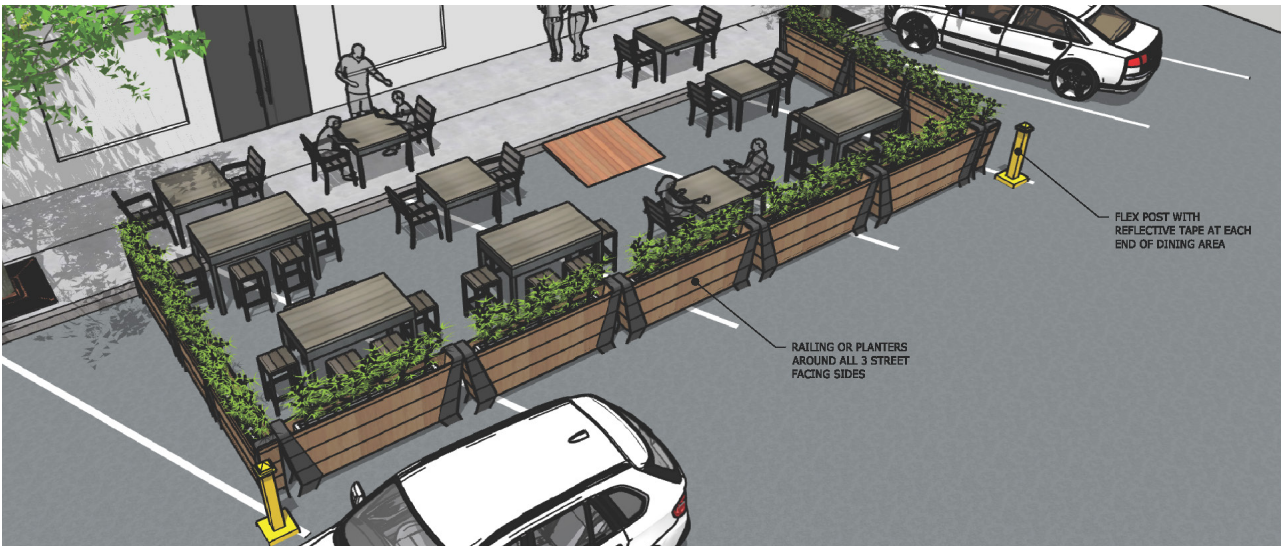
roadway. The proposed surface is to have the specific location and design approved during the review process.

- Access to public utilities, crosswalks, bus stops and other required entrances/exits must be maintained.
- Design should include items that reflect the cultural/aesthetic values of the surrounding area.
- A space buffer of at least two (2) feet must separate the diner area street side from traffic and two (2) feet from the parking side(s).
- The three faces of the perimeter of the dining area within the street must have barriers such as a rail system and/or planters incorporated into the design. The barrier must be approximately waist high (3 to 3-1/2 feet) to allow visibility for both pedestrians and vehicles. Soft-hit reflective posts to aid visibility of each side street corner should be utilized.
- In order to maintain curbside drainage, a minimum of six inches of cutout from the bottom of the base or other stormwater drainage maintenance measures are to be approved by the Department of Public Works.
- Outdoor dining areas must be built as a semi-permanent structure capable of removal in a single day for emergencies such as severe storms, utility access or other events as determined by the Town.
- The outdoor dining area walls may be secured to the street by bolting it down into the asphalt. The owner is responsible for repairs to the public realm in the event of removal; in general, such repairs must be accomplished in the same 24-hour time frame as the dining area removal. Dining area materials should weigh no more than 200 pounds per square foot to limit damage to the pavement surface or utilities.
- Signage is limited to that needed for safety or regulatory. All other signage, including temporary signs, visible to and legible from the travel way of the street or adjacent sidewalk is prohibited without approval.

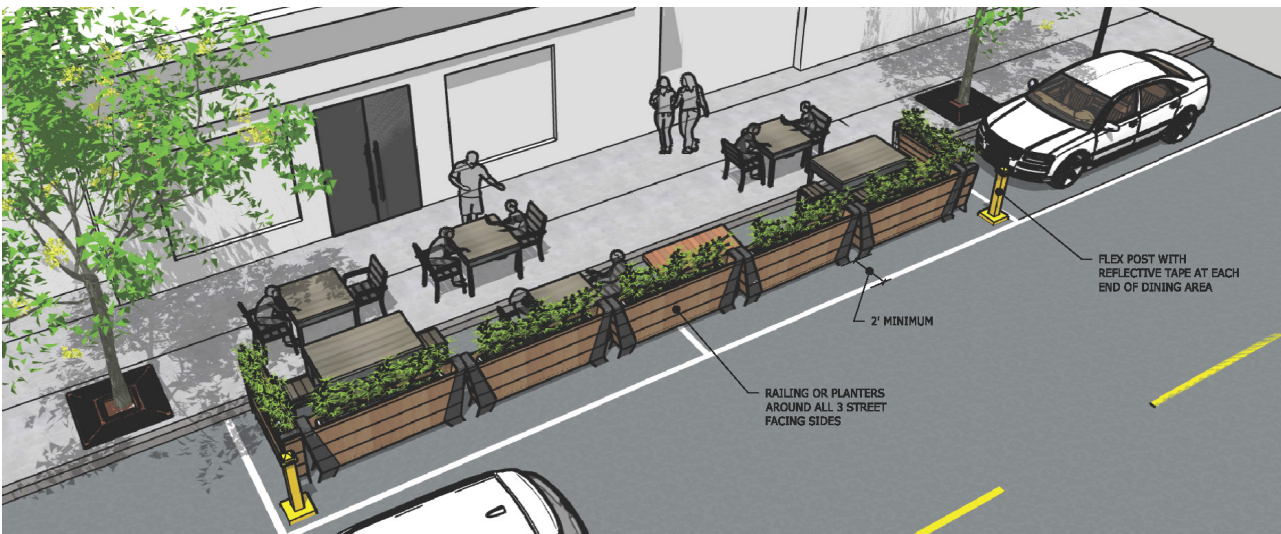
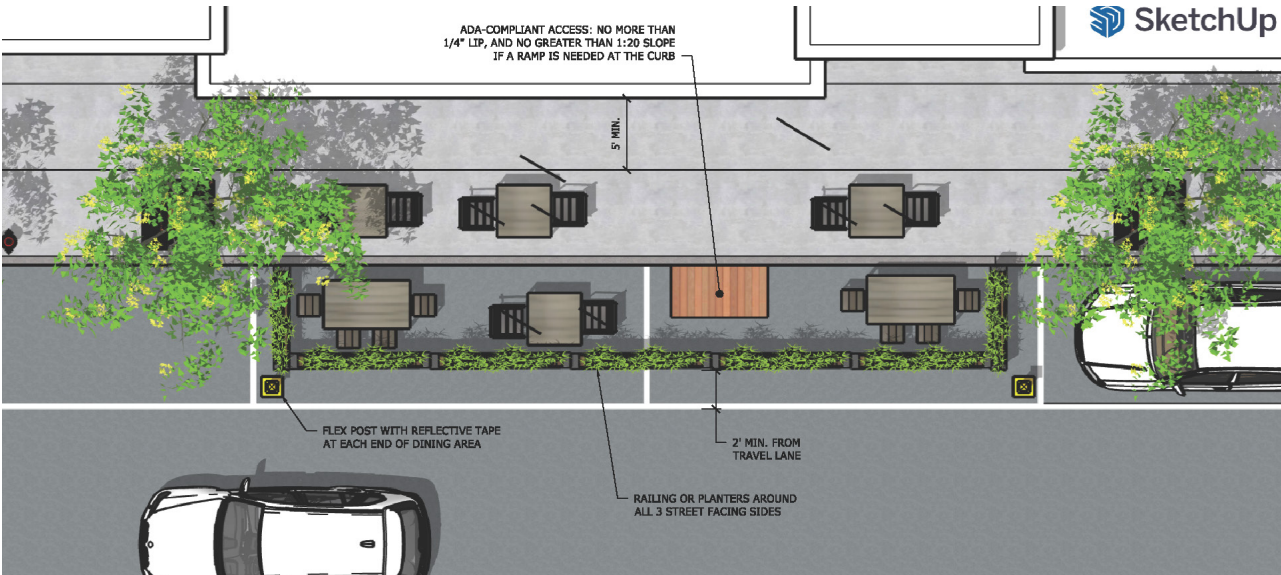


Guidelines for Angled Parking Spaces





Guidelines for Angled Parking Spaces (cont.)



Guidelines for Parallel Parking Spaces

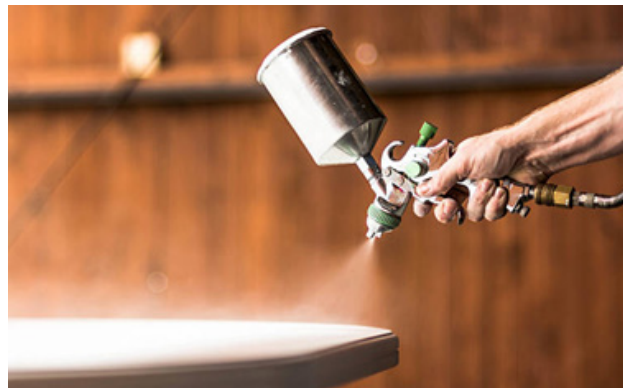
## DESIGN AND MATERIAL REQUIREMENTS

### GENERAL MATERIAL REQUIREMENTS

- All material must be suitable for exterior use.
- Metals other than stainless steel, chromed metals, or copper-based metals must be coated to prevent corrosion.
- Woods other than those which are naturally rot-resistant must be stained, varnished (or other type of clear coat), or primed and painted with exterior grade coatings on all sides prior to assembly.
- Colors must be similar to those used on the business façade or business branding and identity. Bright, vivid colors not associated with existing buildings or identity will not be acceptable.



Woods should be painted or sealed



Metals should be painted or coated to prevent corrosion



### FLOORING MATERIALS

If a platform is constructed for flooring the following is to be adhered to:

#### Acceptable:

- Aluminum, stainless steel
- Naturally rot-resistant wood
- Treated wood
- Wood composite

#### Prohibited:

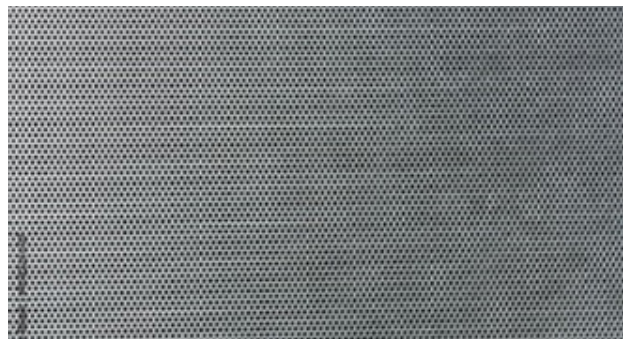
- Stone, concrete, ceramic, linoleum, nylon, vinyl, porcelain pavers
- Brick
- Untreated solid wood in contact with the ground
- Indoor wood or laminate flooring
- Uncoated materials susceptible to corrosion
- Indoor carpet or artificial turf

#### Flooring Requirements

- All flooring must allow drainage and be slip resistant
- Flooring must be installed within a 2% slope in any direction
- Flooring must be designed to not retain standing water
- Maximum floor opening/slot/seam/gap is  $\frac{1}{4}$ "
- Any elongated opening must be perpendicular to the primary direction of travel
- Maximum level of change of  $\frac{1}{4}$ "
- Level changes greater than  $\frac{1}{4}$ " require a ramp
- Ramp runs shall have a running slope not steeper than 1:12



Allowed: Composite wood decking



Allowed: Perforated aluminum flooring



Not Allowed: Interior laminate flooring



Not Allowed: Artificial turf



### BARRIERS

Dining area barriers (fences, gates, planters, etc.) are to be visually appealing and are to be constructed to separate the dining area from the roadway and sidewalk. All barrier material must be maintained in good visual appearance without visible fading, dents, tears, rust, corrosion, or chipped or peeling paint.

Barriers are required in the following instances:

- *Required for Leading Edge of All Dining Areas:* A detectable barrier is required for the leading edge of all outdoor dining areas to ensure that visually impaired pedestrians using canes can detect the dining area safely. The leading edge is defined as the section of a dining area that is at or near a perpendicular angle to the building wall and/or curb line.
- *Required for Full Perimeter of Some Dining Areas:* A detectable barrier is required for the full perimeter (with the exception of access openings). The perimeter includes both the leading edge and parallel edge.
- *Required for Full Perimeter of All Outdoor Dining Areas Serving Alcohol:* State law requires that outdoor dining areas where alcohol is served or consumed must enclose the area, with only one opening to the sidewalk for access.

#### Barrier Requirements

- Any barrier must be freestanding without any permanent or temporary attachments to buildings, sidewalks or other infrastructure.
- Attachment to pavement is allowed, but the owner is responsible for repairs to the asphalt.
- All barrier must be detectable to visually impaired pedestrians who employ a cane for guidance. Transparent portion of walls (windows) may be comprised of glass or clear vinyl.
- Any glass elements must be:
  - Shatter Resistant
  - Tempered
  - Wired
  - Laminated



Allowed: Naturally rot-resistant wood barrier/planters



Allowed: Sectional fencing with planters

- Barrier must remain stable in wind speeds of 50 MPH, and be removed if winds are expected to exceed that speed.
- Sectional fencing (generally defined as rigid fence segments that are placed together to create a unified fencing appearance) can be a solution for outdoor seating areas using barriers. Such fencing is portable, but cannot be easily shifted by patrons or pedestrians, as can less rigid forms of enclosures.
- Any access opening within the barrier must measure no less than 44 inches in width. Access openings should be placed in a location that will not create confusion for visually impaired pedestrians.

### Barrier Materials

#### Acceptable:

- Aluminum, stainless steel, iron, copper
- Painted or coated steel
- Painted, stained or coated wood
- Naturally rot-resistant wood

#### Prohibited:

- Plastic panels or fencing
- Fabric (natural or synthetic) fabrics
- Metal fencing
- Chicken wire or similar appurtenances
- Whole pallets
- Recycled pallet wood is acceptable, however, the pallet must be disassembled, the wood painted and then assembled into a finished looking component.



Allowed: Painted or coated steel



Allowed: Wood or metal planters



Not allowed: Plastic or vinyl fencing



Not Allowed: Metal barriers



### PLANTERS AND PLANT MATERIALS

Planters are a friendly and attractive way to delineate an outdoor dining area and may be used in addition to, or in place of, other barrier designs.

The following guidelines apply to planters (and plants) used in outdoor dining areas:

#### Planters

**Planter height:** Must not exceed a height of 42" above the level of the sidewalk or roadway.

**Plant height:** Must not exceed a height of 6 feet above the level of the sidewalk.

**Plant Material:** All plants must be live plants. Plants shall be always maintained in a healthy growing condition and replaced when necessary or the planter must be removed from the public right-of-way. Seasonal, thematic planter displays are encouraged. Planters and material must be portable.

**Prohibited:** Artificial plants, empty planters, or planters with only bare dirt, mulch, straw, wood chips, mulch or similar material are not allowed. Planters shall not be used as a cigarette butt container and must be cleaned of all such items at least daily by the Owner.

#### Planter Materials

##### Acceptable

- Aluminum, stainless steel, copper
- Painted or coated steel
- Painted, stained, or coated wood
- Naturally rot-resistant wood
- Concrete

##### Prohibited

- Plastic
- Pallets



Allowed: Coated wood planter as a barrier wall



Allowed: Coated steel barriers



Allowed: Painted wood barriers



### FURNITURE REQUIREMENTS AND MATERIALS

Outdoor dining furniture becomes a prominent part of the streetscape when used in front of buildings, and such furniture needs to uphold the high standards applied to buildings and other improvements.

A wide range of furniture styles, colors or materials are permitted. All furniture must be maintained in good visual condition with no visible fading, dents, tears, rust, corrosion, or chipped or peeling paint. All furniture must be maintained in a clean condition at all times. All furniture must be durable, sturdy, stable and shall be weighted as to not blow over with normal winds or sudden storm events such as summer thunderstorms or when wind gusts exceed 50 miles per hour.

All furniture other than tables, chairs and umbrellas is prohibited. This includes but is not limited to serving stations, bar counters, shelves, racks, televisions, and torches. Heaters are allowed only with approval from the Town of Bristol Fire Department for the heater type and location.

The following guidelines apply to furniture used in outdoor dining:

#### Furniture Requirements

**Freestanding:** Furniture must not be secured to trees, lamp posts, street signs, hydrants or any other street infrastructure by means of ropes, chains, or any other such devices during restaurant hours.

**All-Weather:** Furniture used in the outdoor dining areas must be specifically made for outdoor use.

**Matching:** All chairs used within the outdoor dining area must match each other by being of visually similar style, construction, and color.

**Storage:** All furniture must be removed and stored inside when not in use for an extended period of time.



Allowed: Aluminum furniture



Allowed: Painted wood furniture

### Furniture Materials

#### Acceptable

- Aluminum
- Wood
- Heavy-duty plastic
- Fabric

#### Prohibited

- Lightweight Plastic
- Upholstered furniture not rated for continuous exterior use
- Furniture prominently branded with logo or name other than the business



Allowed: Heavy-duty plastic furniture



Allowed: Coated metal furniture



Allowed: Wood tables and chairs

### Tables

Outdoor dining furniture must contribute to the overall atmosphere of the area and must be complementary in appearance and quality.

### Colors

Tables may be painted, anodized, colored or of a natural unpainted material (e.g. all-weathered wood, metal, wicker, etc.). Tables are not permitted to be white plastic. In general, fluorescent or other strikingly bright or vivid colors will not be approved unless part of a discernible theme other than simply to gain attention.

### Size and Shape

The size and shape of tables strongly affects the functionality of an outdoor dining area. Due to the narrow dimensions of most dining areas, restaurants should strive for space-efficient seating layouts and figure configuration. Square or rectangular tables are strongly recommended as such tables may fit flush against a wall and can permit more usable surface area for patrons.

### Chairs

Chairs, like the other outdoor dining elements, must contribute to the overall atmosphere of the surrounding area and must be complementary in both appearance and quality. All chairs used within a particular establishments outdoor seating area must match each other by being of visually similar design, construction and color.

### Colors

Chairs may be colored or natural unpainted material (e.g.all-weathered wood, metal, wicker, etc.). Chairs are not permitted to be white plastic. In general, fluorescent or other strikingly bright or vivid colors will not be approved unless part of a discernible theme other than simply to gain attention.

### Upholstery

Upholstered chairs are permitted as are upholstered cushions for chairs. In general, fluorescent, or other strikingly bright or vivid colors will not be approved unless part of a discernible theme other than simply to gain attention. Outdoor and water-resistant materials are required. Cushions must be attached in some manner to the chair itself.



Allowed: Upholstered furniture rated for outdoor use



Not Allowed: Lightweight plastic table and chairs; card table and metal chairs





### SHADE STRUCTURES

Umbrellas and awnings can add a welcoming feel to outdoor dining areas and can provide shelter from the sun or rain. Appropriately designed and sized umbrellas and awnings are permitted for use.

All shade structures must comply with the following conditions:

#### Location

To ensure effective pedestrian flow, all parts of any umbrella must be contained entirely within the outdoor seating area.

#### Height

In order to avoid causing an undue visual obstruction of other businesses, umbrellas must not exceed a height of 10' above the level of the sidewalk. The umbrella must also be a minimum height of 7' above the level of the sidewalk for head clearance.

#### Colors

Shade structure colors must blend with the surrounding area and must be solid colors. In general, fluorescent or other strikingly bright or vivid colors will not be approved unless part of a discernible theme other than simply to gain attention.

#### Size and Shape

The size and shape of umbrellas strongly affects the functionality of an outdoor dining area. Due to the narrow dimensions of most dining areas, restaurants should strive for space-efficient umbrella designs.

Market-style umbrellas, those designed for patio or outdoor dining use and which vent breezes, are preferred.

#### Material

Fabric of shade structures must be of a material suitable for outdoor use and must be a canvas-type. No plastic fabrics, plastic-vinyl-laminated fabrics, or any type of rigid materials are permitted for use as shade structures within an



Not Allowed: Vivid colors



Allowed: Solid color; attached to building

outdoor dining area.

#### Removable

Umbrellas must be able to be removed each night or during storms and stored inside for the safety of pedestrians and surrounding businesses.

#### Retractable Awnings

Must be fastened to the main building.

### Umbrella Materials

#### Acceptable

- Fire retardant canvas material
- Color should match the color of the establishment's branding
- Other colors must blend in with the surrounding environment

#### Prohibited

- Bright colors for the purpose of attracting attention
- Fringes, tassels or straps that are not fire resistant



Allowed: Shade Structures that blend within the surrounding area and are contained within seating area.

### LIGHTING

Lighting is allowed with the outdoor dining areas as an accent and it should not overpower any adjacent site lighting or building lighting. The following guidelines apply to lighting to be used:

#### All-Weather

Lighting used within an outdoor dining area must be specifically made for outdoor use and must have a hardwired electrical connection. All lighting shall be durable, sturdy, stable, and weighted as to not to blow over with normal winds or sudden storm events with wind gusts of 50 miles per hour.

#### Matching

All lighting used within an outdoor dining area should match any being of visually similar design, construction, and color.

#### Height

In order to avoid causing and undue visual obstruction of other businesses, lighting must not exceed a height of 10 feet.

#### Color Temperature and Brightness

Lighting must be of warm white color temperature between 2,500 Kelvin and 3,000 Kelvin. 2,700 Kelvin is ideal.

#### Maintenance

Lighting must be always kept in proper working order. Burnt out lighting must be replaced promptly (one working day).



Allowed: Warm white lighting

### Lighting Prohibited

#### Light Source

The lights must not contain any glare producing surfaces or inappropriate lighting (blinking, neon, florescent, etc.)

#### Support

Lighting must not be secured to lamp posts, street signs, hydrants or any other street infrastructure.

#### Signage or Wording

Lighting must not contain signage for the restaurant or any other entity in the form of wording, logos, drawings, pictorial or photographic representations, or any other likewise identifying characteristic.

#### Power Cords

Lighting may be plugged in to extension cords, provided that the extension cords are maintained safe condition and protected from abrasion, pressure and wear. Extension cords that become frayed or split must be replaced immediately.



Not allowed: Neon signage/lighting







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