

Winter Strategies to Support Downtowns

Considerations for Outdoor Dining

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Background

Over the summer and fall, many businesses expanded their outdoor dining and retail options by using sidewalks, parking spaces, and surface lots. As cases continue to rise in New Hampshire, and winter underway, businesses will have to adapt to meet the needs of their customers while maximizing safety. This guide provides some best practices and helpful hints to create innovative outdoor restaurant spaces as the COVID-19 pandemic heads into a colder climate.

Tips and Tactics for Staying Warm

In order to create a pleasant outdoor dining experience during winter, restaurants should consider the following elements:

Heating Lamps

Electric radiant, natural gas radiant, portable propane heaters or fire pits are options for keeping warm while sitting outside. Check with your local municipality regarding what is permissible. Some businesses are utilizing Kotatsu, a Japanese heated table or crafting their own version with heating elements on the underside of tables.

Wind Protection

Minimizing the effects of a deep winter chill can do a lot to keep customers and employees comfortable. Some sort of wall, barrier, or vegetation against prevailing winds can lessen the effects of strong gusts or wind tunnels.

Maximize Sun Exposure

As the winter solstice approaches, keeping track of where the sun hits outdoor furniture (and moving it accordingly) is essential to encourage any melting or aid in keeping customers warm.



Temporary Structures

Larger urban areas have seen restaurants use plastic igloos, yurts, or tents to separate customers while providing shelter and adequate ventilation. Although there is some uncertainty about the safety of these temporary structures in curbing transmission rates, one should work with their municipality to ensure these structures are permissible and follow public health best practices and guidelines.

Decorations

Art and aesthetics can help people feel sheltered, safe, and comfortable. Using planters, a variety of colors or sculptures can help delineate spaces, facilitate distancing customers, and create a welcoming environment.

Managing Snow and Ice

As Granite Staters know, snow is a regular part of our winters and must be managed to ensure that outdoor dining is both safe and enjoyable. With restaurants utilizing their sidewalks, parking spaces, alleys and other areas for seating, a snow maintenance plan for businesses is critical. Clearing away snow from pathways and furniture quickly will maximize the utility of any outdoor dining space. Considerations for each plan can include:

- Connecting with your municipality or landlord regarding public sidewalk snow removal responsibilities
- Having sufficient amounts of ice melt and sand at the ready
- Designating a snow storage area(s) during high volume storms that:
 - ◆ Does not impede pedestrian traffic
 - ◆ Is protected from high winds
 - ◆ Will receive sufficient sunlight to encourage melting and adequate drainage
 - ◆ Encourages smaller snow mounds by using a number of areas to speed up melting process
- Placing snow poles or reflective devices on any barriers between the dining area and pedestrian or automobile traffic
- Temporarily removing furniture to avoid damage from plows



Out-of-State Resources and Guides

The resources below are intended to stimulate ideas and solutions based on what other places are doing, but should be applied with caution given the different regulatory requirements and needs of each state.

- City of Somerville, MA's COVID-19 Winter Ready Outdoor Dining Guidelines: <https://www.somervillema.gov/sites/default/files/winter-tents-and-other-winter-structures.pdf>
- Michigan Economic Development Corporation's Winter Strategies for Downtowns & Business Districts: https://www.miplace.org/4aafef/contentassets/121f2aa174374015a15724e381a7a517/winter-report_final-102620.pdf



For More Information:

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