

Sidewalk Dining Process Improvements 2017-2019

Process Improvements

Sidewalk dining is a vital part of commercial district vibrancy, variety and economic development. As part of the Public Realm initiative of the [Downtown 2020 Work Plan](#), the Town has been examining the sidewalk dining permit process for opportunities to improve the Sidewalk Dining Permit Application process, increase flexibility for restaurants, and promote safe sidewalk dining

Town staff composed a text amendment to the Code text amendment which can be found [here](#). The changes came from input received from restaurants and the Downtown Partnership, a new State statute passed since the Town Code was written, and Town staff input. The text amendment was presented to the [Planning Commission](#) on March 19, 2019 and approved by the [Town Council](#) on April 10, 2019.

Major changes include:

- Removing zoning restrictions - now any approved restaurant that abuts a public right of way (sidewalk) can apply for a sidewalk dining permit
- Reducing the minimum distance from intersections, curbs, and permanent objects of sidewalk dining furnishings - this increases the available space for sidewalk dining activities
- Removing restrictions around furnishing size and type - furnishings must now only meet Chapter 8 of the Building Code (the same as any other furnishings)
- Removing the requirement to bring in furnishings by midnight each night - furnishings may now be left out except during Town-declared special events or adverse weather
- Town Manager has more authority to grant variances
- A penalty and appeals process is now outlined within the ordinance

The Sidewalk Dining Permit Application, linked above, reflects the changes to the Town code.

Input Opportunities

A meeting of Downtown restaurants was held in February 2018 and the notes from that meeting are [here](#). The Town also tested the proposed Sidewalk Dining Permit Application with multiple restaurants throughout 2018 to ensure it is clear, concise, and includes all the information needed to approve outdoor seating.

In addition, the community was invited to send their input about sidewalk dining for consideration in the revised ordinance to Sarah Poulton at spoulton@townofchapelhill.org or 919-969-5009.