



King Street
Outdoor Dining
Design Guidelines

City of Alexandria

Approved by Board of Architectural Review

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Purpose

These Guidelines provide standards for the use of outdoor dining areas along King Street and adjoining streets in order to maintain a quality appearance in keeping with the Street's historic character.

The City of Alexandria permits outdoor dining along King Street and adjoining streets in Old Town through an administrative permitting process authorized by Section 6-800 of the City of Alexandria Zoning Ordinance. As per Section 6-805(O)(4), the design of each outdoor dining area must “comply with any Board of Architectural Review approved design guidelines.” This document contains the guidelines of furniture and fixtures considered acceptable within the architectural and cultural framework of Old Town’s main commercial corridor.

Central to the process of permitting outdoor dining along one of the nation’s most historic streets is the necessity of ensuring that furniture and other items placed along the street will complement the overall character of the street and not detract from the district’s architectural heritage. These Design Guidelines provide standards for the use of outdoor dining areas in order to enhance the historic character, visual quality and pedestrian safety of the area.

These guidelines apply to all outdoor dining areas that receive City approval through powers granted by Section 6-800 of the Zoning Ordinance. Failure to comply with these guidelines constitutes a violation of the City Zoning Ordinance.

Background

The City of Alexandria is pleased to offer restaurants along King Street the option of utilizing the public sidewalk as outdoor dining areas. Outdoor dining gives restaurant patrons an amenity that has become an increasingly popular feature within the Washington area.

While the City has encouraged the use of outdoor dining arrangements, restaurant operators must be mindful of two important considerations: the safety and flow of pedestrian traffic, and the visual appropriateness within Old Town's historic district.

These Design Guidelines are intended to ensure that restaurants use the public sidewalk for outdoor dining in a way that is safe for pedestrians and appropriate for the historic district.

Application Procedure

Outdoor dining is permitted along King Street and adjoining streets through an administrative approval process authorized by Section 6-800 of the City Zoning Ordinance. This administrative process saves time and expense by pre-establishing standards that must be followed for all outdoor dining set-ups.

To apply, a restaurant owner needs to complete the following.

- **Application Form:** A brief form with basic information about the restaurant and proposed number of seats
- **Site Plan:** A plan showing the proposed outdoor dining area with measurements (including a representation showing that at least 5 feet of unobstructed sidewalk space will remain for pedestrians).
- **Photos or Drawing of Furniture:** Photos or other graphic representation (including color and material) of furniture and umbrellas, needed for the City to verify that the proposed furniture conforms to these Design Guidelines.

For forms, information or questions, contact the Department of Planning and Zoning at 703.838.4666 or visit in person at City Hall, 301 King Street, Room 2100.

Elements of a Quality Outdoor Seating Area



Chapter I: Barriers

Dining area barriers (fences, gates, ropes etc.) are visually appealing and help to separate the dining area from the 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:

a) 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*, illustrated at left, 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.

b) Required for Full Perimeter of Some Dining Areas:

A detectable barrier is required for the full perimeter (with the exception of access openings) when the outdoor seating area extends more than 3 feet into the public right of way. The perimeter includes both the leading edge and parallel edge.

Restaurants which do not serve alcohol and whose outdoor seating area extends less than 3 feet into the public right-of-way are not required to enclose the full perimeter of the seating area, but may do so on an optional basis.

c) 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.

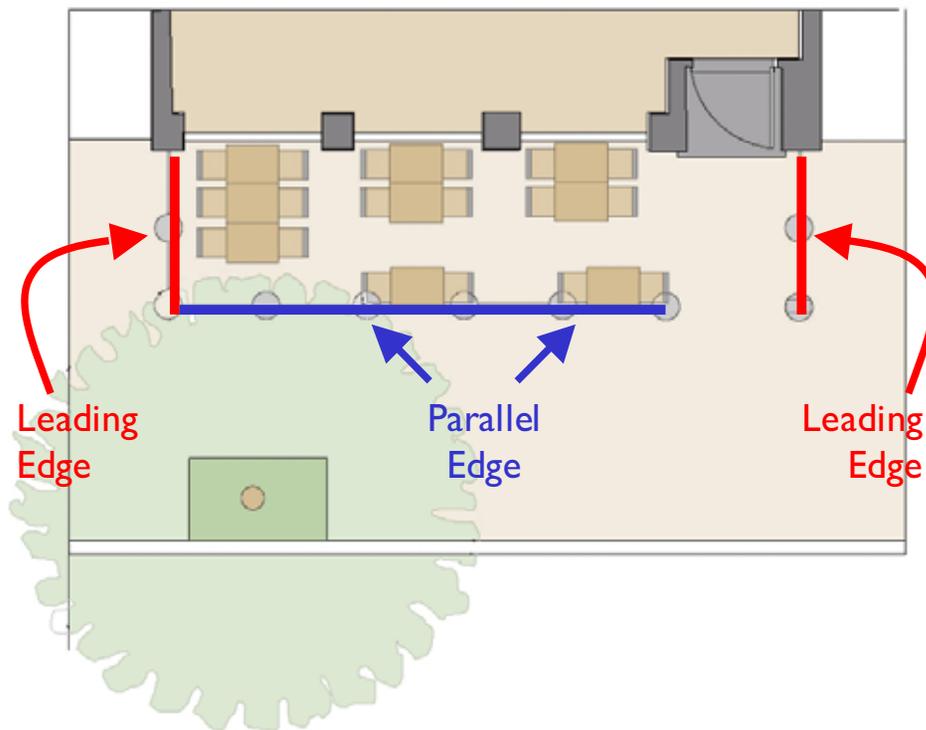


FIGURE 1
Illustration of leading edge and parallel edge of barrier

I.1 Barrier Designs

A wide variety of styles and designs are permissible for outdoor dining area barriers:

Sectional Fencing: Sectional fencing (generally defined as rigid fence segments that can be placed together to create a unified fencing appearance) is a desirable 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.

Sectional fencing must be of metal (aluminum, steel, iron, or similar) or of wood construction and must be of a dark color (either painted or stained).



FIGURE 2
Acceptable sectional fencing design



FIGURE 3
Rope or chain barrier must have a minimum diameter of 1 inch



FIGURE 4
Stanchion base must be flat and no more than 1/2" above sidewalk surface



FIGURE 5
Domed stanchion bases are not permitted

I.1 Barrier Designs

Rope or Chain Rails: Rope or chain-type barriers (generally defined as enclosures composed of a rope or chain suspended by vertical elements such as stanchions) are permitted if they meet the following guidelines:

- **Rope/Chain Diameter:** The rope or chain must have a minimum diameter of 1 inch, in order to maintain detectability by the visually impaired.
- **Posts:** Vertical support posts (stanchions, bollards, etc.) must be constructed of wood or metal (aluminum, steel, iron, or similar).
- **Stanchion Base Must Not Be A Tripping Hazard:** If a stanchion or other vertical supporting device is attached to a base, that base must be flat and must measure no more than one-half ($\frac{1}{2}$) of an inch above the sidewalk surface. No domed stanchion bases are permitted.

1.1 Barrier Designs

Freestanding: Any barrier (whether sectional fencing or rail-type) must be freestanding, without any permanent or temporary attachments to buildings, sidewalks or other infrastructure.



FIGURE 6
Acceptable sectional fencing design: freestanding

1.1 Barrier Designs

Prohibited Barrier Styles:

- **Fabric Inserts:** Fabric inserts (whether natural or synthetic fabric) of any size are not permitted to be used as part of a barrier.
- **Chain-link and Other Fencing:** The use of chain-link, cyclone fencing, chicken wire or similar appurtenances is prohibited. Materials not specifically manufactured for fencing or pedestrian control (including but not limited to buckets, food containers, tires, tree stumps, vehicle parts, pallets, etc.) and not expressly permitted elsewhere in these Guidelines may not be used as components of a barrier.

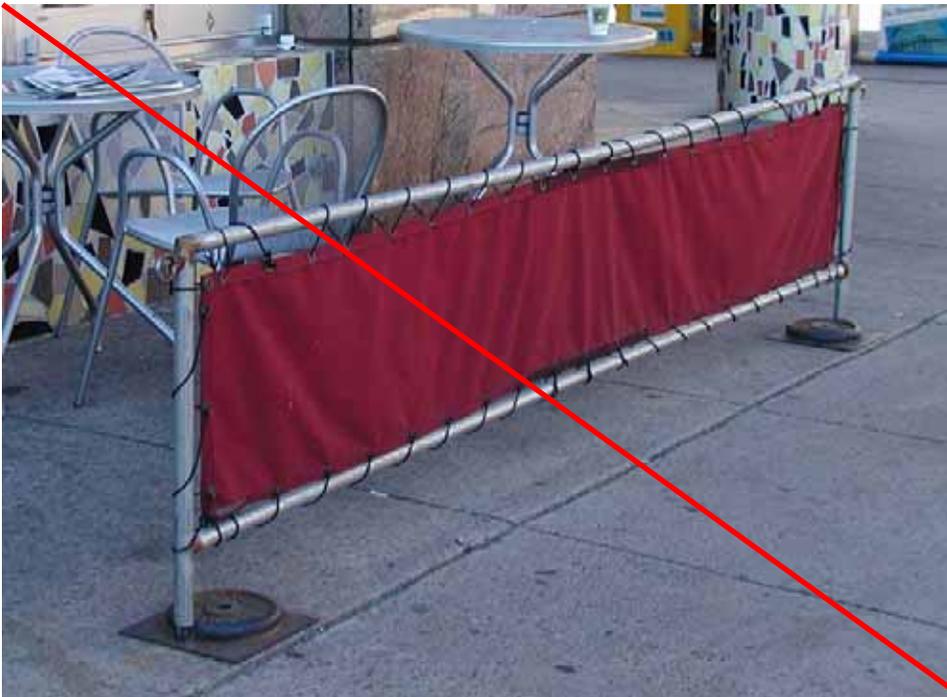


FIGURE 7

Fabric inserts are not permitted to be used as part of a barrier

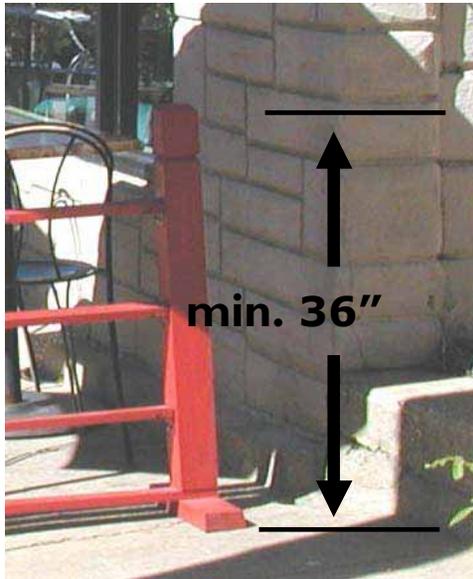


FIGURE 8
Sectional fencing barrier height must be at least 36"

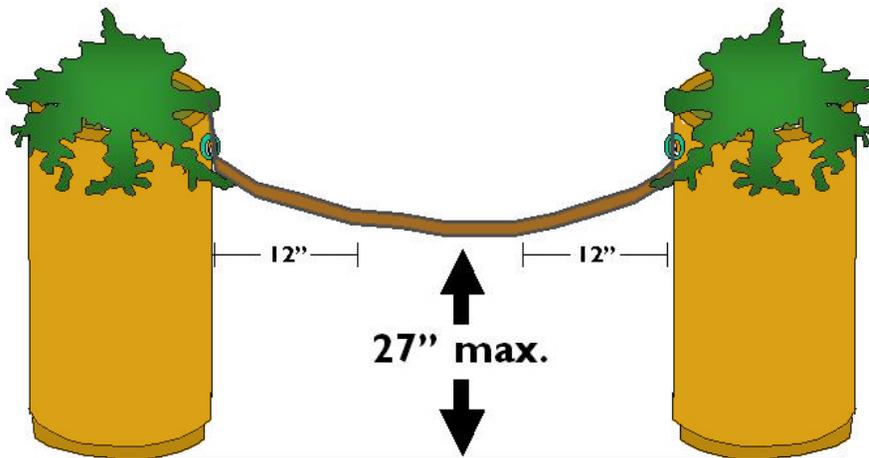


FIGURE 9
How to measure rope/chain distance from ground

1.2 Barrier Measurements

To ensure their effectiveness as pedestrian control devices and their detectability for persons with visual impairments, barriers must meet the following measurement guidelines:

Height: The highest point of a barrier (such as a stanchion) must measure at least 36 inches in height, with the exception of planters.

“Open” Appearance: Fences or other perimeter enclosures with a height of between 36” and 50” must be at least 50 percent open (see-through) in order to maintain visibility of street level activity. Any enclosure with a height over 50” must be at least 80 percent open (see-through).

Maximum Distance from Ground: All barriers must be detectable to visually impaired pedestrians who employ a cane for guidance. Therefore the bottom of barriers must be no greater than 27 inches above the sidewalk surface.

- **How to Measure Rope/Chain Distance from Ground:** In the case of a rope or chain enclosure, the rope/chain must not exceed 27 inches in height when measured 12 inches or more away from a vertical post (stanchion, bollard or other such support).

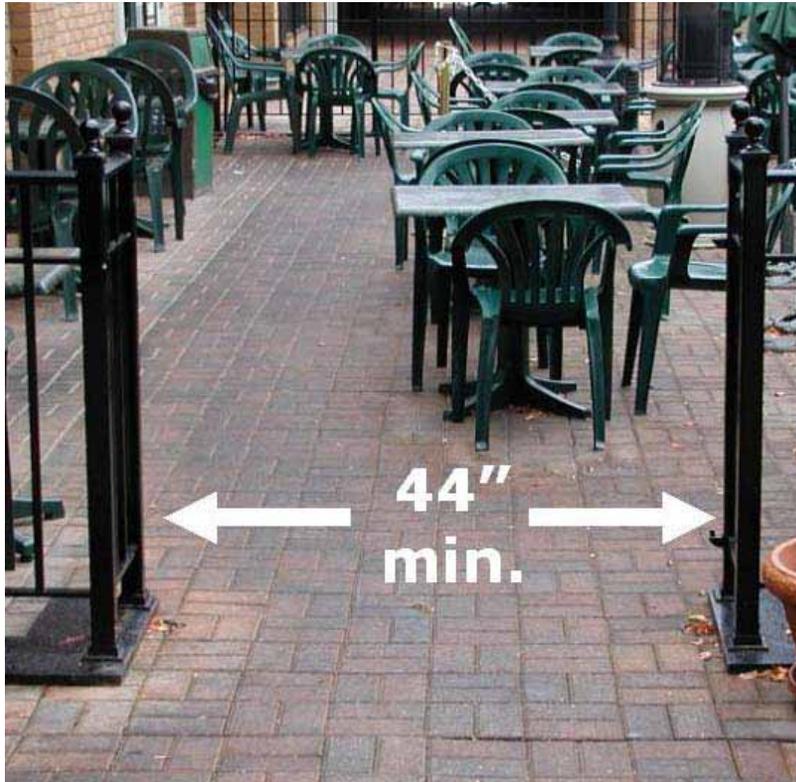


FIGURE 10
Minimum access width is 44 inches

1.3 Access Openings

Minimum Access Width: Any access opening within the barrier must measure no less than 44 inches in width.

Location: Access openings should be placed in a location that will not create confusion for visually impaired pedestrians.



FIGURE 11
Acceptable planter design and material



FIGURE 12
Height of plants may not exceed 8'

1.4 Planters

Planters may be used in addition to or in place of other barrier designs. In addition, planters may be used in situations where no barrier is required (for example, where the outdoor dining area does not extend more than three feet into the sidewalk) in order to provide added visual interest and create a more attractive and welcoming atmosphere.

Planters and the plants contained within them must meet the following requirements:

Maximum Height of Planters: Planters may not exceed a height of 36 inches above the level of the sidewalk. (This pertains only to planters, not the plants contained therein.)

Maximum Height of Plants: Plants (whether live or artificial) may not exceed a height of 108 inches (8 feet) above the level of the sidewalk.



FIGURES 13, 14 and 15
Acceptable planter design and material

1.4 Planters

Planted Material: All planters must have plants contained within them. If the plants within a planter die, the plants must be replaced or the planter removed from the public right-of-way. Artificial plants; empty planters; or planters with only bare dirt, mulch, straw, woodchips or similar material are not permitted.

Seasonal, thematic planter displays are encouraged.



Chapter 2: Furniture and Fixtures

King Street's retail liveliness depends on maintaining an attractive and high-quality atmosphere. As stated in the *King Street Retail Strategy*, "The quality of the streetscape is vitally important to King Street's retail ambiance...The streetscape and the defining adjacent buildings are the most significant overall elements in providing a dynamic visual environment."

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

A wide range of furniture styles, colors and materials are permitted. All furniture and fixtures must be maintained in good visual appearance, without visible fading, dents, tears, rust, corrosion, or chipped or peeling paint. All furniture and fixtures must be maintained in a clean condition at all times. All furniture and fixtures must be durable and of sufficiently sturdy construction as not to blow over with normal winds.

To ensure a quality visual appearance in keeping with the historic context of King Street's architecture, the conditions on the following pages apply to furniture (tables and chairs).

2.1 Types of Furniture

Prohibited Furniture: All furniture other than tables, chairs and umbrellas is prohibited. This includes but is not limited to serving stations, bar counters, shelves, racks, sofas, televisions, trash receptacles, heaters and torches.

Freestanding: Furniture and fixtures must not be secured to trees, lampposts, street signs, hydrants, or any other street infrastructure by means of ropes, chains or any other such devices, whether during restaurant operating hours or at times when the restaurant is closed.

Other furniture or equipment
not permitted



FIGURE 16
Furniture other than tables, chairs and umbrellas is not permitted



FIGURE 17
Furniture may be of dark color or natural unpainted material



FIGURE 18
No white or fluorescent furniture is permitted

2.2 Tables

Tables need to be functional, not only for patrons, but also for pedestrians, given the limited space available for outdoor dining on many Old Town sidewalks.

Outdoor dining furniture must also contribute to the overall atmosphere of Old Town's commercial district and be complementary in both appearance and quality.

Color: Tables may be colored or of a natural unpainted material (i.e., wood, metal etc.). Tables are not permitted to be white plastic or of any fluorescent or other strikingly bright or vivid color.

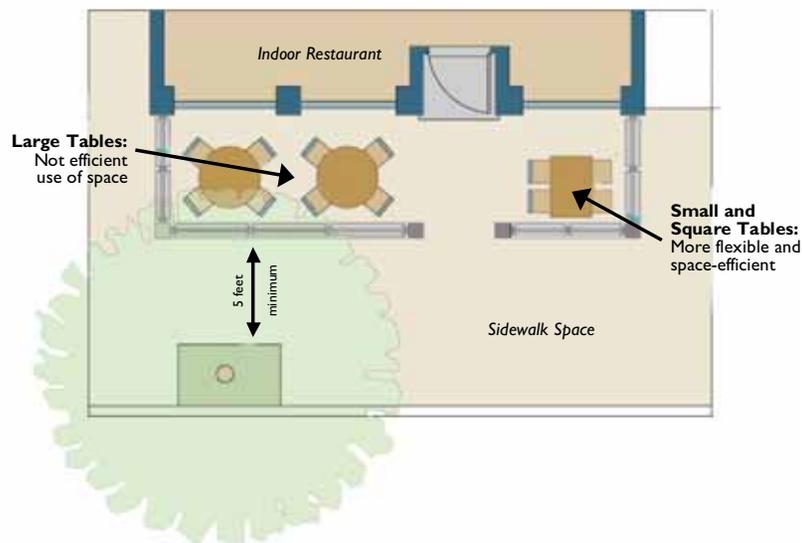


FIGURE 19
Efficient furniture layout - smaller furniture works better on King Street



FIGURES 20 and 21
Smaller bistro-style tables are more efficient for use along King Street

2.2 Tables

Size and Shape: The size and shape of tables strongly affects the functionality of an outdoor dining area. Due to Old Town’s narrow sidewalks, restaurants should strive for space-efficient seating layouts and furniture configuration.

Square or Rectangular Tables Preferred: Square or rectangular tables are strongly recommended for use in Old Town’s outdoor dining areas.

- **Better Fit:** Square or rectangular tables may fit flush against a building’s wall and can permit more usable surface area for patrons while at the same time leaving more space available for pedestrians.
- **More Flexibility:** Square or rectangular tables are more flexible for use in outdoor dining areas. Such tables may be combined to seat larger parties much more effectively than can round tables.

Smaller Tables Preferred: Smaller tables work better than larger tables and are more efficient and flexible. Although optimal table size varies by each restaurant’s specific outdoor dining layout, smaller tables are preferred.

FIGURE 22
Chairs used in an outdoor dining area must match each other



FIGURE 23
No white plastic or fluorescent furniture is permitted



FIGURE 24
Furniture may be of dark color or natural unpainted material

2.3 Chairs

Chairs, like other outdoor dining elements, must contribute to the overall atmosphere of Old Town's commercial district and must be complementary in both appearance and quality.

Color: Chairs may be colored or of a natural unpainted material (i.e., wood, metal etc.). Chairs are not permitted to be white plastic or of any fluorescent or other strikingly bright or vivid color.

Upholstery: Upholstered chairs are permitted. Upholstery is not permitted to be of any fluorescent or other strikingly bright or vivid color.

Matching: All chairs used within a particular establishment's outdoor seating area must match each other by being of visually similar design, construction and color.



FIGURE 25
Acceptable umbrella design

2.4 Umbrellas

Umbrellas can add a welcoming feel to outdoor dining areas and provide shelter from the elements, making their use desirable for outdoor dining applications. Appropriately designed and sized umbrellas are permitted for use under this outdoor dining program. Umbrellas must be free of advertisements and contained within the outdoor dining area, and the lowest dimension of an extended umbrella must be at least 7 feet above the sidewalk surface. All umbrellas must comply with the following conditions.

Contained Within the Outdoor Seating Area:

To ensure effective pedestrian flow, all parts of any umbrella (including the fabric and supporting ribs) must be contained entirely within the outdoor seating area.

Minimum Height for Sidewalk Clearance:

When extended, the umbrella must measure at least 7 feet above the surface of the outdoor dining area in order to provide adequate circulation space below. This measurement must include not only the umbrella frame and panels, but also any decorative borders such as fringes, tassels, or other such ornamentation.

Maximum Height: Any part of an umbrella used in an outdoor seating area may not exceed a height of 120" (10 feet) above the level of the sidewalk, in order to avoid causing an undue visual obstruction of other businesses.



FIGURE 26
Acceptable umbrella design: Solid color, space-efficient, market-style, canvas material

2.4 Umbrellas

Colors: Umbrellas must blend appropriately with the surrounding built environment. Therefore, umbrella fabric is not permitted to be of any fluorescent or other strikingly bright or vivid color. Umbrella covers must be of one solid color.

Size and Shape: The size and shape of an umbrella strongly affects its functionality within a constrained space such as an outdoor dining area. Due to the narrow measurements of most restaurants' outdoor dining areas, restaurants using umbrellas should strive for space-efficient umbrella designs.

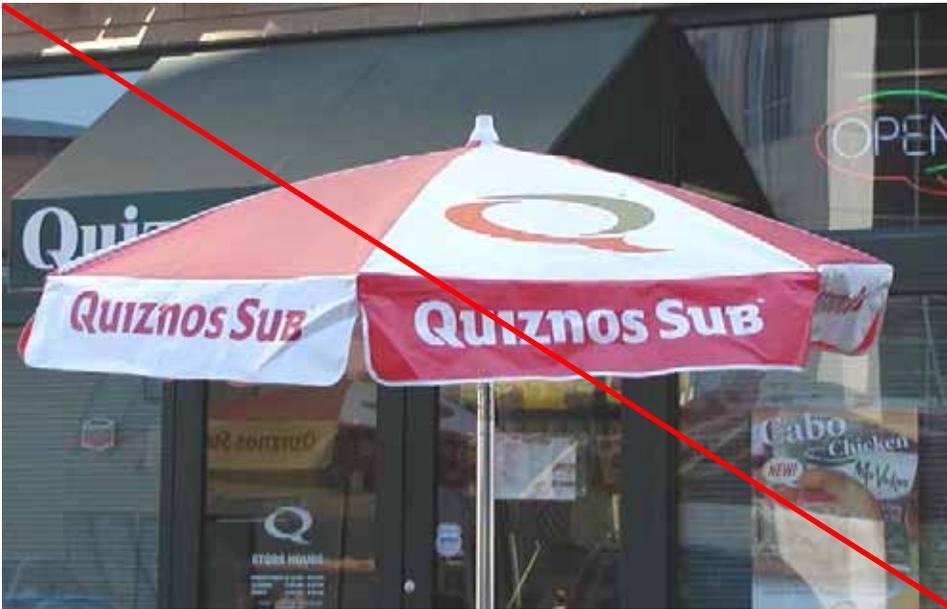
Square or Rectangular Umbrellas Preferred: Square or rectangular umbrellas, as opposed to round or octagonal umbrellas, are strongly recommended for use in Old Town's outdoor dining areas.

Market-Style Umbrellas Preferred: Market-style umbrellas – those designed specifically for patio or outdoor restaurant use – are preferred for outdoor dining purposes.

Material: Umbrella fabric must be of a material suitable for outdoor use, and must be canvas-type. No plastic fabrics, plastic/vinyl-laminated fabrics, or any type of rigid materials are permitted for use as umbrellas within an outdoor seating area.

2.4 Umbrellas

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



FIGURES 27 and 28
Signage on umbrellas
not permitted





FIGURE 29
Outdoor dining areas should be uncovered sidewalk material

2.5 Sidewalk Coverings

The floor of outdoor seating areas should be uncovered sidewalk material as to provide continuity with the adjacent public right-of-way. Floor coverings or raised platforms may not be used within outdoor dining areas.

Prohibited Sidewalk Coverings:

- **Carpet:** Prohibited sidewalk coverings include carpet or other flooring material constructed of fabric, canvas, wool, tile, linoleum, nylon, vinyl, or any covering that is intended to resemble turf.
- **Platforms:** Raised decks, platforms, or other such surfaces are not permitted within outdoor dining areas.



FIGURE 30
Outdoor dining areas must leave at least 5 feet of unobstructed pedestrian space

2.6 Circulation Room

As established in the Outdoor Dining Ordinance, all outdoor dining areas must leave at least 5 feet of unobstructed pedestrian space. This 5 feet of pedestrian space must be clear of obstructions caused by trees, tree wells, posts, hydrants, or any other infrastructure. In addition, no part of an outdoor dining area (including plants) may extend into the 5-foot-unobstructed zone.

If a perimeter enclosure is used, adequate space must be provided within the enclosed outdoor dining area to permit movement of patrons and waitstaff. Waitstaff may not serve patrons from beyond the perimeter enclosure.

2.7 Signage

Signage is permitted within outside dining areas only with a valid City permit. No extra or additional signage is permitted solely as a result of an establishment's participation in this outdoor dining program.

2.8 Setback from Other Businesses

Restaurants need to be mindful of adjoining businesses when using outdoor dining areas, making sure that neighboring businesses remain visible to pedestrians and motorists.

A restaurant may be required to adjust the outdoor seating area's layout, dimensions or distance from the property line (2 feet or more) to ensure that this visibility is maintained.



FIGURE 31

Neighboring businesses must remain visible to pedestrians and motorists