Healthy Business Streets

Guidance for temporary changes to business district street design and use for COVID-19 response and recovery

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Document may be updated as conditions and information change

Washington State Department of Health

Public Health
Seattle & King County

Introduction

Cities and business district organizations are encouraged to reprioritize public space to aid physical distancing as soon as possible. This Guide serves as a toolkit for cities and businesses to use in our collective effort of public health and economic recovery.

The need to reprioritize public space

As cities and businesses continue to address the challenges of COVID-19, we need to adapt our streets to changing circumstances. Recovery of our local businesses is necessary for our region's economic health, and physical distancing is critical for our public health.

The region's public health and economic recovery requires quick, proactive, and iterative action that reconsiders prior assumptions and conditions. The right-of-way, including sidewalks and streets, were designed on pre-COVID conditions, attuned to the travel needs of customers, delivery services, drivers, people with disabilities, and other users.

Cities, business districts, and businesses need to adjust spatial priorities. During COVID-19 response and recovery phases, people need to maintain a greater distance from one another to reduce exposure risks. Restaurants and other businesses need to use exterior spaces to compensate for indoor seating limitation. And on-street parking needs to be oriented for short-term takeout/delivery rather than longer-term parking for dine-in customers.

COVID-19 is currently known to be transmitted primarily through air droplets and aerosols, not through surface contact, and is most easily spread indoors. As a measure to reopen the economy and to protect human health, it is preferable for eating and other activities to be conducted outdoors.

The intended audiences for this Guide are cities, business districts, and restaurant owners considering or pursuing outdoor seating and retail options.

This Healthy Business Streets Guide aims to:

1. Protect public health.
2. Help local small businesses recover.
3. Make business districts destinations for safe and healthy activities.

To achieve these goals, the Guide identifies current streetscape layouts that make it hard for people to maintain safe physical distances, and provides examples for how to redesign spaces to make physical distancing easier.

The Guide is not a one-size fits all approach. Each city and neighborhood is different. Cities, businesses, and business district organizations should exercise their best judgment in applying this Guide to their circumstances.

Act now

Cities should not shy away from adjusting their streets to prioritize pedestrians during Phase 2 and 3 of the State Safe Start. While in years past street closures have enabled large gatherings for street fairs, farmers markets, "Bicycle Sundays," Play Streets," and block parties, these same street closures can now help provide the space necessary for physical distancing and outdoor dining.

The existing city programs, permitting processes, and traffic plans for the past street fairs, farmers markets, and block parties can be retooled to open streets to pedestrians. Cities just need to ensure that street closures are programmed for adequate physical distancing and not intended to draw large crowds. This Guide provides spacing and messaging guidance for how to achieve this outcome.

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Principles

1. **Center the interests, priorities, and perspectives of those for whom the negative impacts of COVID-19 have been most pronounced.**

> *"Those who advocate for safe and open streets have a historic opportunity to redefine the tent so that Black and brown people who heretofore have not felt welcome in the safe-streets movement nor seen the value of an alignment with it will see an ownership stake."*
>
> Op-ed: Making Black Lives Matter in Street Safety
> by Tracey Capers, published in Streetsblog

2. **Through environmental design, enable people to adhere to public health guidance.**

Physical distancing is a core public health strategy to reduce the transmission and potential resurgence of COVID-19 outbreaks. Many sidewalks in business districts are not designed and sized for physical distancing with a high volume of customers and pedestrians. Increasing the amount of outdoor space available to people enables them to comply with public health guidance and protect employee health, aiding in efforts to reduce the spread of the virus.

3. **Support local business recovery.**

Local neighborhood stores and restaurants, many of which are small and minority-owned businesses, are essential to our cities' and region's economic health. Unemployment rates have increased dramatically and local businesses have experienced devastating impacts. Ensuring that businesses can re-open safely is key to our overall recovery. As public health restrictions change, cities should ensure streetscape design supports economic policy goals by providing space for businesses, schools, and institutions to safely re-open.

4. **Protect now and iterate over time to build lasting recovery.**

Immediate action is needed for public health and business recovery, starting in Phase 2 of the State Safe Start Plan. Prior allocation of public and private outdoor space was based on different economic and health conditions than those we find ourselves in today. Physical distancing was not a concern and much of the roadway space was allocated only to motor vehicles.

As new priorities emerge for use of outdoor space, adopting an open and iterative approach to transportation and public space planning will allow for rapid implementation, continuous feedback, and course correction that will enable cities to respond better and faster to future COVID-19 and other outbreaks. An adaptive and iterative approach to implementation will help cities settle on the sidewalk and street layouts that work best for the needs of local businesses in the context of each business district. Involving those most affected, including people of color who own and work in small businesses, can help improve equitable stewardship of public spaces.

Quick-build, temporary installations today can serve as pilot projects to inform lasting improvements over the course of recovery and beyond. Regular dialogue with businesses, neighborhood organizations, residential neighbors, customers, and safe street advocacy groups can provide essential on-the-ground information about how efforts are working and what should be modified over time. The collaborative development model below presents an approach that allows community values and priorities to inform the characteristics of healthy business streets.

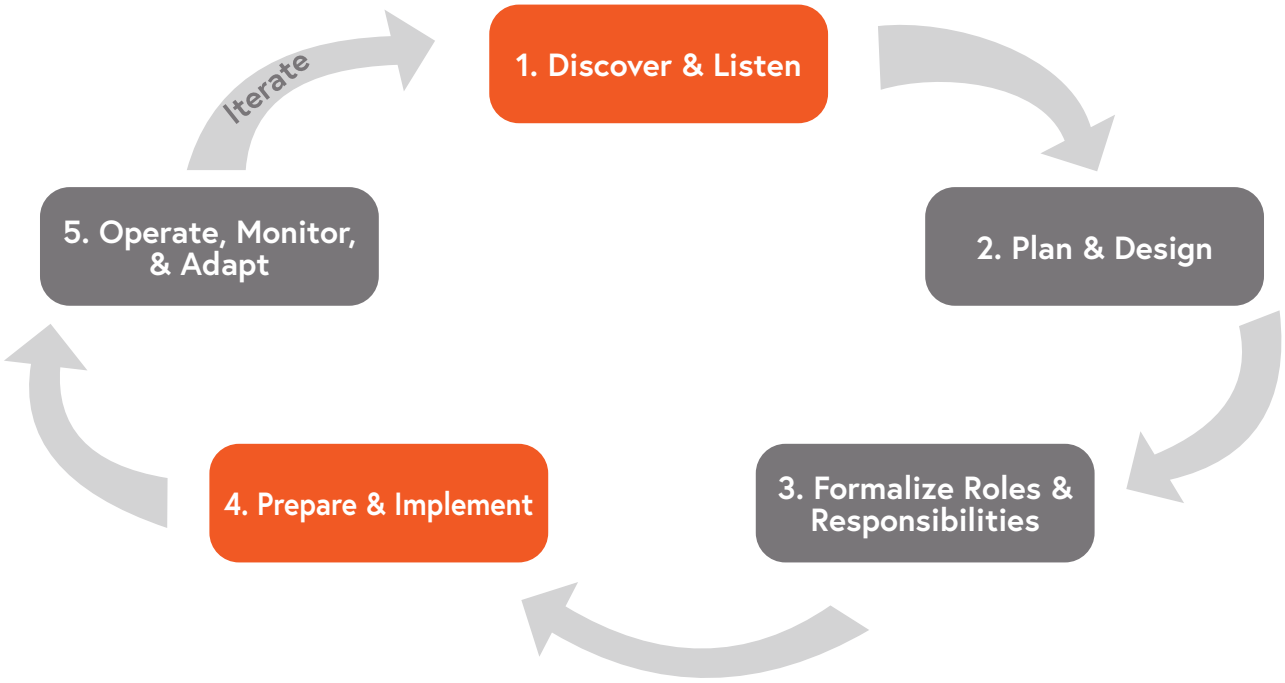
Collaborative Development Model

We face a public health and economic emergency that requires quick, decisive action to protect health and foster recovery.

In order to ensure there is sufficient physical distancing within business districts and to enable businesses to have adequate restaurant and market space for their financial sustainability, the planning, design, and implementation of street modifications should be highly iterative. Focus on piloting a street modification quickly and using the pilot as a core tool to better understand what works and doesn't work for the particular context of a street.

In some cases traffic and customer behavior may take time to adjust; in others, issues will immediately become apparrent. Therefore, organizers should both evaluate impacts over time, and be ready to make rapid adjustments to iterate and modify as neccesary.

1. Discover and listen to understand the modifications that are needed
2. Plan and design modifications based on design tools and approaches
3. Formalize roles and responsibilities
4. Prepare and implement
5. Operate, monitor, and adapt



1. Discover & Listen

A core strategy to prevent the spread of COVID-19 is keeping individuals from different households six-feet physically distant from one another.

With indoor occupancy restrictions, a business may need to expand its footprint into the public right-of-way to remain financially viable. Opening outdoor space for dining and merchandise sales is an opportunity to support local small businesses.

When identifying where modifications to sidewalk and street layout are necessary, it is essential to consider how people are able to maintain a six-foot physical distance throughout their experience in these public settings.

Identifying what steps to take and when modifications are necessary

Key Steps for Discovering & Listening

- Evaluate the physical conditions on a street, including sidewalk widths, number of businesses, and pedestrian volumes.
- Identify key obstacles or issues affecting design or segment length.
- Gauge the types of businesses nearby and their needs, including additional seating or retail space and parking zones for delivery.
- Seek input and learn about interests and concerns of adjacent businesses and other potentially affected parties.
- Center the most impacted, including Black, Indigenous, People of Color, and people with disabilities, to co-design and co-develop the street modification.
- Consider forming a stakeholder working group that includes:
    - Black, Indigenous, and People of Color organizations and individuals.
    - People with disabilities.
    - Adjacent businesses and business district organizations.
    - Bike/walk and health coalitions.

Topics for Stakeholders to Consider

Determine if a sidewalk extension or other street/sidewalk modification is necessary by considering whether:

- There is enough space for two people to pass one another on the sidewalk while maintaining a six-foot physical distance. A standard sidewalk is six feet wide, which allows two people in wheelchairs to pass one another. As illustrated on page ##, a six-foot width is likely inadequate for two people who are walking to pass one another in order to maintain their COVID-required physical distancing.
- Street furniture and landscaping reduce the pedestrian space, including trees, street lamps, benches, garbage cans, newspaper vending boxes, fire hydrants, and bicycle racks.
- The number of people who are walking and standing on the sidewalk during peak hours is too great to reasonably expect they will maintain safe physical distances.
- People line-up outside of a business to get food or services, and/or inside seating is full.
- People with disabilities, such as those using wheelchairs, have difficulty navigating the sidewalk or difficulty keeping physical distance.
- An adjacent parking lane or even a travel lane can be converted to another use.
- The speed and volume of vehicular traffic adjacent to the sidewalk make walking into the street dangerous.
- Signs are easily understandable and relatable by diverse users. Try to make signs fun and appealing, whenever possible. Hire local artists, including youth, to develop signs that reflect local cultures.
- The resources different communities have. Communities of color have been impacted by COVID-19 to a greater degree, and their businesses may be less situated to take advantage of new city programs for street and sidewalk modifications due to possibly possessing fewer financial resources to buy tables, chairs, canopies, and other weather protection for curbside cafes, and having less time and experience in working with city administrations to navigate permitting. As a result, cities should consider providing additional staff time and other assistance in neighborhoods where these resource differentials are likely to exist.

Illustrating physical distancing challenges

Sidewalk Layout Terminology and Requirements

Sidewalks have a "frontage zone," "pedestrian clear zone," and "furniture zone," as shown in the illustration to the right. The "pedestrian clear zone" is the most important as it's the traditional area of the sidewalk that is specifically reserved for pedestrian travel, and must be unobstructed in a straight line for the length of a block. The minimum widths of "pedestrian clear zones" are based on the ability for a person using a wheelchair to pass another person (see 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design). In Seattle, the width of the "pedestrian clear zone" is eight feet for downtown sidewalks and six feet for all other areas.

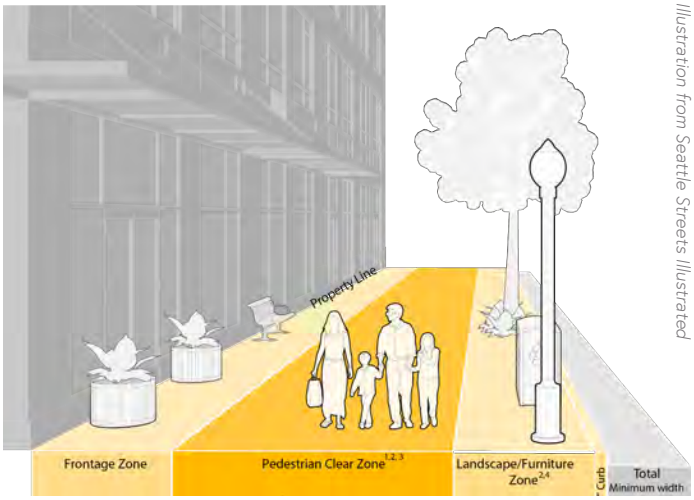


Illustration from Seattle Streets Illustrated

Challenge: Sidewalks Too Small

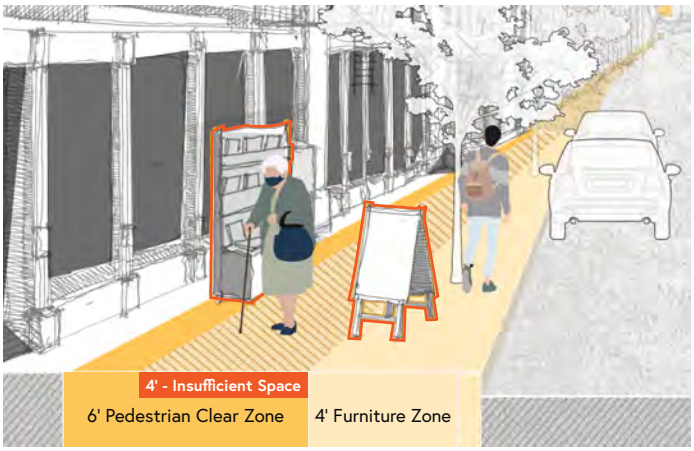
A six-foot wide pedestrian clear zone would be too small for individuals from different households to pass at least 6 feet from one another without one person walking outside the clear zone.

In some situations when people are walking in a group, even an eight-foot wide sidewalk may be too small for adequate physical distancing.

Some locations, such as grocery stores and parks, have overcome problemmatic passing distances by making pathways one-way. This is not possible for public sidewalks where people need access to storefronts from both directions.

Challenge: Obstacles & Intrusions

Retail along the sidewalk adjacent to a business, "sandwich board signs," and other sidewalk furniture may significantly impact the ability for people to maintain a six-foot physical distance. The obstacles can be especially difficult for people with limited mobility or vision impairments to navigate. In constrained sidewalk environments, sandwich board signs and similar obstacles should be discouraged, even when in the furniture zone.

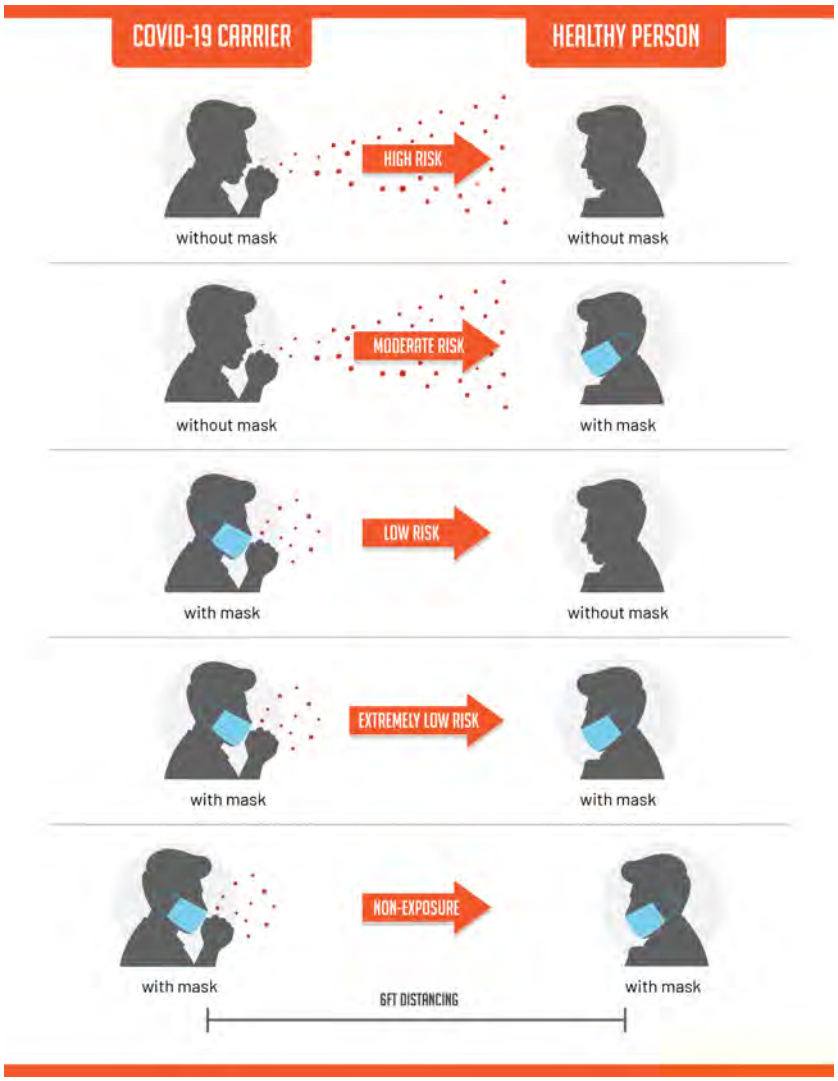


Benefits of masks

Because COVID-19 is currently known to be an airborne disease, masks have been shown to be an effective tool at limiting infection. Six-foot physical distancing in an outside environment will prevent most transmission.

However, despite the best efforts to make space for physical distancing on sidewalks and streets, pedestrians and customers will inevitably still come within a closer distance. Therefore, people need to be encouraged to wear masks at all times, including immediately before and after eating outside.

Effect of Masks on Likelihood of Transmission



Top illustration by Public Health of Seattle & King County

Bottom illustration by Jennifer Cao

2. Plan & Design
Potential Modifications

There is no 'one solution fits all' approach to modifying a street layout. City staff, local business districts, businesses, and community members will need to decide together what modification works best for their context. In all circumstances, the design should follow the six-foot physical distancing requirements and meet ADA standards. An adaptive, iterative approach will always be best to ensure street modifications continue to be successful.

Key Steps for Planning & Designing Potential Modifications

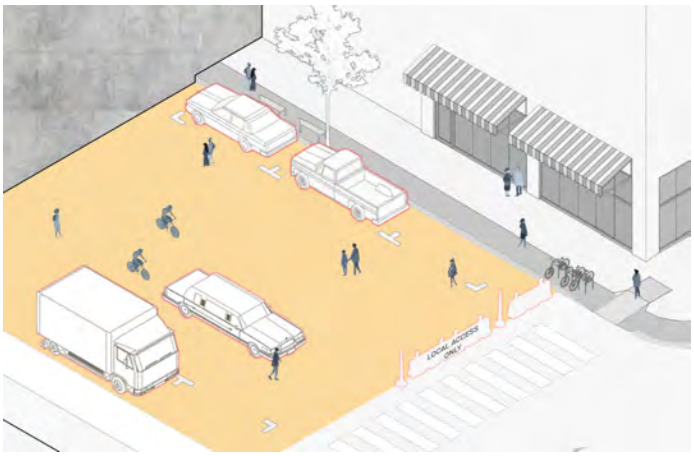
Using this Guide's Solutions Toolkit and the Additional Considerations on the following pages, design a context-appropriate street modification proposal that:

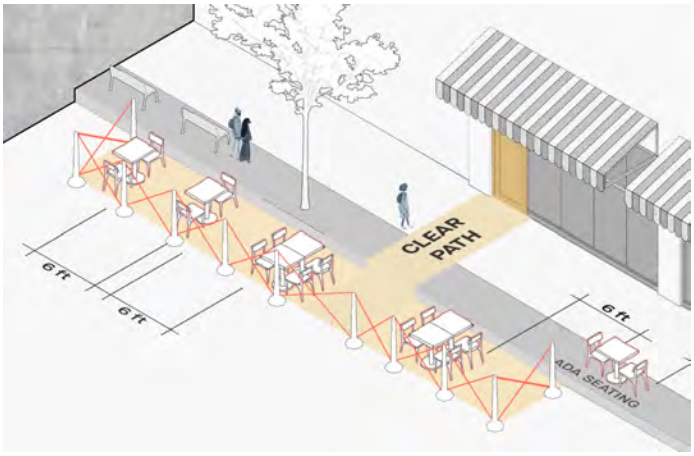
- Meets physical distancing, health, and street use guidelines and requirements.
- Engages adjacent businesses and relevant stakeholders for brainstorming creative solutions and ultimately is a proposal that meets business needs.
- Can be implemented quickly and iterated upon.
- Reflects the intent of businesses and other stakeholders.
- Advances racial equity in configuration and operation.
- Communicate and refine proposal(s) in dialogue with:
    - Community and affected parties, including businesses and residents
    - Transportation and land use authorities
    - Permitting and safety authorities

Plan & Design Section Content

- **Solutions Toolkit**
    - Sidewalk Extensions
    - Slow Streets
    - Curbside Cafes & Markets
    - Shared Curbsides for Dining & Markets
    - Plazas & Market Streets
    - Alternative Configurations
    - Combining Designs
- **Additional Considerations**
    - Delivery and pick-up zones
    - Order and take-out windows
    - Time of day and week uses and changes
    - Fire department
    - ADA design
    - Transit
    - Micromobility: scooter and bike share
    - Sanitation protocols
    - Restaurant employee safety and health
    - Food handling and service
    - Alcohol
    - Permit fees and review
    - Insurance
    - Defining and serving priority businesses

Solutions Toolkit





Sidewalk Extensions

Description

Create temporary extra space for people to walk by using traffic cones or other delineators to block off parking lane or travel lane adjacent to the sidewalk.

Places to Consider for Implementation

Where sidewalks are too narrow for people to adhere to physical distancing guidelines while people are walking or waiting. Any sidewalk that is 6 to 8 feet wide within a business district should be considered for a sidewalk extension.

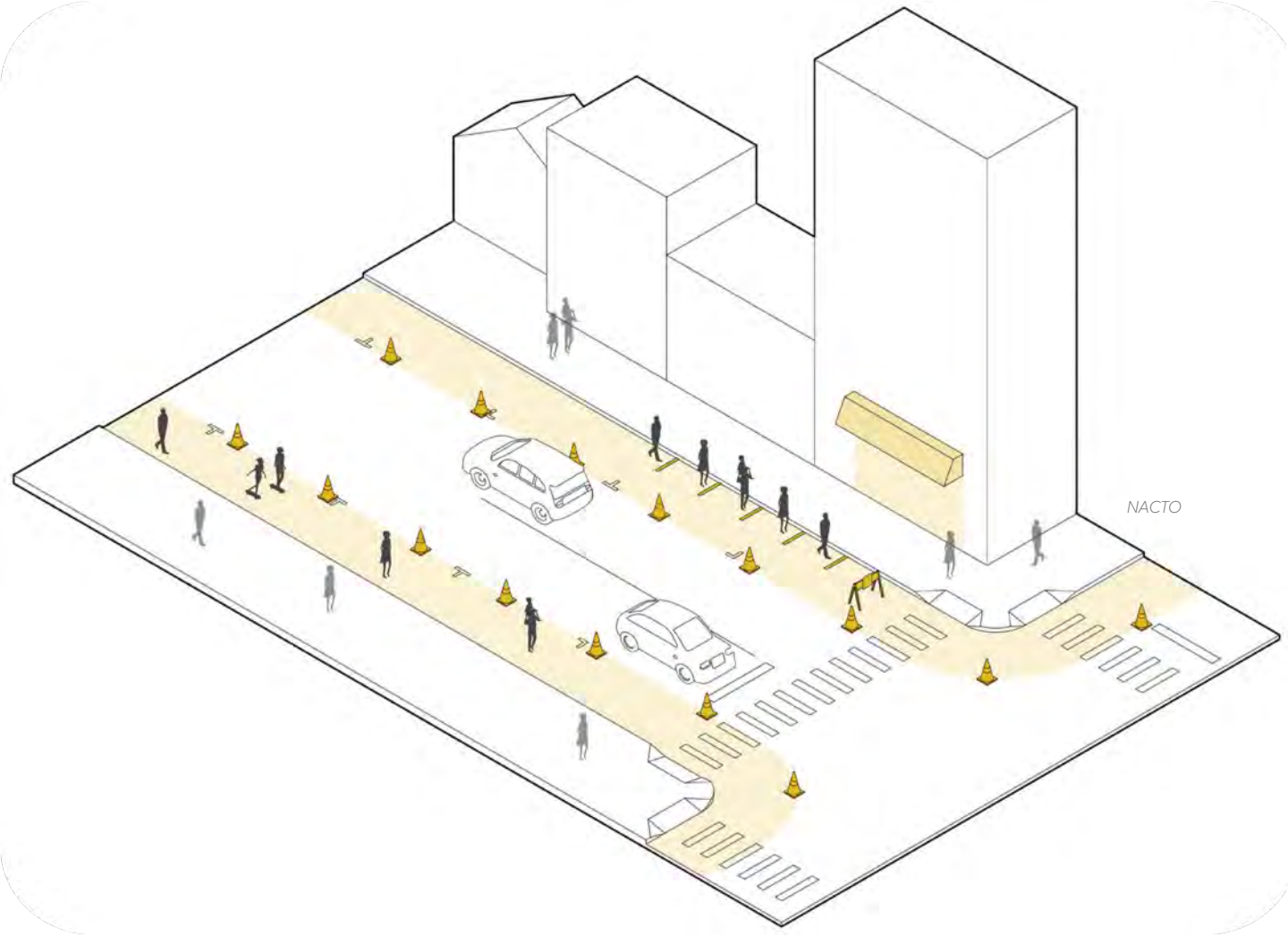
Planning

- Prioritize sidewalk extensions for business districts with pedestrian clearance zones that are less than 8 feet wide.
- If local requirements for pedestrian protection in temporary traffic control plans cannot be met within the timeline of pandemic response, document rationale for departing from rules rather than delaying the project.

Design

- Use traffic cones, barrels, delineators, or plastic jersey barriers to block-off parking lane or travel lane adjacent to the sidewalk. The substantiality of the delineators should reflect the traffic volumes and speeds of the adjacent vehicular traffic, and be compliant with state and local law.
- Consider enhancing the sidewalk extension by painting the extension area and using planter boxes as the traffic delineator/barriers.
- Consider: (A) need for delivery driver pick-up zones; (B) bus stop access; (C) ADA parking needs; (D) garbage/recycling pick-up; (E) access to utilities, including fire hydrants; and (F) whether sandwich boards and street furniture should be relocated or removed in order to create more pedestrian space.
- Maintain the "pedestrian clear zone" on the sidewalks so that people with disabilities can still easily traverse the existing sidewalk.
- Materials and solutions should be ADA compliant; i.e., cane detectable for people with low vision or blind.

SHOP
7' Sidewalk Extension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Slow Streets

Description

As an alternative to a temporary sidewalk extension, a city may choose to instead implement traffic calming measures that permit all people, whether driving, bicycling, walking, or rolling, to share the full right-of-way of a street. Driving on the street is typically restricted to local access, pick-up and delivery.

Places to Consider for Implementation

Where sidewalks are too narrow for people to meet physical distancing guidelines while people are walking or waiting. A "slow street" design may be preferable to a "sidewalk extension" where a "sidewalk extension" may eliminate parking or where no parking lane currently exists. A "slow street" design may also be implemented on streets with other modifications such as sidewalk extensions and curbside cafes & markets. A "slow street" is not suitable for a major transit corridor without approval of the transit agency.

Design

- Identify which intersections to close fully and which to partially close, preserving local access but preventing most through-movements.
- Place temporary traffic barriers to partially block streets, indicate restricted use, and encourage traffic speeds of 5-10 mph.
- Use temporary "Local Traffic Only," Slow/Shared, and/or branded signs (e.g., "Stay Healthy Streets") at main vehicle entry points.
- Allow local access, food take out pick-up, waste pick-up, deliveries, and emergency vehicles.
- As a means to reduce traffic volume and the amount of space dedicated to motor vehicles, consider converting the street to one-direction for drivers and reducing the drive lane width by combining other design solutions, such as sidewalk extensions and curbside cafes.
- Consider: (A) need for delivery driver pick-up zones; (B) ADA parking needs; (C) garbage/recycling pick-up; (D) access to utilities, including fire hydrants; and (E) whether sandwich boards and street furniture should be relocated or removed in order to create more pedestrian space.
- Establish a delivery protocol for restaurants based on hours of operation, garbage pickup, and overall access issues.
- Maintain the "pedestrian clear zone" on the sidewalks so that people with disabilities can still easily traverse the sidewalk.

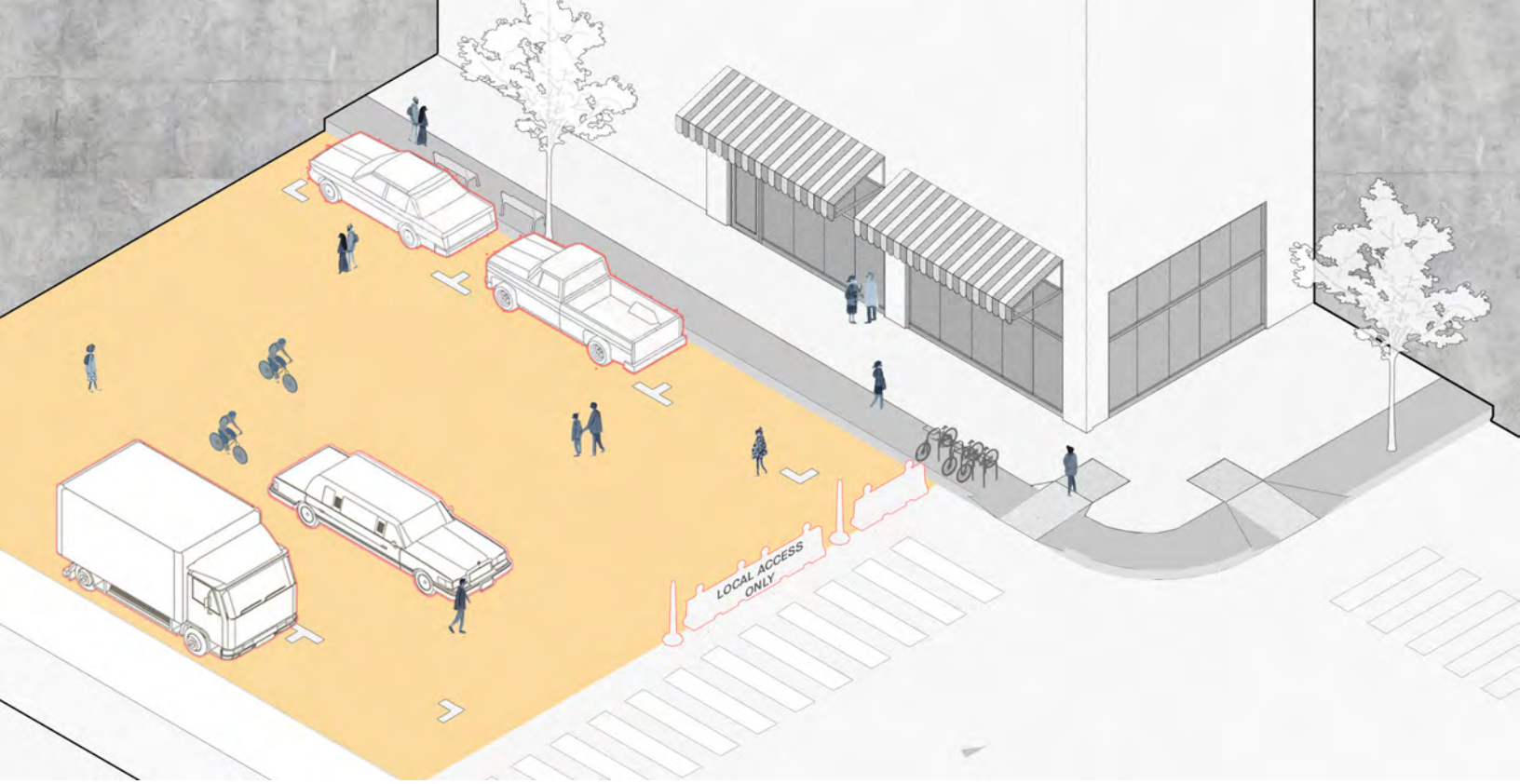
State law only allows pedestrians to walk in the street when it is "closed." (RCW 46.61.250). Barriers and signage should be installed at each end of the block to make it clear that the street is closed to general through traffic but open for local access and deliveries and for people to walk and bike on.

Planning

- Identify a block or network of streets that can be closed at key entry points, where interior intersections remain unobstructed.
- Avoid affecting streets with bus or streetcar routes, unless the bus routes can be easily shifted to an adjacent street.
- Engage community groups, youth, and local artists in implementing the design.

Examples

- Pike Place in Pike Place Market, Seattle
- Bell Street Park Boulevard, Seattle
- Seattle Stay Healthy Streets Program
- Bellevue Healthy Streets Program
- NACTO spreadsheet tracking cities' transportation-related COVID-19 actions, including open streets initiatives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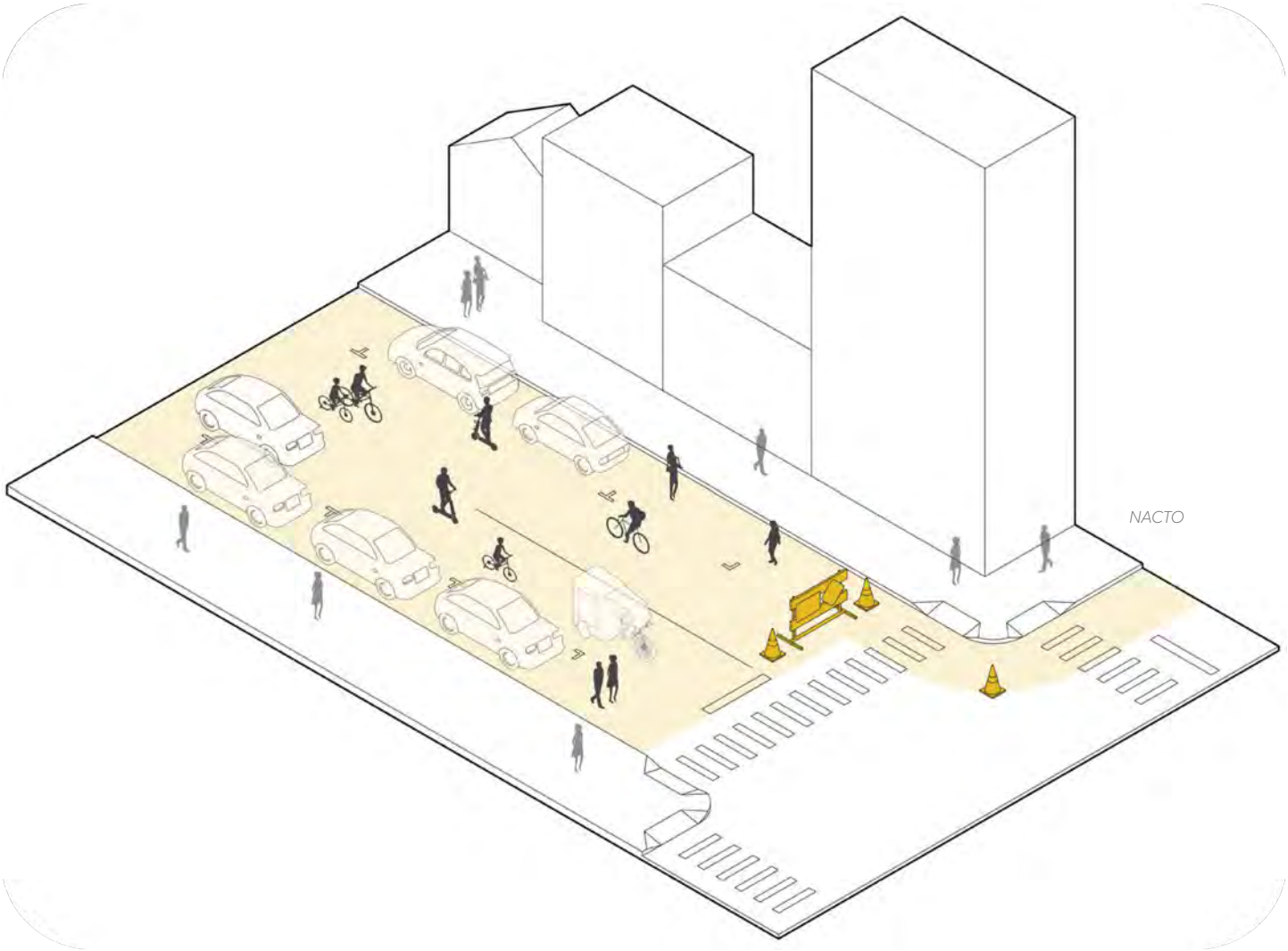
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Curbside Cafes & Markets

Description

Many cities already have established "parklet," "streatery," or "curbside cafe" programs that allow businesses and other organizations to convert on-street parking into a sitting, eating, and drinking space. These cities can leverage their existing programs by reducing design requirements and permitting costs and timelines. For restaurants and retail stores forced to reduce interior occupancy, the exterior space can provide the additional space capacity necessary to compensate for reduced interior seating.

Places to Consider for Implementation

- Where a parking lane is available to be converted into a curbside cafe or market and:
  - Adjacent restaurants or retail stores have restricted interior seating or shopping capacity and need exterior space to off-set lost interior capacity, and
  - the existing sidewalks lacks sufficient space for seating or retail to occur adjacent to building or in the landscape zone.

Key Steps

- City establishes no-cost to low-cost permit program for businesses to set-up eating or other marketplace space in adjacent curbside parking area.
- Business sets up curbside cafe or market.
- Establish opportunities for city or other partnerships to provide access to low-cost materials, equipment and resources to set up outdoor spaces

Design

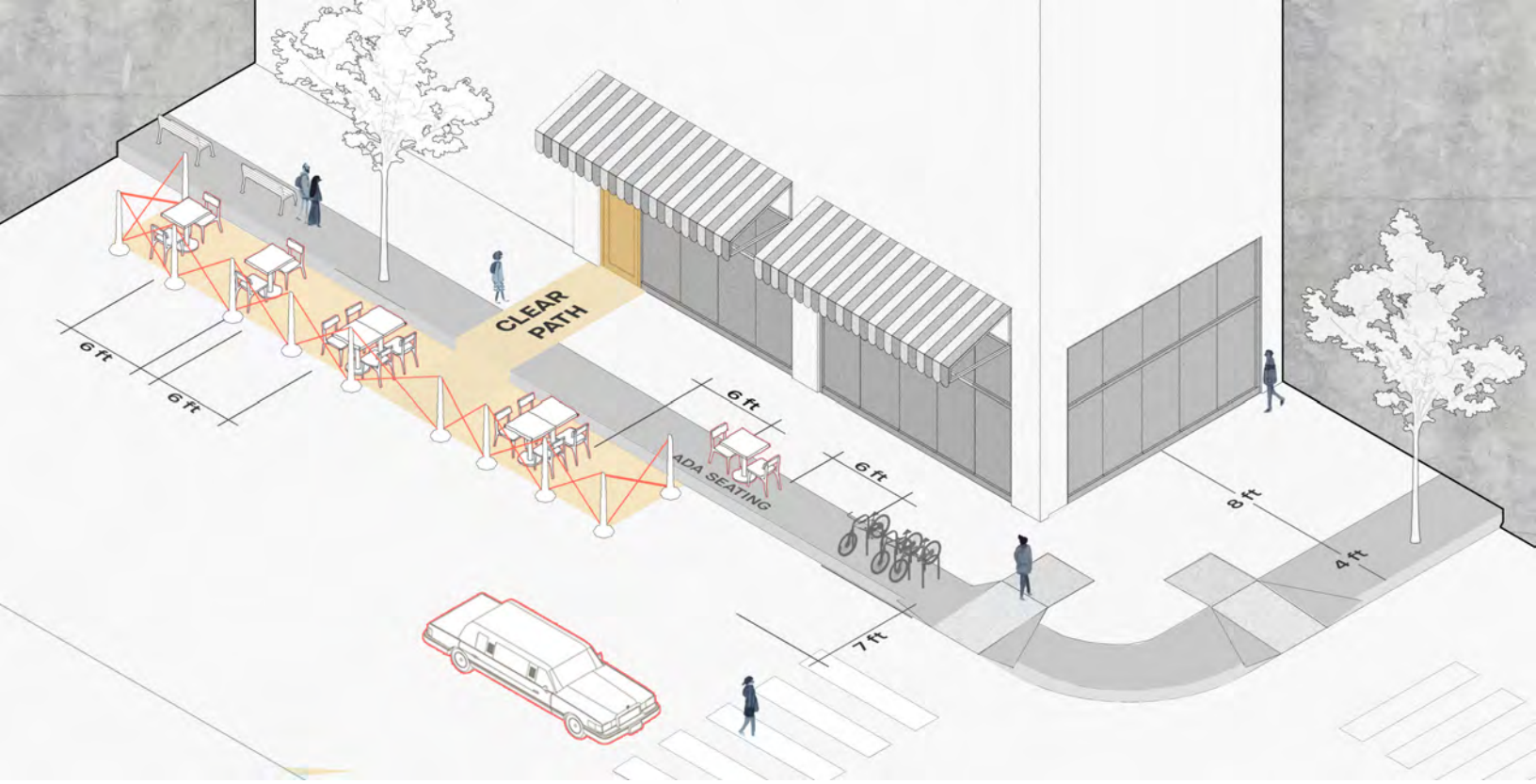
- Allow deviation from existing city parklet or streatery standards, and allow additional flexibility for more temporary installations.
- If the curbside cafe or market is either (A) in the street or (B) partially on the sidewalk and immediately adjacent to the pedestrian clear zone, delineate the space with cones, ropes, or fencing.
- ADA compliance is the responsibility of the business.
  - Maintain the "pedestrian clear zone" on the sidewalks so that people with disabilities can still easily traverse the sidewalk.
  - If a business's curbside cafe or market is separated by a vertical curb or edge, ensure people with disabilities can access different spaces within the business in order to be served.
  - If a portion of the curbside cafe or market is immediately adjacent to the pedestrian clear zone of the sidewalk, the delineation must be cane-detectable.
- Design for Physical Distancing:
  - Ensure tables and seating are configured such that people seated are at least 6' from other individuals of different households, whether the other people are seated at another table, are servers, or are customers moving through the space. Spacing shall be measured from occupied chair to occupied chair.
  - All tables must seat no more than 5 people.
  - The adjacency to the pedestrian walkway must be considered. The table/chair sets should be setback six feet from the nearby "pedestrian clear zones" of the sidewalk.
  - If outdoor customers are expected to order or purchase inside a business, a clear pedestrian path must be established from the business entrance to the outdoor seating/retail areas.
- Consider: (A) need for delivery driver pick-up zones; (B) bus stop access; (C) ADA parking needs; (D) garbage/recycling pick-up; (E) access to utilities, including fire hydrants; and (F) whether sandwich boards and street furniture should be relocated or removed in order to create more pedestrian space.

Planning

- Establish a rapid permitting program, or establish clear guidelines for businesses to follow without any necessary permit approval process.
- Reduce or eliminate permitting costs.

Examples

- Redmond Outdoor Dining Program
- Seattle Temporary Streatery Cafe, Merchandise Display, & Vending Permits
- Tacoma Curbside Cafes & Marketplaces (PDF)



Local Examples

Redmond

Photo by Greater Redmond TMA

Ballard Ave, Seattle

Capitol Hill, Seattle

Photo by Greater Redmond TMA

Photos by Dongho Chang, SDOT

Shared Curbside Dining

Description

Provide space for outdoor dining off the sidewalk in the street so that restaurants and retail stores can comply with physical distancing guidelines while resuming dine-in and retail operations. The city or a local business district organization would be the likely entity responsible for establishing and maintaining a shared outdoor dining area, including providing tables and chairs.

Places to Consider for Implementation

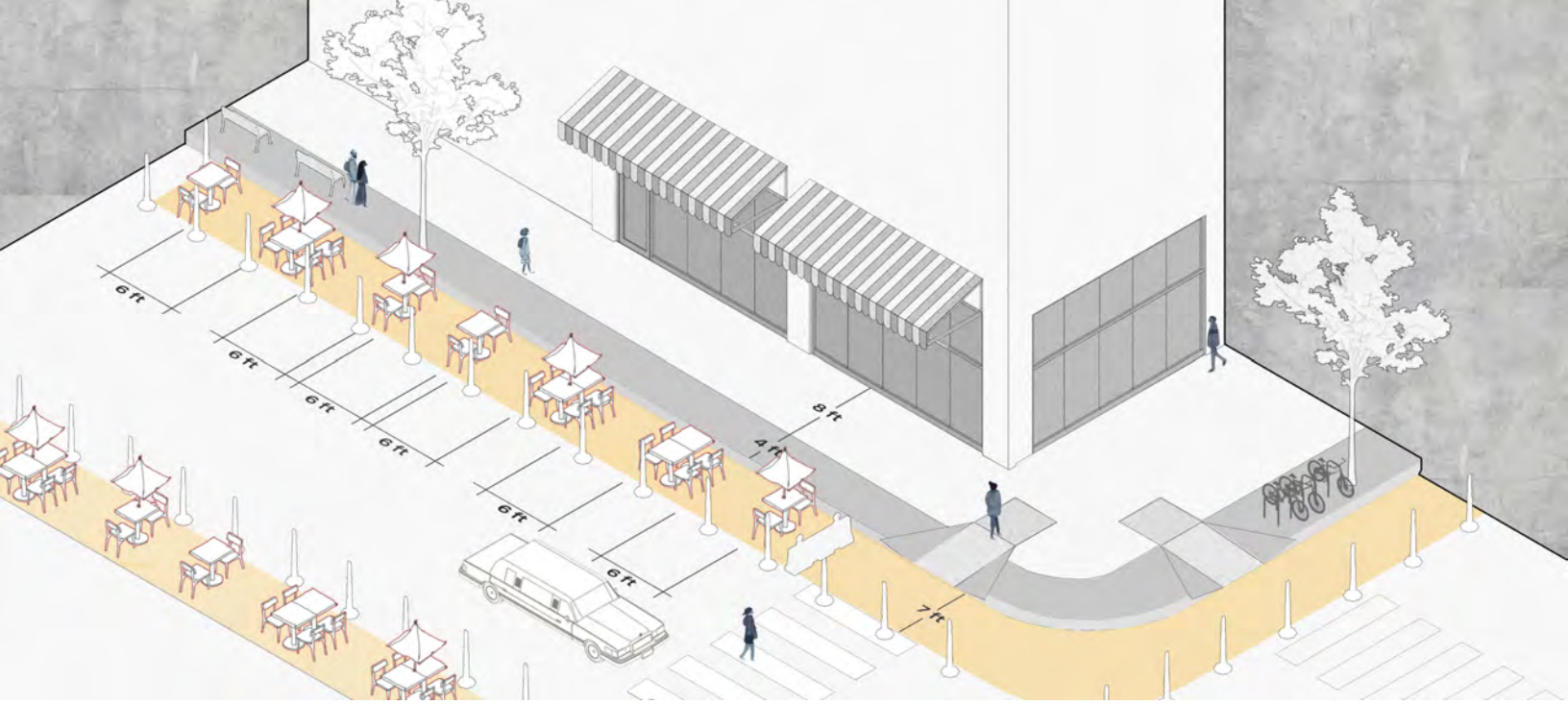
Where restaurants, cafes, food stalls, and/or street food vendors are clustered along one or several blocks.

Design

- Use fencing, traffic cones, or other barriers to delineate the shared outdoor dining and market curbside space from the vehicular travel lanes.
- If closing a lane of traffic, use a larger barrier to end-cap the lane.
- Provide tables, chairs, and umbrellas as needed to create shared dining area. As a variation to a completely public shared space for dining, may allow business-specific streateries and curbside markets within the space.
- Design for Physical Distancing
    - Measure from back-of-seat to back-of-seat when using markings to indicate distancing standards or public health guidelines.
    - Sets of chairs with a table should be spaced six feet from adjacent sets table/chair sets. If pedestrians, customers, or waiters are expected to be able to walk between the table/chair sets, the spacing should be increased to 12 feet.
    - The adjacency to the pedestrian walkway should also be considered. Ideally, the table/chair sets should be setback six feet from the adjacent "pedestrian clear zone." A narrower furniture zone that buffers the pedestrian clearance zone from the seating may be sufficient; if no furniture zone exists, it's sufficient if the seating area is on the street, separated from the sidewalk.
- Maintain ADA compliance, including maintaining the "pedestrian clear zone" on the sidewalks so people with disabilities can still easily use the sidewalk.
- Include tables and seating that is accessible for people with disabilities.
- Consider: (A) need for delivery driver pick-up zones; (B) bus stop access; (C) ADA parking needs; (D) garbage/recycling pick-up; (E) access to utilities, including fire hydrants; and (F) whether sandwich boards and street furniture should be relocated or removed in order to create more pedestrian space.
- Establish a delivery protocol for restaurants based on hours of operation, garbage pickup, and overall access issues.
- Consider providing handwashing stations and public restrooms. If using private restrooms for public use, provide clear informational and wayfinding signage to the bathrooms.
- Consider providing outdoor tents to cover the seating area as weather changes to rain in the fall and winter. However, UV light may be helpful in more rapid deterioration of the COVID-19 virus, so exposed tables and seating are encouraged on days when rain protection is unnecessary.

Planning

- Establish authority for creating "street dining" as needed, such as through emergency mayoral executive orders or administrative rules.
- Consider waiving sidewalk dining permit fees during the pandemic.
- Consider the roles that parking enforcement officers, transportation/public works department staff, and/or a local business district organization coupld play in assisting with support tasks, such as monitoring, cleaning, and public communication.
- Commit to an initial duration and hours of operation, noting state and county "stay-at-home" phases restrictions that govern operations.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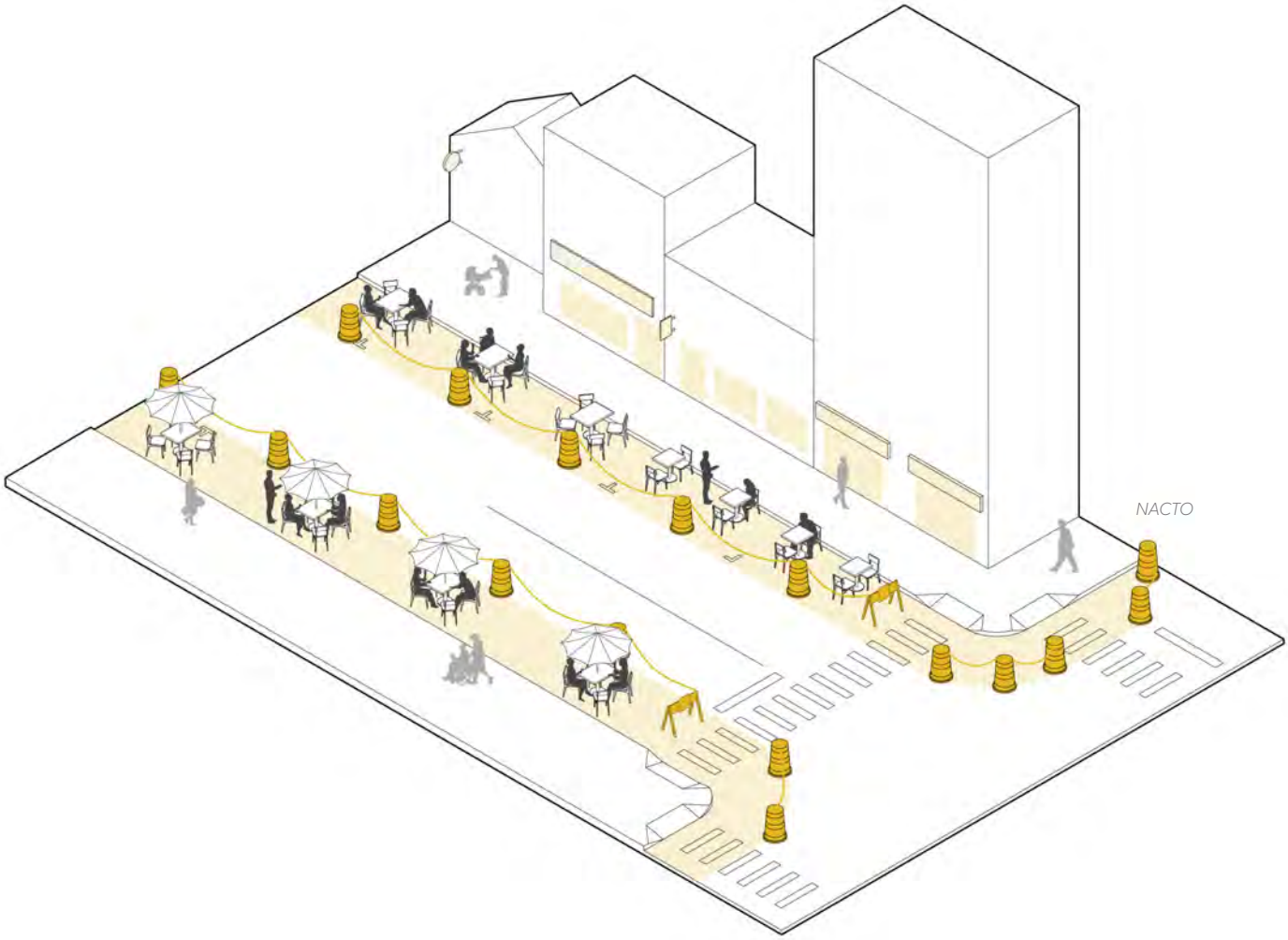
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Plazas & Market Streets

Description

Close street to vehicular traffic and allow businesses to set-up tents, tables, and chairs within the street for cafes and retail. The layout could be similar either to a farmers market or to enlarged fenced-in curbside cafes and markets. The city or a local business district organization would be the likely entity responsible for establishing and maintaining a shared outdoor dining area, including providing tables and chairs.

Places to Consider for Implementation

- Streets with permanent or active open-air markets, periodic farmers markets, or streets adjacent to market buildings.
- Non-principal arterial streets in business districts with a high-density of restaurants and storefront retail.
- Streets adjacent to parks within business districts.

Design

- Design for Physical Distancing:
  - For a booth style configuration, ensure there is at least 12' between each booth to enable people to move between the booths at a distance of 6' from the booths. Use paint or other ground markings to indicate locations for vendor stalls.
  - For a fenced-in eating and retail configurations and for public plaza seating, ensure the tables and seating are configured such that people seated are at least 6' from individuals of different households, whether the other people are seated at another table, are wait staff, or are customers moving through the space.
  - The adjacency to the pedestrian walkway should be considered. The table/chair sets should be setback six feet from nearby "pedestrian clear zones."
- Use barriers and signs to demarcate where market boundaries abut vehicle traffic.
- Create large signage for entrance areas.
- Maintain necessary emergency fire lane widths within the street.
- Use barriers and markings (e.g., tables, ropes, sidewalk chalk, fencing) to minimize interactions between vendors and customers and to maintain physical distances at purchase points. Cane-detectable barriers, such as fencing, are good for aiding blind people to understand the defined edges of seating arrangements.
- Maintain ADA compliance, including maintaining the "pedestrian clear zone" on the sidewalks so people with disabilities can still easily use the sidewalk.
- Consider: (A) need for delivery driver pick-up zones; (B) bus stop access; (C) ADA parking needs; (D) garbage/recycling pick-up; (E) access to utilities, including fire hydrants; and (F) whether sandwich boards and street furniture should be relocated or removed in order to create more pedestrian space.
- Establish a delivery protocol for restaurants based on hours of operation, garbage pickup, and overall access issues.
- If dining is a signficant programmed use of the plaza, consider providing handwashing stations and public restrooms. If using private restrooms for public use, provide clear informational and wayfinding signage to the bathrooms.
- With an expectation that fewer people will arrive to the plaza or market street by motor vehicle, ensure there is adequate bike parking, such as providing a set of "staple" or "inverted-U" racks within a "bike corral" at each end of the block.
- In later phases of the State Safe Start, possibly consider adding a stage for music and other performances so people feel more comfortable in the open, physically-distanced space. Guidance for when such entertainment will be permissible will be added to a future edition of this Guide.

Planning

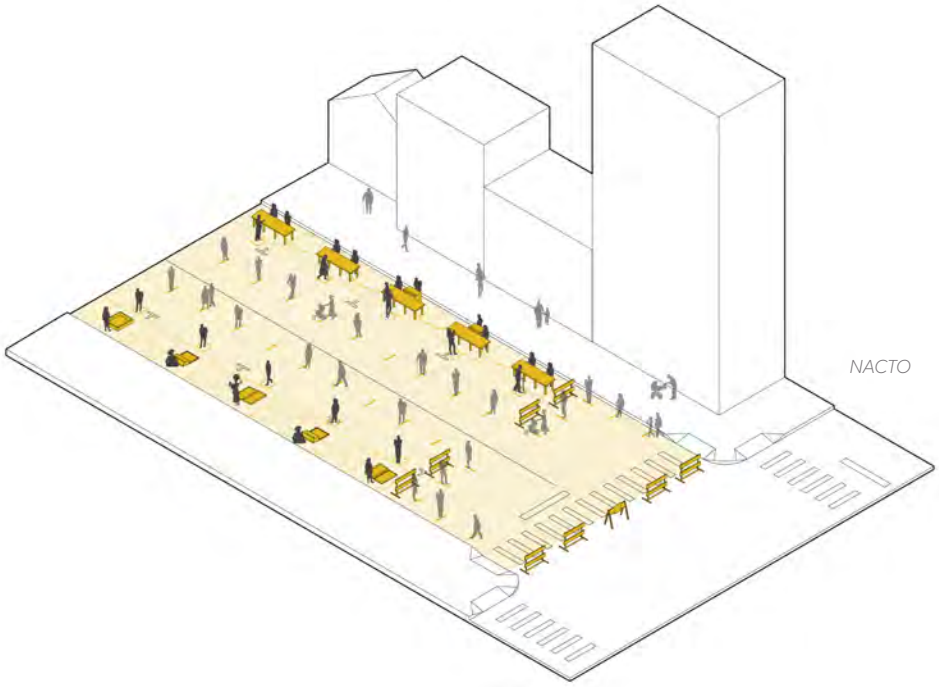
- Assess total vendor and customer capacity based on current physical distancing guidelines.
- Amend or update permits to reflect the new operation scheme, if needed.
- Allocate space and schedules to allow for safe loading and drop-off outside market operating hours.

Examples

- City of Edmonds Weekend Closure of Main Street
- Washington State Department of Health's Farmers Market Guidance (PDF)

Local Examples

Edmonds



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Bothell

Photos by Mark Ostrow

Alternative Configurations

Side Street Plaza

Where the main street in a business district is an arterial that cannot be significantly modified, it may be possible to close a side street to vehicular traffic and open it to outdoor dining. All seating and tables should observe physical distancing, including ensuring that people can walk between seated people at different tables and maintain a 6' distance. In general, this means that table/chair sets should be at least 12' apart.

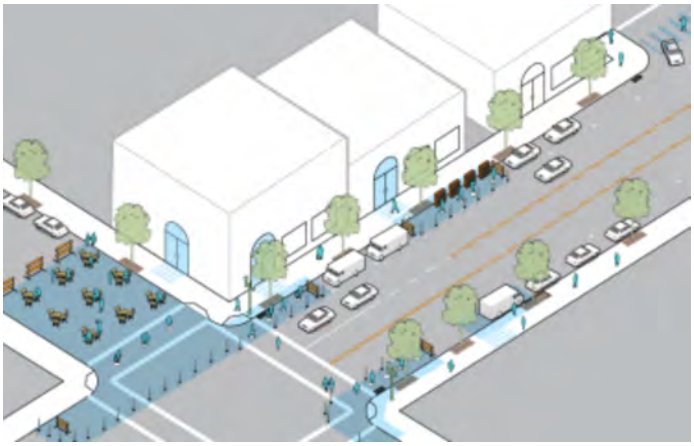


Illustration by Portland Bureau of Transportation

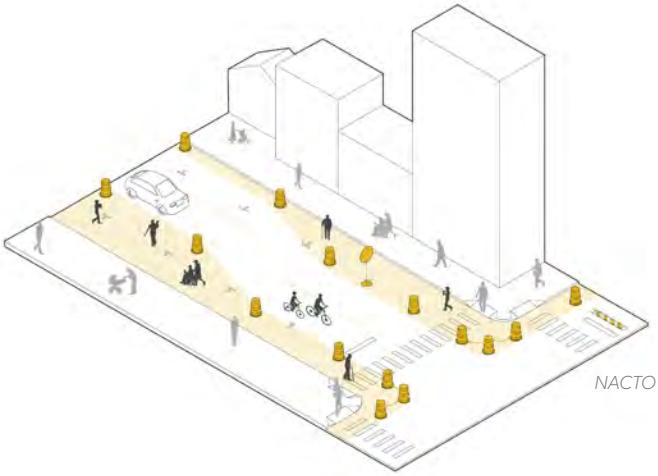
Shared Private Parking Lots

Restaurants are encouraged to put seating outdoors, including by partnering with adjacent restaurants as an effort of mutual aid. This could include sharing outdoor eating spacings on existing private parking lots. All table/chair sets should be at least 6' apart, and 12' apart if customers and wait staff are expected to walk between the tables. Table spacing and enforcement of physical distancing shall be the responsibility of the principal business on the property.

Photo by Dongho Chang, SDOT

Swerved Sidewalk Extensions

In order to slow traffic and extend sidewalks, consider alternative designs such as swerving the travel lanes through the block segment. By realigning the travel lanes, the needs of different businesses may be able to be better met, such as curbside delivery in one location and a streatery in another. Any layout should be approved by the city traffic engineer.



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Combining Designs

There is no one-size fits all approach to modifying the allocation of space to other uses. Sidewalk extensions, curbside cafes, slow streets, and side street plazas can all exist within the same block. The right design will be based on local context and input from businesses and stakeholders.

The approach to designing a street should be adaptive and iterative — if something is not working, the city and businesses should experiment with finding a better design solution. In all circumstances, the COVID physical distancing requirements and ADA standards should always be met as a baseline.

Example: Slow Street + Sidewalk Extension + Curbside Cafes & Markets

Additional Considerations

There are many additional considerations beyond physical distancing and street layout design that are important for modifying the configuration of a street. This subsection highlights some of those issues and directs the reader to follow-up with the appropriate decision-making authorities where necessary.

- Delivery and pick-up zones
- Order and take-out windows
- Time of day and week uses and changes
- Fire department
- ADA design and Universal Design
- Transit
- Parking for bicycling and shared microbility
- Sanitation protocols
- Restaurant employee safety and health
- Food handling and service
- Alcohol
- Permit fees and review
- Insurance
- Defining and serving priority businesses

Other considerations, such as long-term funding to support permanent installation of temporary solutions, bicycle access, and autonomous vehicles, may be added to future editions of this Guide.

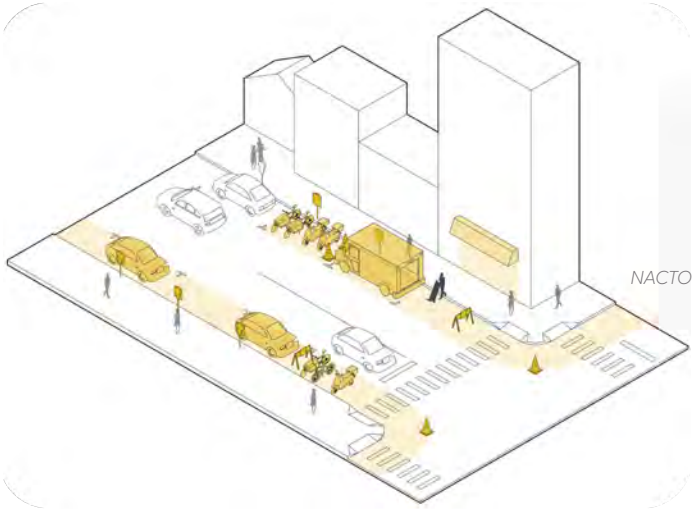
In addition, future editions of the Guide may address when and how to safely program space for entertainment, such as a music stage in public plaza. Such programming may be appropriate in later phases of the State Safe Start, but is currently not encouraged for Phase 2 counties.

Delivery and Pick-up Zones

Take-out food has become a major income stream for restaurants during the stay-at-home order. Providing more curbside space dedicated to take-out & pick-up can be a key strategy for cities to support local businesses. For example, the City of Seattle established a program for restaurants and retail stores to have temporary pick-up zones for free.

Resources

- Seattle Program for Temporary Pick-up Zones



Order and Take-out Windows

Many restaurants have shifted service through only a window or their front door. This service model may result in customers standing on the sidewalk in a line, waiting to make an order or for their food to be prepared. The business should have signage that reminds people to wear a mask and maintain proper 6' physical distancing. The queue lines can be maintained by putting dots or lines on the ground, spaced at 6' intervals. The queue line should be outside of the "pedestrian clear zone" so that passing pedestrians can get by at a safe distance. The number of people in a queues may be reduced by encouraging pre-orders and texting when an order is ready

Time of Day and Week Uses and Changes

Curb extensions, curbside cafes and markets, plazas, and the other street design modifications highlighted in this report need not be put in place 7 days per week, 24 hours per day. Lane closures and complete street closures can be either for just a few days a week (such as weekends), or even only during certain times of the day.

By making the modifications apply to certain days of the week or times of the day, the modification can be made more responsive to the delivery schedule needs of businesses and to peak pedestrian traffic volumes.

Fire Department

Fire Lanes

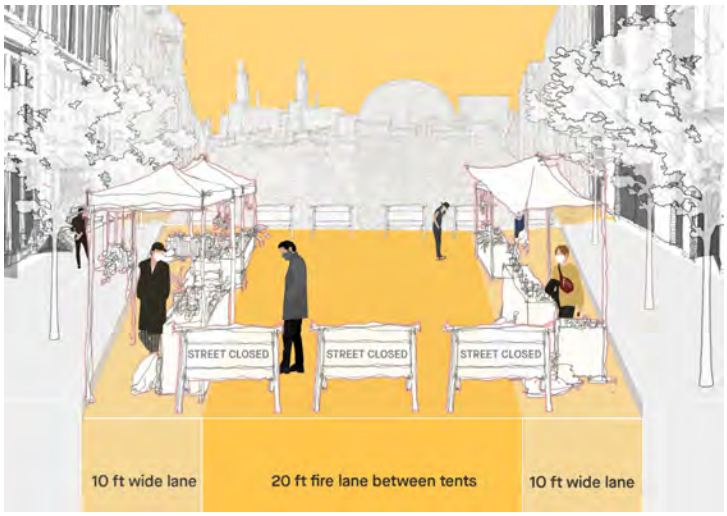
Any street closure will likely need approval from the local fire department to ensure emergency access. In Seattle and Tacoma, the fire departments require a 20-foot wide unobstructed ingress/egress corridor. An unimpeded bike lane, walkway, and easily moveable chairs and small tables typically can be included within the 20-foot wide emergency access lane, but not structures such as booths, tents, and large tables.

Tent Sizes

Local fire departments may also restrict the size of a temporary canopy or tent that a vendor may wish to set-up. In Seattle, tents greater than 400 square-feet (20'x20' or 10'x40'), must receive a permit. For tents placed within 12' of one another or a building, tent coverage must be no greater than 700sf.

Resources

- Seattle Fire Department requirements
- Tacoma Fire Prevention Bureau requirements



ADA Requirements and Universal Design

Designing for people with disabilities must be a core element to any street modification. People who have low or no vision benefit from straight, clear paths and people who rely on mobility devices require ramps to get on and off curbs. Maintaining clear space to navigate the sidewalk and public plazas, ensuring accessibility to curb ramps and bus stops, and locating ADA parking spots are critical considerations. The 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design are the foundation for all street design for people with disabilities, which should be embedded into a city's "right-of-way improvement manual."

This Guide has attempted to incorporate best practices for ADA design, but business, and local city staff should ensure any street design is achieving the requirements and goals of the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design. It is recommended that any street or sidewalk modification follow the principles of Universal Design. City staff and businesses are encouraged to reach out to local disability rights advocates and service providers to get their input on proposed street modifications.

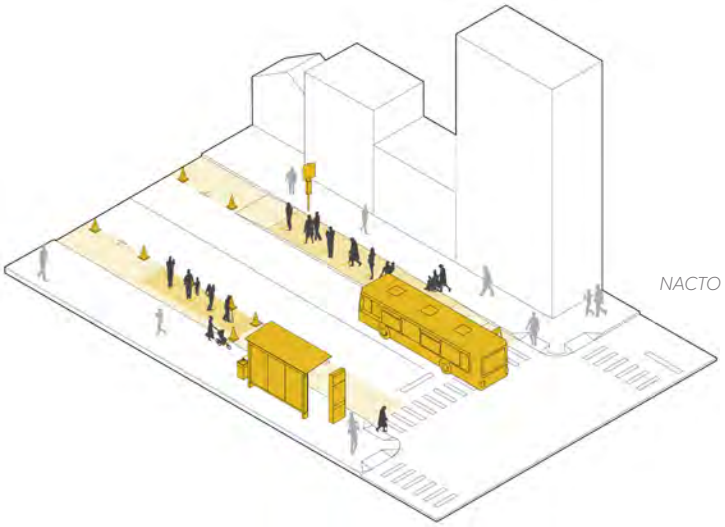
Resources

- 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design
- Seattle Streets Illustrated Guide (Right-of-Way Improvement Manual)
- The Principles of Universal Design, NCSU
- "ADA vs. Universal Design," Spaces Quarterly

Transit

Streets with bus routes will not be able to be closed to vehicular traffic without approval of the transit agencies. In addition, bus shelters and benches are generally the property of the transit agency, and any repurposing of a shelter or bench would need to be approved by the agency as well as the jurisdiction.

Physical distancing at bus stops can be encouraged through signage and on-ground markings that encourage 6-foot spacing for people waiting to get on the bus. Any marked queue line should be outside of the "pedestrian clear zone" of a sidewalk to allow pedestrians to pass by at least 6 feet away from those waiting to get on the bus. In addition, access and circulation for all transit facilities must accommodate people with physical and vision impairments.



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Parking for Bicycles & Shared Micromobility

Bike Parking

Bicycling is a great mode for people to travel while maintaining appropriate physical distancing. During COVID-19, record numbers of people have purchased bicycles for transportation and recreational purposes.

To make sure people have a safe place to lock-up their bikes when they ride to a business district, consider adding "bike corrals" — sets of three to four "staple" or "inverted-U" bicycle racks — to each end of a block.

In addition to encouraging people to bike to the block, providing bike parking to each end of a block can free-up space on the sidewalks for people to have more room to walk without having to navigate around people pushing bikes.

Bike Share & Scooter Share

Dockless, free-floating micromobility services provide a way for people to get around the city while observing safe physical distances. However, parked bikes and scooters can take up space on sidewalks and streets necessary for safe physical distancing of pedestrians and be obstacles for people with disabilities.

In designing a street modification, it may be prudent to designate one or two areas for shared scooters and bikes to be parked so that they do not interfere with pedestrian movements.

Sanitation Protocols

Sanitation efforts should follow the latest guidance from the Washington State Department of Health and the local county public health agency.

Surface contact is not currently considered a significant way that the virus spreads (How COVID-19 Spreads," CDC), but precautions are still recommended. The CDC's Reopening America Guidance states, "Warmer temperatures and exposure to sunlight will reduce the time the virus survives on surfaces and objects." According to the CDC's Guidance for Administrators in Parks and Recreational Facilities, "outdoor areas generally require normal routine cleaning and do not require disinfection."

In all cases, the latest guidance from state and local health agencies should be followed.

Here are a few important steps that can help prevent the spread of COVID-19:

- Establish a sanitation management plan to determine roles and responsibilities for cleaning furniture and other surfaces in public spaces.
- Display posters and signs to remind people to take steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19, including messages about:
  - Wearing a mask and covering coughs and sneezes.
  - Maintaining 6-foot physical distancing.
  - Discouraging large groups of people.
  - Washing hands often with soap and water.
  - Staying home if you do not feel well.
- Clean and disinfect regularly, including:
  - Restaurant staff should wipe-down outdoor tables between customers.
  - Public tables should be wipe-down public tables at least twice a day, whether by adjacent businesses, a business district association, or the city. Tables, chairs and other touched surfaces not exposed to the sun due to weather, shade from buildings or canopies, or the time of night should be cleaned more frequently.
- Regularly monitor the space to ensure that people are observing proper physical distancing.

Restaurant Employee Safety and Health

Employers must follow the Washington State Department of Labor & Industry COVID-19 requirements to protect workers:

- Educate workers about coronavirus and how to prevent spread of disease. Workers should also know the employer's COVID-19 policies. This should happen in the language workers understand best.
- Always maintain at least six feet of separation between all employees and customers. If physical distancing is not possible for a specific task, use other prevention measures: use physical barriers, limit the number of people in narrow or enclosed areas, stagger breaks and work shift starts so fewer people are working at the same time.
- Provide personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves, goggles, face shields and face masks as appropriate to employees for the work activity.

Resources

- L&I COVID-19 Requirements (PDF)

Food Handling and Service

The Guide does not address food safety, per se, rather it informs characteristics of and space use for safe outdoor restaurant seating. Since outdoor cooking raises a host of food safety challenges, this Guide assumes restaurants and food vendors which produce kitchen-cooked food will maintain designated travel corridors for servers and guests when food is brought from the business to designated curbside takeaway locations or seating areas.

- Restaurants that do not have table service must have protocols that ensure adequate physical distancing at food and drink pick-up stations and seating areas. Table service is when servers take guests' orders at their table and bring them their food.
- All indoor and outdoor tables must have 5 or fewer guests.
- Outdoor seating is allowed but must also be at 50% of the outdoor seating capacity. Outdoor seating must follow all other requirements of the local public health authority.
- An outdoor seating permit may be required for expanding or creating a new outdoor seating area on private property or public right-of-way. Obtain the appropriate outdoor seating permit from your local municipality if you are expanding or creating new outdoor seating.
- Physical distancing of more than six feet between chairs of adjacent outdoor tables should be maintained on all sides and at all times. A physical barrier, such as a wall or booth back, separating tables is acceptable for chairs to be closer together. If customers and wait staff are expected to walk between open tables, the backs of the chairs must be at least 6 feet from the middle of the aisleway. Use only 50% of the seating capacity approved by your local municipality
- Food establishments that share common walls with adjacent restaurants need to set up their outdoor seating so that they are more than six feet apart or separated by a physical barrier. Physical barriers may be needed in other areas as well to maintain separation from public right-of-ways and other public areas. Please consult with your local municipality on what types of physical barriers are allowed.
- Customers are strongly encouraged to wear a cloth face covering anytime they are not seated at the table (while being seated or leaving, waiting for a table or take-out order, or while walking to the restroom). Cloth facial coverings must be worn by every employee not working alone.
- For self-serve beverage services, restaurants must provide signage informing customers that cups, lids, and straws cannot be reused. They must obtain new items for refills. Employees must provide single-service cups, lids, and wrapped straws to customers from behind the counter, and must wash hands frequently and correctly if handing single-service utensils.
- Provide a menu using one of the following options: (1) single-use disposable menu, (2) a reusable menu if sanitized between uses, (3) electronic, chalk board, or white board menu, or (4) an app service or website for viewing on customer's personal device.
- Any condiments (such as ketchup or soy sauce) must be single-use or sanitized hourly.
- Restaurants must ensure proper physical distancing in the lobby, waiting areas, and payment counters.
- Minimize the number of staff serving a table. One staff person should take a table's order, bring their beverages, food, and utensils, and take their payment.

Alcohol

If liquor is to be served and consumed, the liquor control board must approve the layout and operation of the space. Your city's street use permitting division may have additional information.

Resources

- Liquor Control Board: Special Licenses and Permits

Permit Fees and Review

With restrictions on operations during the pandemic, businesses are financially struggling. In order to support local small businesses, cities may consider reducing or eliminating any permit fees that might be associated with in-street cafes and markets. Cities may also consider expediting review for permits to ensure more businesses can benefit from these programs.

Insurance

Cities typically require organizations that are hosting a street fair or businesses that set-up and manage a curbside cafe or streatery to carry liability insurance. Each city may have different requirements. Cities can reduce barriers to business districts and businesses to redesign a street by eliminating or reducing the insurance requirements or processes, or by taking responsibility for the design and maintenance of the street.

Resources

- City of Seattle Cafe/Streatery Insurance Requirements (PDF)

Defining and Serving Priority Businesses

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities have been disproportionately negatively impacted by COVID-19. Black, Hispanic, and Indigenous populations have more than double the infection rate, and Asian populations are experiencing racial animosity. Due to generational wealth gaps and the pandemic's acute impact, minority-owned small businesses are likely less-well positioned to take advantage of expanded opportunities for street modifications that could aid their financial and public health recovery. For this reason, cities should proactively connect with priority populations about street modification opportunities and be willing to assist businesses and business associations in their neighborhoods in developing proposals. Cities should look to work with community liaisons and community-based organizations to reach these businesses.

Resources

- **Equitable Engagement**
  - Intentionalist
- **Data**:
  - King County Map of COVID Cases
  - King County Statistics of COVID Cases by Race/Ethnicity
  - Washington State Department of Health COVID-19 Data Dashboard
  - Monica Webb Hooper, Anna Maria Napoles, & Eliseo Perez-Stable, "COVID-19 and Racial/Ethnic Disparities," 323 J. of Am. Medical Ass'n, 2466-67 (2020)

3. Formalize Roles & Responsibilities

Street modifications should be collaborative efforts between the city, businesses, neighborhood organizations, and other key stakeholders resulting in shared stewardship of sidewalks, facilities, and neighborhoods. Effective collaboration requires communication, an understanding of responsibilities, and an inclusive spirit of co-creation.

Key Steps for Formalizing Roles & Responsibilities

- Welcome and include potential new stakeholders and partners.
- Define and engage permitting authorities, including for street use, traffic safety, and food service.
- Respond to emerging concerns of area residents, business owners, customers, and employees, and through traffic; and proactively consider ways the design could be adjusted in configuration or operation as new information and concerns arise.
- Establish and formalize agreements among key actors, and as necessary, craft written agreements that define the sharing of organizing roles and operational responsibilities, including communications, set up and break down tasks, timing, and material storage.

4. Prepare & Implement

Coordinated with the local transportation or public works department, implement the planned street modification.

Key Steps for Preparing & Implementing

- Define and provide guidance for traffic safety and public health.
- Establish clear communications to and from all affected parties.
- Message an iterative approach from outset - welcome course corrections as you go.
- Create several easy ways for businesses and street vendors to register interest and get involved.
- Partner with local business groups and BIDs, local associations, schools, youth, artists, and other groups to publicize programs.
- Fast-track assessment and notification within each neighborhood.
- Establish set-up and break-down processes and operating protocols and practices.
- Build shared participation in safety, inclusivity, and problem solving.
- Keep interagency communications open, especially emergency services and any cleaning or maintenance crews.
- Establish ways to hear from and respond to emerging concerns and opportunities.
- Inform all adjacent businesses of final design of the street modification at least 48 hours prior to implementation.

5. Operate, Monitor, & Adapt

All street modifications should be viewed as temporary solutions to a public health and economic crisis that will need to be monitored, adapted, and iterated upon to ensure the design meets core objectives for public health and businesses recovery.

As temporary solutions, the modifications may also serve as pilot projects to collect user feedback toward a permanent installation

Key Steps for Operating, Monitoring, & Iterating

- Using on-site observation, customer and pedestrian counts, and business surveys, monitor the effectiveness of the street modification, considering:
    - The sufficiency of space for physically distant walking and queuing.
    - Safe corridors for delivery or take-out pick-ups.
    - Whether the configuration of outside tables and seating and the cleaning efforts continue to meet public health guidelines
    - Whether the clear zone for pedestrian movement continues to be maintained per ADA and public health guidance.
    - Whether hours or days of operation of the street modification should be adjusted.
- Resource key actors and operations with tools and clear safety and operating protocols.
- Ensure active systems and processes to listen and adjust at frequent intervals.
- Host a physical or on-line point of coordination, where operational details are made accessible - and input can be received, reviewed, and responded to.

Published by

- Washington State Department of Health
- Public Health – Seattle & King County

Endorsed by

- Seattle Department of Transportation

More endorsements will be listed in the second edition.

Also reviewed by

In addition to being reviewed by the agencies who co-published and endorsed this Guide, it has been reviewed by staff of several organizations, including (being listed does not imply the organization endorses the Guide):

- Everett Public Works
- King County Metro
- King County Office of Equity & Social Justice
- Seattle Office of Economic Development
- Seattle Office of Planning & Community Development
- Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department
- Washington State Department of Transportation
- Downtown on the Go! (Tacoma)
- Downtown Seattle Association
- Everett Station District Alliance
- Greater Redmond Transportation Management Association
- Seattle Neighborhood Greenways
- Seattle Restaurant Alliance
- Seattle Restaurants United
- Snohomish County Transportation Coalition
- Washington Bikes / Cascade Bicycle Club

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