

Streets for Recovery Case Study

City of Amesbury: Outdoor Dining & Retail



Project type:	Outdoor dining
Project timeline:	June 18 - Nov 1
Planning timeline:	3 weeks
Scope:	12 restaurants
Location:	Downtown
Municipal lead:	Angela Cleveland
Budget:	\$100-200
Materials:	Jersey barriers, signs, paint, etc.

Item	Total cost	# Units
Jersey barriers	On-hand	30
15-min parking signage	\$338	
A-frame boards; signage	\$278	3; 6
Paint	\$360	12 cans
Paint tools	\$61	

Goals

Rapidly respond to restaurant and small business needs during the COVID-19 pandemic by providing access to city-owned areas (pathways and parking spaces) to allow for outdoor dining and retail.

Background

The City of Amesbury (pop: ~17K) proactively sought to address the challenges of their small businesses due to on-site capacity restrictions implemented by the Commonwealth to protect public health during the COVID-19 pandemic. With most downtown restaurants operating from older brick buildings without outdoor space, the City looked to municipally-owned property to safely serve patrons outside.

Partners

Under the leadership of Mayor Gove, the Community & Economic Development Director, Deputy Fire Chief, Communications Director, and Police Chief conducted a “walkabout” to explore opportunities for each restaurant to expand service into public spaces. The DPW Director joined during the next outing to take measurements and ensure that physical distancing and other requirements were met.

Outreach

The Mayor’s Office conducted direct outreach to restaurants to understand their plans for reopening and need for outdoor space. Once the plans were approved, the Communications Director posted a call for volunteers, and together staff and community members painted the jersey barriers. Business owners were invited to a physically distanced lunch with the Mayor in the new public parklet on Main Street.

Design & Implementation

To help prepare for outdoor dining applications, the team worked with interested restaurants to suggest spaces and configurations that would meet requirements, as mapped out in the earlier walkabout.

During a single phone meeting, key municipal staff from DPW, Fire, Police, and OCED approved outdoor dining applications for twelve restaurants. The public parklet on Main Street was also approved.

Design & Implementation (cont.)

Once the Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission softened its requirements for municipalities to locally grant alcohol licenses for outdoor dining, the team quickly created a permitting process inspired by a neighboring community's permit language. Within a week, the City granted the first twelve permits.

DPW brought out several of their 60 jersey barriers out of storage and installed all hard infrastructure at street-grade around 14 parking spaces, while restaurants were responsible for tables and chairs.

They posted waterproof foam core signage for newly designated 15-minute parking spaces and installed a new pedestrian crossing yield sign to calm traffic at one of the downtown crosswalks.

When the Commonwealth allowed outdoor dining on June 18th, some restaurants began to expand to approved parking spaces that afternoon. In total, twelve restaurants applied for new outdoor alcohol permits, and eight expanded seating to the public realm. These spaces will be activated through November 1st, or when the executive order from Governor Baker is lifted, whichever is sooner.

Initial Response & Adjustments

After installation, City staff visited all local establishments. In addition to checking in on outdoor dining arrangements, this outreach helped the City uncover unrelated opportunities for economic development and ways in which the City could support its local businesses now in and in the future, especially perceptions of parking scarcity.

In response to calls and emails, some of the designated 15-minute spaces were relocated.



What's Next for Amesbury?

In anticipation of a potential rise in COVID-19 cases, the City is now exploring how to provide additional space for employees working remotely and families. In an existing centralized open space, they are looking into shaded outdoor coworking infrastructure and nature play features for children.

Tips for Success & Lessons Learned

- Early collaboration with Fire, Police, and Communications was critical to identifying feasible and quickly implemented solutions. Include DPW and take measurements early!
- Direct restaurant check-ins unveiled other opportunities for the City to support its small businesses

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