



CITY OF HUNTINGTON BEACH
CITY COUNCIL MEETING – COUNCIL MEMBER ITEMS REPORT

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: MIKE POSEY, CITY COUNCIL MEMBER
PATRICK BRENDEN, CITY COUNCIL MEMBER

DATE: MAY 18, 2020

SUBJECT: **DIRECT STAFF TO RESEARCH EXPANDED OUTDOOR DINING PROGRAM FOR COVID-19 RESTAURANT RELIEF**

BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically altered our business landscape, and many restaurants and storefronts face steep obstacles as we look to reopen the economy. Those businesses able to re-open will need to impose strict social distancing and safety measures for their workforce and customers. In particular, restaurants, cafés, and bars will be grappling with significantly-reduced dining capacity, with customers being required to abide by social distancing requirements.

Given the need for restaurants to reduce service capacity to facilitate social distancing, I am requesting that the City Council consider directing staff to develop a program where restaurants adjacent to public property would be allowed to temporarily use the City's public spaces to place additional tables for outdoor dining. Additionally, restaurants not adjacent to public property would be allowed to temporarily use adjacent private property, if the arrangement could be worked out with the private property owner.

If this new protocol is approved, it could help increase capacity and reduce the burden that will be placed on food and beverage establishments, and the added seating capacity could make the difference between a business being able to stay afloat and having to close its doors. Vilnius, Lithuania, has created a similar program for outdoor diners, and it was met with great acclaim. The idea is gaining popularity all across the country as well. In addition, outside of helping specific restaurant businesses, this plan to open up the use of the City's public spaces for additional outdoor dining would bring people back to the City's streets faster, increasing traffic for nearby retail and service-based businesses.

As part of this direction to staff, additional parameters that should be considered during the assessment include:

- Assess the feasibility of creating a sliding scale of available exterior space that would be made available for participating businesses, the amount of which would decline commensurate with each reopening stage as additional interior space utilization becomes allowed. In that manner, the outdoor seating capacity would provide the necessary seating offset for the restaurant to operate, where space is available, at 100% capacity. As indoor capacity increases, outdoor capacity could decrease so that the total permitted capacity cannot exceed 100%.

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- There shall be no fees incurred by any restaurant participating in this voluntary and temporary program.
- Assess the amount of sales tax revenue that could be earned from the program to determine if any parking revenue loss would be offset, in the event public parking spaces are utilized for this effort.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Take out service for food and beverage is already allowed. Patrons should have, and for all practical purposes already have, dining access within public and private spaces. This proposed voluntary program allows more options for restaurants and patrons alike. Adoption of the program would boost restaurant sales as well as boost a return to socialization.

Based on this assessment of the situation, we are requesting that the City Council vote to direct staff to develop a program that would temporarily allow conversion of adjacent public and private spaces into outdoor dining areas to allow restaurants greater dining capacity, given COVID-19 social distancing requirements.

