The background is a detailed architectural line drawing of a two-story building facade. The upper story features three large, double-hung windows on the left and two on the right. The ground floor shows a central entrance door flanked by windows. In front of the building, there are three outdoor dining areas. Each area is enclosed by a low wall with a decorative top edge and supported by posts. Large, square umbrellas are positioned over the dining areas. The entire drawing is rendered in a light brown or tan color on a white background.

# **City of Alexandria Outdoor Dining Design Guidelines**

November 2022

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## Purpose

These Outdoor Dining Guidelines provide standards for the use of outdoor dining areas along public streets City-wide to maintain an appearance in keeping with the unique architectural and cultural character of Alexandria's neighborhoods and to ensure public safety, emergency access and pedestrian accessibility.

Central to the process of permitting outdoor dining along City streets is the necessity of ensuring that furniture and other items placed along the street will complement the overall character of the street, maintain emergency access to hydrants and Fire Department connections and address pedestrian safety and accessibility standards. This document contains guidelines for use of outdoor dining areas, including acceptable furniture and fixtures, on public sidewalks and public on-street parking spaces, otherwise known as Commercial Parklets.

These Guidelines apply to all outdoor dining areas that receive City approval through powers granted by Sections 6-800, 7-1500 and 11-513 of the Zoning Ordinance and

Section 5-2-29 of the City Code. Failure to comply with these guidelines may constitute a violation of the City Zoning Ordinance or City Code.

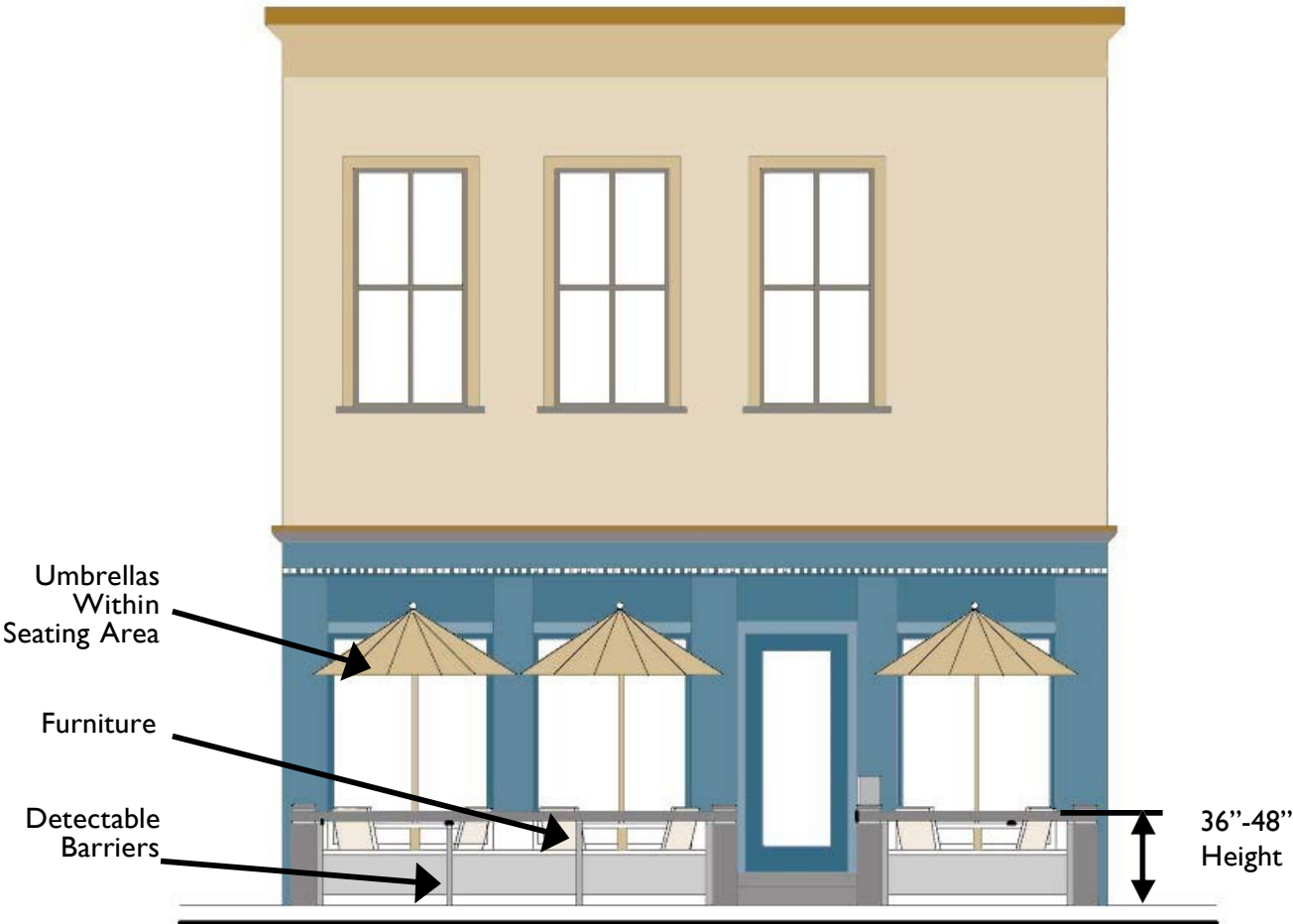
## Application Procedures

Outdoor dining on public sidewalks and in Commercial Parklets in public on-street parking spaces are permitted through two separate administrative approval processes. Access the online applications for each here:

**Outdoor dining on a sidewalk** through a Department of Planning & Zoning application: <https://www.alexandriava.gov/zoning/king-street-outdoor-dining>.

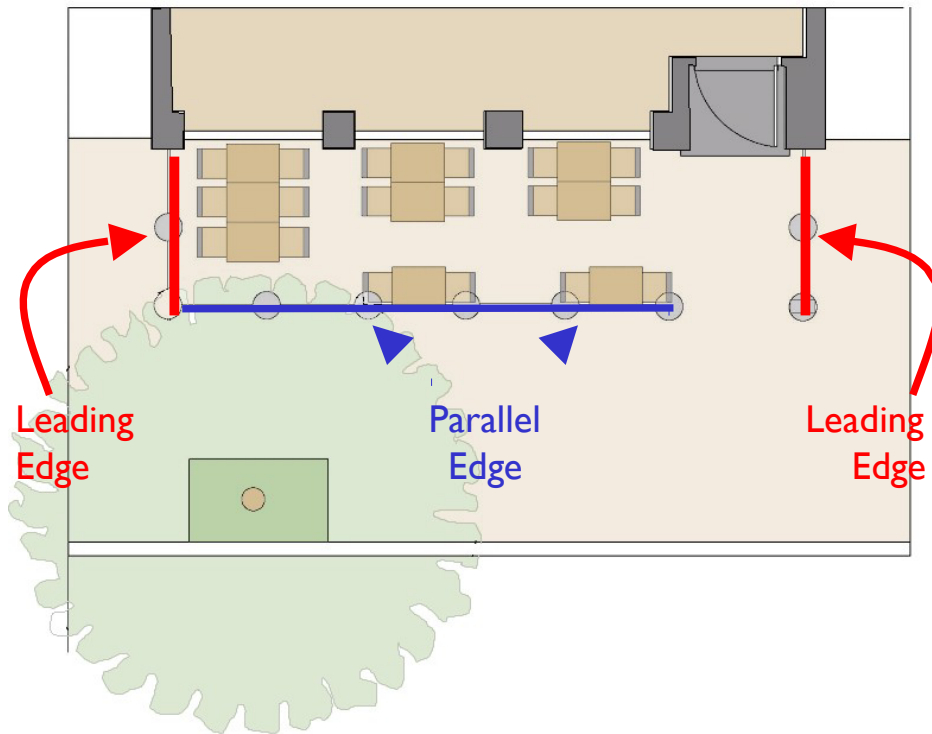
**Outdoor dining in Commercial Parklets** through a Department of Transportation & Environmental Services application at: <https://www.alexandriava.gov/Parklets>.

# Elements of an Outdoor Dining Area



# Chapter I: Barriers

Dining area barriers (fences, gates, ropes etc.) are visually appealing and help to separate the dining area from the sidewalk and/or travel lane. All barrier material must be maintained in good visual appearance, without visible fading, dents, tears, rust, corrosion, or chipped or peeling paint.



*Illustration of leading edge and parallel edge of barriers*

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 and the curb side for Commercial Parklets) 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.

**Note: Outdoor dining areas located near the sidewalk curb must leave at least two feet of unobstructed sidewalk depth between the curb and the outer dimension of the outdoor dining area if not next to a Commercial Parklet.**

## 1.1 Barrier Designs

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



*Acceptable sectional fencing design*

**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 neutral or dark color. Wood barriers must be painted or stained.

## I.1 Barrier Designs



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



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



*Domed stanchion bases are not permitted*

**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:

- **One-inch Rope/Chain Diameter:** Must be designed to be able to be disconnected rapidly without the use of tools.
- **Posts:** Vertical support posts (stanchions, bollards, etc.) must be constructed of wood or metal (aluminum, steel, iron, or similar). Planters may also serve as vertical supports.
- **Flat Stanchion Base** to measure no more than one-half (1/2) of an inch above the sidewalk or Parklet surface. No domed stanchion bases are permitted.

## 1.1 Barrier Designs

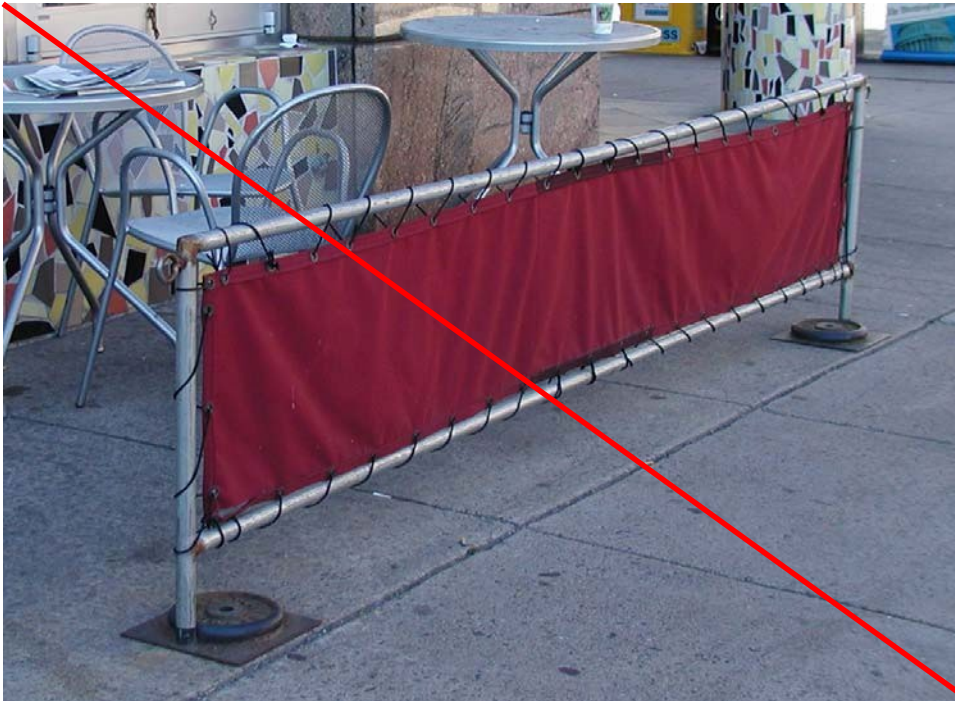


*Acceptable sectional fencing design: freestanding*

**Freestanding:** any permitted barrier must be freestanding, without any permanent or temporary attachments to buildings, sidewalks or other infrastructure. The edge barrier must be easily removable by one person.



## I.1 Prohibited Barrier Designs



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

### Prohibited Barrier Styles:

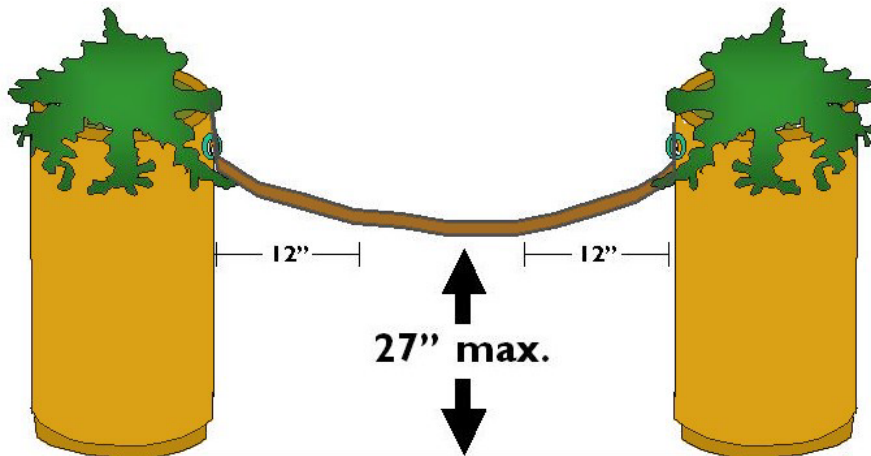
- **Fabric or Plexiglass Inserts:** Fabric or plexiglass inserts of any size are not permitted to be used as part of a barrier.
- **Chain-link and Other Fencing:** The use of chain-link, cyclone fencing, chicken wire or similar appurtenances is prohibited. Materials not specifically manufactured for 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.

## 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:



*Sectional fencing barrier height must be at least 36" and no taller than 48 inches*



*How to measure rope/chain distance from ground*

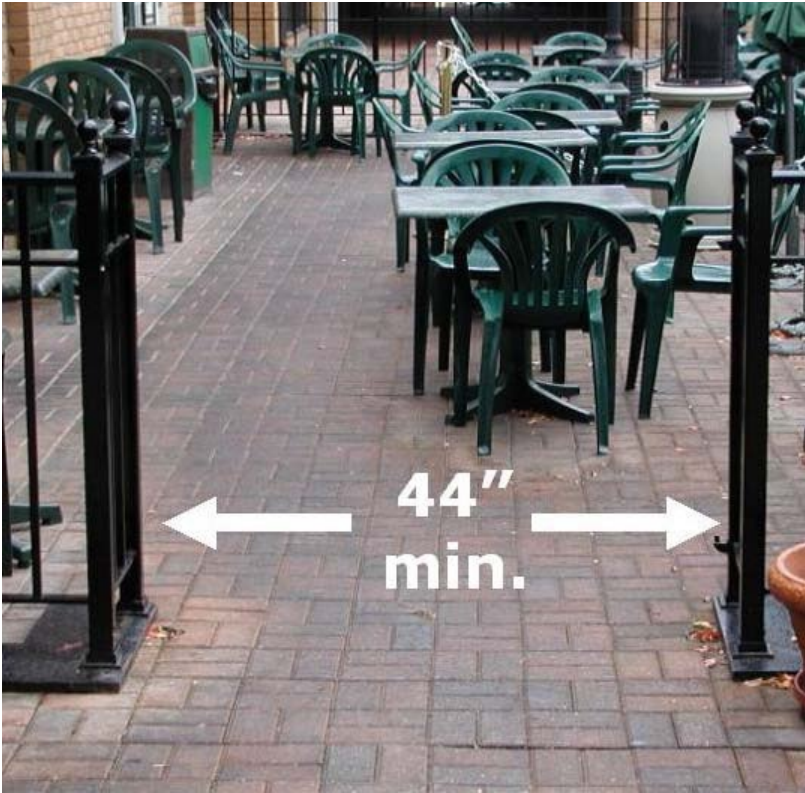
**Height:** The highest point of a barrier (such as a stanchion) must measure at least 36 inches in height, not to exceed 48 inches.

**“Open” Appearance:** Where fences or other perimeter enclosures on sidewalks with a height between 36” and 48” must be at least 50 percent open (see-through) in order to maintain visibility of street level activity. Any enclosure with a height over 48” 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).

### 1.3 Access Openings



*Minimum access width is 44 inches*

**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.

## I.4 Planters



*Acceptable planter design and material*

*Height of plants may not exceed 8'*



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 must be easily moved by one person and shall not create a continuous barrier that cause an obstruction to Fire Department access.

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

**Maximum Height of Planters:** Planters may not exceed a height of 48 inches above the level of the sidewalk. (This pertains only to planters, not the plants contained therein.)

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

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

## I.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.



*Acceptable planter design and material*



## Chapter 2: Furniture and Fixtures

Outdoor dining furniture becomes a prominent part of the streetscape when used in the front of buildings, and such furniture should coordinate with the high standards applied to buildings and other improvements across the City.

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.

### 2.1 Types of Furniture and Fixtures



**Prohibited Furniture and Fixtures:** This includes, but is not limited to, serving stations, bar counters, shelves, racks, sofas, televisions, and trash receptacles.

**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.

*Serving stations and other equipment are not permitted*

## 2.2 Tables and Chairs

Outdoor dining furniture must contribute to the overall atmosphere of the area and be complementary in both appearance and quality.



Furniture may be colored, painted or natural unpainted material



*Smaller bistro-style tables*

**Color and Materials:** Tables and chairs may be colored, painted, or of a natural unpainted material (i.e., wood, metal, etc.). Some recycled materials, including high density polyethylene (HDPE) plastics, may be considered on a case-by-case basis. Upholstered chairs are permitted.

**Matching:** All tables and chairs within an establishment's outdoor seating area must match each other by being of visually similar design, construction, material, and color.

**Square or Rectangular Tables:** These shapes allow for more usable space for patrons while at the same time leaving more space available for pedestrians on the sidewalk. Picnic tables and rectangular tables longer than four feet are not permitted.

**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.

## 2.3 Umbrellas



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

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. It may not overhang into the five-foot pedestrian walkway.

**Minimum Clearance Height:** When extended, the umbrella must measure at least seven 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 surface of the outdoor dining area, in order to avoid causing an undue visual obstruction of other businesses

**Signage or Wording Prohibited:** Umbrellas must not contain signage

**Other coverings such as tents or canopies are not permitted in outdoor dining areas.**



## 2.4 Lighting

Low impact lighting may be a part of the outdoor dining area design and follow the guidelines below:

**Location:** All lighting fixtures must be completely within the outdoor dining area. Lighting, including string lighting, cannot overhang outdoor dining areas. Extension cords are not permitted within the sidewalk and parklet areas, including along the sidewalk or base of the parklet.

**Type:** Lighting must be self-sustaining (battery or solar-operated). Power may not be derived from City light fixtures.

**Prohibited Lighting:** Spotlights, flood lamps, and freestanding light fixtures or poles are prohibited.

## 2.5 Electric Heaters, Generators, and Fuel Fired Appliances

**Electric heaters, fire pits or open burning of wood, generators are not permitted.**

**Propane (LP) Heaters:** These are subject to fire prevention permit approval by the Fire Department prior to installation. LP gas cylinders used for outdoor heating appliances must be secured at all times while in use or storage, and cannot be stored or left unattended on the sidewalk, or stored inside of any building. All combustible materials shall be located away from any source of heat or ignition.

**Location:** All fixtures must be completely within the outdoor dining area.

## 2.6 Sidewalk and Parklet Base Coverings

The floor of outdoor seating areas on sidewalks should be uncovered sidewalk material as to provide continuity with the adjacent public right-of-way. Commercial Parklets must be flush to the curb with a seamless connection. Parklet decking constructed of wood must be stained or painted.

**Prohibited Sidewalk and Parklet Coverings:**

Prohibited outdoor dining 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. Raised decks, platforms, or other such surfaces are only permitted for outdoor dining areas within Parklets.

## 2.7 Signage

Signage is not permitted in outdoor dining areas on the sidewalk or in commercial parklets

## 2.8 Required Clearances

Dining furniture, planters, any permitted signage, barriers and the base of barriers must remain outside these areas:



*Outdoor dining areas must leave at least five feet of unobstructed pedestrian space, including between the base of barriers. On sidewalks the five-foot passage way must form a continuous linear path in front of the business as illustrated in the example.*

*Required clearance around fire department connections and fire hydrants*

### Five-foot sidewalk clearance

A minimum of five feet of unobstructed pedestrian walking space must remain on the sidewalk. Waitstaff must serve patrons within the dining enclosure and not in the pedestrian walk area.

### Twenty-two foot emergency vehicle easement (EVE) clearance

in roads that have been closed to traffic marked as an EVE.

### Three-foot clearance around all fire department connections.

### Five-foot clearance around all fire hydrants.

**A clear and unobstructed path must be maintained between the street or emergency vehicle easement (Fire Lane) and the primary means of business entry, fire department connections, and fire hydrants.**

Where utility meters are on the exterior of a building, no outdoor dining or parklet element/component may be within **two feet of the utility shut-off.**

