

# Applications for Major and Minor Outdoor Cafes/Patios

**Recommendation:**

That the February 18, 2014, Sustainable Development report CR\_161, be received for information.

**Report Summary**

This report provides a summary of the sidewalk cafe applications received by Administration in 2013, highlights updates to the sidewalk cafe program, and suggests process refinements to deliver improved services to customers.

**Previous Council/Committee Action**

At the April 15, 2013, Executive Committee meeting, the following motion was passed:

That Administration bring forward a report in September 2013, providing information on the number of applications submitted for major and minor outdoor cafes/patios; the number of applications withdrawn and the reasons for the withdrawals; the number of applications approved and the length of time that was required for approvals of each application.

**Report**

On April 15, 2013, Executive Committee endorsed changes to the sidewalk cafe process and guidelines, to enable the expedited review of sidewalk cafe permits, reduce approval times and support a vibrant cafe culture in the city.

Process changes included the creation of a minor and a major category for sidewalk cafe permits, with reduced approval timelines. Targets set forward at that time indicated approximately one to three days for approval of minor sidewalk cafe applications. The estimated approval time for major applications would be approximately four to six weeks. Other key changes include reduced fees, use of curb lanes in certain locations and allowing the use of approved commercial heaters when the opportunity allows.

A review of the revamped sidewalk cafe program indicates that its implementation produced varied results during the 2013 cafe season. A total of 18 applications were made, as listed in Attachment 1, including 7 minor and 11 major applications. 16 of the applications were approved with conditions, creating a total of 200 seats. The two applications, one major and one minor, that were not approved were incomplete applications.

A preliminary review of the six minor applications approved in 2013 indicates that these permits took between 5 to 24 days to approve, with an average of 12.7 days. This falls somewhat short of the expected approval time, but can be attributed to a lack of familiarity with the guidelines, incomplete applications and requests for variances, including larger cafe areas and reduced setbacks that require additional review.

Review of the ten completed major sidewalk cafe applications received in 2013 paint a more favourable picture. Approval times for these ranged from a minimum of 7 days to a maximum of 52 days, with an average of 20.2 days. This average falls within the four to six weeks anticipated in the major sidewalk cafe approval process.

The variability of approval times for major sidewalk cafes, as shown in Attachment 1, reflects the complexity of the application, site context and timely response from applicants for required information. Most, if not all of the applications with protracted approval times, or those that were placed on hold, were invariably accepted as incomplete or the applicants had difficulty in meeting key setback or cafe area requirements. Applicants with more complex projects could have benefited from requesting available pre-consultation services.

Discussions with stakeholders, including applicants and City staff suggest that further improvements can be made to the process and guidelines to enhance customer experience and reduce approval times. Responding to these observations, the following administrative refinements will be implemented prior to the 2014 cafe season:

1. Provide designated staff that is trained to assist applicants in the preparation of sidewalk cafe permit applications to ensure that the submission is complete.
2. Provide staff with appropriate computer aided design programs and training to access technical information required to evaluate submission requirements and approve cafe permits in a timely manner.
3. Encourage pre-application meetings and on-site consultation between the applicant and Administration to identify site limitations, define the cafe area, and provide clarification before the permit application is submitted in order to expedite review of the cafe permit.
4. Make available on-line examples of clear, fully dimensioned site plans that illustrate setbacks and other information that will satisfy submission requirements.
5. Review and if necessary, revise the Sidewalk Cafe Guidelines to ensure setback requirements and pedestrian clear paths are adequate to accommodate pedestrian access, circulation and safety within and adjacent to the cafe area.
6. Revise the checklist to create two separate forms, one for Minor Sidewalk and the other for Major Sidewalk Cafe Permits, to assist applicants in providing information specific to the type of cafe.
7. Provide clarification regarding Insurance requirements and quality of cafe furniture for minor sidewalk cafes.

### Policy

This report supports policy directions in:

- *The Way We Grow*, City of Edmonton's Municipal Development Plan;
- *The Way We Live*, City of Edmonton's People Plan; and
- *The Way We Move*, Edmonton Transportation Master Plan

### **Corporate Outcomes**

*The Way Ahead*, Edmonton's Strategic Plan 2009-2018:

- Transform Edmonton's Urban Form

### **Attachments**

1. Sidewalk Cafe Permits Applications - 2013
2. Background and Context Setting

### **Others Reviewing this Report**

- D. Wandzura, General Manager, Transportation Services