

Legislation Text

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Authorizing the Committee on Commerce and Economic Development to hold hearings regarding making permanent in the Philadelphia Code to permit outdoor dining spaces on city streets and sidewalks and the outdoor entertainment sidewalk cafe rules established during the Covid-19 pandemic.

WHEREAS, At the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in March of 2020, restaurants were closed entirely. As cases decreased in the late spring and summer of 2020, more restaurants began offering outdoor dining through the established permitting process; and

WHEREAS, Before the pandemic and at its start outdoor dining spaces were only permitted in certain parts of the city and dining spaces in the street (“streeteries”) were even less frequently able to be used; and

WHEREAS, City Council recognized the need for legislation to allow all restaurants, who could do so safely under the Code and approval of the Department of Streets and Department of Licenses and Inspections, to open outdoor dining spaces to safely drive business; and

WHEREAS, In June of 2020, Council passed two bills to address outdoor dining. Bill 200351 expanded the rules around sidewalk cafes to allow more restaurants to create those spaces. Bill 200352 enabled the same expansion of outdoor streetery dining. Both bills created processes in which all outdoor spaces were subject to permitting and inspection rules to ensure safety; and

WHEREAS, In September of 2020, in response the success of the new sidewalk cafes and streeteries in keeping many Philadelphia restaurants in business, the above referenced bills were amended to extend the permissions granted therein to December 31, 2021; and

WHEREAS, In April of 2021, Council also enacted legislation regulating outdoor entertainment in sidewalk cafe spaces around which conversation is also needed in developing permanent rules; and

WHEREAS, The new outdoor dining spaces created during the pandemic have added a vibrancy to Philadelphia’s streets and sidewalks. Restaurants are able to maintain their businesses safely. As the pandemic slows, Council, the Administration, and all stakeholders must consider the best way to move forward around these new spaces; and

WHEREAS, Public discourse is needed to hear about the best practices, traffic issues, safety regulations and concerns, and other necessary rules and regulations around sidewalk cafes and streetries created during the pandemic. These spaces have been successful, but the City must now consider all issues around them in a post-Covid world; and

WHEREAS, To make these structures permanent through legislation, more discussion is needed between the City, restaurant owners, and the public to ensure the legislation best accomplishes all goals safely and efficiently; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF PHILADELPHIA, That the Committee on Commerce and Economic Development is authorized to hold hearings regarding making permanent in the Philadelphia Code to permit outdoor dining spaces on city streets and sidewalks and the outdoor entertainment sidewalk cafe rules established during the Covid-19 pandemic.