



# CaféTO Winterization: Design Charrette Report

**diac**

DESIGN  
INDUSTRY  
ADVISORY  
COMMITTEE

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Cover Photo Credit: Patio Diners, Distillery Winter Village, Toronto. Stephen Kazumi

# CaféTO Winterization: Design Charrette Report

## Executive Summary

On October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2021 the City of Toronto and the Design Industry Advisory Committee (DIAC) held a half-day virtual design charrette to explore innovations for enhancing safe outdoor dining and entertainment activities into the colder months.

The charrette brought together an experienced, cross-disciplinary design team, key stakeholders from the restaurant industry, representatives of the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas (TABIA) and Toronto Business Improvement Areas (BIAs), and City of Toronto staff from Buildings, Economic Development, Fire, Planning, Municipal Licensing, Music, Public Health and Transportation.

The designers shared their expert knowledge of strategies to address the challenges of dining outside in cold weather. They advised on space adaptations, sustainable and resilient materials, sourcing of existing products, lighting, heating and other relevant technologies, signage, accessibility issues and simple ways to enliven and bring beauty to the winter patios.

Prior to the charrette, DIAC conducted research on the winter patio opportunity, and spoke with members of the City's Business Improvement Area team and with the Executive Directors of various BIAs.

At the start of the charrette, Deputy Mayor Michael Thompson welcomed the participants and said "I am thrilled to see this cross-disciplinary team of design and food service stakeholders come together to discuss challenges, weigh opportunities and find ways to work together to support recovery in the restaurant and food service industry".

An opening presentation by Arlene Gould, DIAC's Strategic Director, outlined the agenda together with the opportunities to be investigated, and also provided background on DIAC and the charrette design team. A group discussion followed. The participants were then divided into themed breakout groups to explore the opportunities in more detail. Finally, participants came together for a closing plenary. The designers leading each of the breakout groups presented their top recommendations and the findings were discussed by the entire group.

A key question addressed was: How can Toronto create a winter patio culture? One of the major insights to emerge from the charrette was that outdoor dining in the winter should not try to replicate indoor dining. The winter patio experience should be positioned and marketed as different and special.

The group recommended that winterizing Toronto's restaurant patios needs to address not only design, but also operational issues. To invest in winterizing their patios, restaurants need a 3 to 5 year commitment from the City to allow for a reasonable return on their investment.

Toronto restaurant patios fall into a variety of typologies. Different patios have very different needs and challenges. Plans for winterization should include low cost, easy to implement ideas for smaller restaurants that could be introduced right away, as well as concepts for larger restaurants with greater capital, and ideas that would contribute to a more ambitious, long-term vision for Toronto's winter dining culture.

Appropriate furniture, heating, lighting, and some protection from the elements are required to ensure the safety and comfort of restaurant patrons and staff.

Special menus should be introduced, customized to the particular conditions of outdoor winter dining. Integrating music and art could help enhance the experience.

Marketing and promotions are required to raise awareness of winter patios and to attract customers.

Pilot projects should be developed to address challenges with different types of patios and to demonstrate how the various recommendations could be applied. The pilots could help to promote an appealing image for winter patio dining. The group proposed that two or three streets be selected reflecting different conditions for restaurant patios. Time is tight this year, so there may not be many. But successful pilots are important models for how change happens. They can be studied and the results applied to other locations.

## What Makes a Successful Winter Patio?

1. Longer-term commitment from the City.
2. Plan for snow removal.
3. Protection – slush guard, half walls, flexible winter landscapes to block the wind.
4. Lighting – white lights to engage customers and unify the streetscape.
5. Heat Source – a range of options depending on budget.
6. Appropriate Furniture – sturdy tables and seating with coverings that retain the heat, made of synthetic materials that dry quickly and are easy to clean and sanitize.
7. Special Winter Patio Menus – feature soups, chilis, stews, hot drinks and other foods that are easy to keep warm.
8. Signage and Branding – a simple signage system to engage customers and enliven the street.
9. Marketing – offer special promotions to raise awareness and popularize the outdoor winter dining experience. Collaboration with other restaurants will raise awareness and increase the impact.
10. Promote winter patio dining as different and special!

## Introduction

On October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2021 the City of Toronto and the Design Industry Advisory Committee (DIAC) held a half-day virtual design charrette with industry stakeholders, City staff and a team of designers to explore innovations that could enhance safe outdoor dining in the colder months.

The event was organized in response to Recommendation #15 of the Executive Committee Report EX20.6 CaféTO – Pandemic Response Programs:

“City Council request the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, to work with partner divisions and external partners, as an enhancement to the CaféTO initiative, to explore supporting innovations to enhance safe outdoor dining and other entertainment activities to extend the operation of such businesses into the colder months over fall/winter 2021, with any approaches considered to be in full accordance with relevant public health regulations and in compliance with municipal regulations governing such activity, while also addressing accessibility needs.”

### Background on the CaféTO Program

At the start of the pandemic in 2020 the City moved quickly to support local restaurants by developing the CaféTO program. In 2021 the patio program was expanded to include more patios with support from the City and the BIAs. In 2022 there is an opportunity to further expand the program by helping restaurant owners to operate their patios in the shoulder seasons and into the winter months.

During the pandemic, outdoor dining has become important to the success of restaurants, providing an opportunity to continue serving clients by expanding their indoor floor space into outdoor spaces (sidewalks, curb lanes, and parklets), to satisfy physical distancing requirements and some customers' preferences for outdoor dining.

The CaféTO program, launched in spring 2020, was one of the City of Toronto's pandemic response programs to support local Toronto businesses. The program created a streamlined process and financial assistance for Toronto restaurant and bar operators who wanted to install cafés on City streets and sidewalks. This was particularly important for businesses facing capacity restrictions and without previous access to outdoor dining space.

In 2021, 1,213 restaurants participated in the CaféTO Program – a 50% increase over the previous year, supported by 69 Business Improvement Areas (BIAs). Outside of BIAs, 158 restaurants participated.

According to a public survey conducted by the City of Toronto in August 2021:

- 87% of all respondents said that they liked that CaféTO increases the vibrancy of the city, and 88% said that they liked that CaféTO creates more options for dining outside;
- 67% of operators reported that opening a café in 2021 prevented their business from having to close, and 66% reported that they were able to retain staff who would otherwise have been let go.

The day before the charrette was held, indoor venues that had vaccination requirements in place, including restaurants, were allowed to ease their COVID-19 capacity restrictions. Unfortunately, effective 12:01 a.m. January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022, indoor dining was once again closed due to the rapidly spreading Omicron variant. Restaurants were allowed to reopen with limited capacity on January 31<sup>st</sup> although a number of patios were closed for not meeting the guidelines. On February 17<sup>th</sup>, the province removed capacity limits for restaurants, bars and other food or drink establishments without dance facilities.

## The Opportunity

Clearly, continuing to offer expanded outdoor patio opportunities will assist restaurants in their pandemic recovery efforts, increase the vibrancy of our city's streetscape, and provide a response to the public's expressed desire for more options for dining outside.

Winterizing the restaurant patios presents a number of challenges, but it is also a significant opportunity to expand business in the winter months. With its great restaurants, strong BIA infrastructure, network of neighbourhoods, initiatives such as plazaPOPS, and experience in organizing City-wide programs and festivals, Toronto is a city that would be well positioned to develop a thriving winter patio culture.

The objective of the CaféTO Winterization Design Charrette was to generate both immediate ideas for the restaurant industry that could be quickly and easily implemented, and longer-term programmatic ideas for all stakeholders to consider and explore. Implementing the recommendations from the charrette would be one step towards developing a winter café culture that could enliven the streetscape in Toronto neighbourhoods and could be sustained beyond the pandemic and for years to come.

## Benefits of the Design Charrette Process

The design charrette is an intensive, collaborative workshop that brings together experts from various design disciplines and other community stakeholders. The design charrette is an ideal forum for brainstorming, information exchange and modelling creative ideas to address a specific set of challenges and opportunities.



Distillery Winter Village, Toronto. Stephen Kazumi

## Pre Charrette Process

Prior to the charrette, DIAC organized a brainstorming session with designer members of its Research Advisory Committee to explore preliminary ideas. DIAC also spoke with staff from the City's BIA office and with the Executive Directors of various BIAs. City staff provided input regarding opportunities as they would apply to dining outdoors in the winter.

With help from its design association members, DIAC identified and engaged an expert design team with relevant experience to help the charrette participants develop ideas and recommendations to safely extend the CaféTO outdoor dining season into the fall and winter months. The designers came from the disciplines of architecture, landscape architecture, planning and urban design, industrial, interior, graphic and fashion design.

There were specific benefits in having designers actively participate with other industry experts in this session. The designers brought expert knowledge of strategies to address challenges in inclement weather. They advised on space adaptations, sustainable and resilient materials, lighting, sourcing of existing products, heating and other relevant technologies, signage, accessibility issues and simple ways to enliven and bring beauty to the winter patios.



The designers were asked to contribute ideas and recommendations, but they were not expected to produce finished design concepts or to design new products.

## Charrette Design Team

- **Steven Fong, Ontario, Ontario Association of Architects/Toronto Society of Architects**  
Steven is an architect principal at Steven Fong Architect and professor at the Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design, University of Toronto. He has extensive experience in designing restaurants and other retail spaces.
- **Chris Hannah, Association of Registered Interior Designers of Ontario, Interior Designers of Canada**  
Chris is an interior designer, design educator and principal at Cricket Design. He has 40 years' experience in the hospitality sector focusing on restaurant design with clients at all scales.
- **Ute Maya-Giambattista, Ontario Professional Planners Institute**  
Ute is a planner and urban designer at Fotenn with over 17 years' experience. She works with both private and public sector clients to create healthy urban spaces and communities.
- **Trevor McIntyre, Ontario Association of Landscape Architects**  
Trevor McIntyre is a landscape architect and Global Director of Placemaking for IBI Group. Since 2020, Trevor and his team have collaborated with City staff on the development of the CaféTO Program.
- **Mardi Najafi, Association of Chartered Industrial Designers of Ontario**  
Mardi is an industrial designer who has worked extensively on furniture, exhibit and set design. He is Director of Retail Design for Figure3 with over 25 years' experience in this field.
- **Stussy Tschudin, Registered Graphic Designers**  
Stussy is a graphic designer, former President of the Registered Graphic Designers and Principal of Forge Media + Design. He leads a team of designers, storytellers and placemakers focused on addressing branding and communications challenges with human-centred, creative solutions.
- **James Yurichuk, Fashion Industry Advisory Panel**  
James is the CEO of Wuxly Movement, a Toronto-based manufacturer of sustainably-sourced, animal-free, warm outerwear.

## Charrette Attendees

The charrette brought together key stakeholders from the restaurant industry, the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas (TABIA) and Toronto BIAs, City of Toronto

staff and the experienced, cross-disciplinary team of designers. Attendees included representatives from the following:

- Ontario Restaurant, Hotel and Motel Association (ORHMA);
- Restaurants Canada;
- Toronto restaurants including Eataly, Imago Restaurants & Krystos Modern Greek Cuisine, etc.;
- Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas (TABIA);
- Toronto BIAs including;
  - Greektown on the Danforth BIA;
  - Mount Pleasant Village BIA;
  - Toronto Downtown West BIA;
  - St. Lawrence Market BIA;
- plazaPOPS;
- City of Toronto staff from;
  - City Planning;
  - Deputy Mayor Michael Thompson's office;
  - Economic Development & Culture;
    - Business Improvement Area (BIA) Office;
    - Sector Development Office – Food & Beverage and Design sectors;
    - Music Office;
  - Municipal Licensing Services;
  - Toronto Building;
  - Toronto Fire Services;
  - Toronto Public Health - Healthy Environments;
  - Transportation Services; and
- The charrette design team.

## The Requirements

There are basic requirements necessary to safely operate a café on Toronto city streets and in the public right-of-way. It is the restaurant operator's responsibility to ensure that all requirements are met. So, in advance of the charrette, all attendees were requested to carefully review the [CaféTO Guidelines](#) and [Chapter 742](#).

The [City of Toronto Winter CaféTO Guidebook](#) summarizes the essential information required to safely install or expand winter sidewalk cafés where possible. Any expanded or new cafés on the sidewalk must meet the design and operational requirements set out in this Guidebook and Chapter 742, including but not limited to, obligations related to health and safety, accessibility, equipment (e.g. fencing, barriers, planters), and insurance and indemnification requirements.

Outdoor patios are often located on private property. Restaurant owners do not need to apply to the CaféTO program if their patios are entirely on private property and they can meet the regulations of the zoning bylaw.

# Charrette Activities

Deputy Mayor Michael Thompson welcomed the participants and provided opening remarks. Then Arlene Gould, DIAC's Strategic Director, outlined the agenda and opportunities to be investigated. A group discussion followed.

## General Discussion

The designers spoke to the importance of blue-skying the opportunity; that is, putting everything on the table to see what is possible, in the spirit of the brainstorming charrette.

The designers thought that to create an outdoor winter patio culture for Toronto, we would have to change the people's mindset about eating outside in cold weather. Designing the experience with the right marketing and incentives in place should help to make this possible. Other countries with a winter climate such as Switzerland, Sweden and Finland have popularized outdoor dining in winter, as have Whistler and Quebec City in Canada.

Snow clearance and where to store the snow are two of the major challenges in creating the winter patio spaces. This issue was raised a number of times.

The group emphasized that recommendations need to address the various types of restaurant patios in Toronto. A very small number of restaurants have enough setback to have a large front patio on their property with a canopy that extends over the seating. The majority of restaurants do not. They need ways to solve the snow clearing issue and to create a comfortable seating space for their customers. Hundreds of Toronto restaurants face these design and operational issues. This is true particularly for smaller restaurants that have been significantly impacted by the pandemic. We need to do something for them.

Charrette Agenda	
9:30	Welcome
9:40	Charrette housekeeping
9:45	Opening Presentation
10:00	General Discussion and Q&A
10:30	Breakout Groups
11:00	Break
11:15	Breakout Group work resumes
12:00	Plenary – Groups Present Recommendations
12:30	Discussion
12:45	Summary of Recommendations
12:55	Thank you and close

### Restaurant patio typologies:

- curb lane patios (not possible in winter)
- curb side patios (not possible in winter)
- small frontage cafés
- frontage cafés
- boulevard or flankage cafés (need Councillor approval)
- outdoor patios on private property
- patios in plaza parking lots

Note: According to the Winter CaféTO Guidelines, 'Curbside & Curblane cafés are not possible in the winter'. Curb lane patios are closed to permit snow plows to clear the streets. But with slush guards, could curbside patios work on some streets?

The Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas (TABIA) raised the issue of the provincial liquor laws and their impacts on patios and margins. The group asked about City of Toronto and community spaces that could be used as patio space for a number of restaurants. There are pockets of unused pavement that could be used for patios. These spaces are not necessarily adjacent to a restaurant so the alcohol distribution would have to move. In this case, could the patio become a licensed station to serve from?

Private plazas can help revitalize suburban areas. This has been done in many US cities, converting strip malls into mini main streets. Two members of the Toronto organization, plazaPOPS (which organized WexPOPS, a 6-week pilot in Scarborough's Wexford Heights in 2019), said that they are planning a number of new pilots for the shoulder seasons.

The BIAs are very involved in supporting and facilitating CaféTO and infrastructure investments. They provide enhanced maintenance and focus on safety and liability. Leveraging and empowering the BIAs is critical to the winter patio program and long-term success. But TABIA pointed out that one third of restaurants are not part of the BIA community. We must also find ways to support them.

It is important to keep the patio culture alive on the side streets, where the patios have a particular character that could be appealing for outdoor winter dining.

## Breakout Group Themes

Following the general discussion the participants separated into three breakout groups to continue to discuss aspects of the patio winterization opportunity in more detail. A mix of participants - restaurant owners and industry associations, representatives of the BIAs, City staff and designers - joined each group. The group discussions were facilitated by the design team.



Notes from Breakout Group 1

To focus the discussion in the Breakout Groups, DIAC developed three themes:

### Group 1: Structure, Flooring, Landscape and Lighting

- What are the basic elements that could be combined to create safe, accessible and appealing winter patios?
- What kinds of structures are possible?
- Can we create flexible winter landscapes to protect the patios, soften the aesthetic and attract customers?
- What type of lighting could enhance the streetscape, keep people safe and create a unique look and feel for Toronto's winter patios?

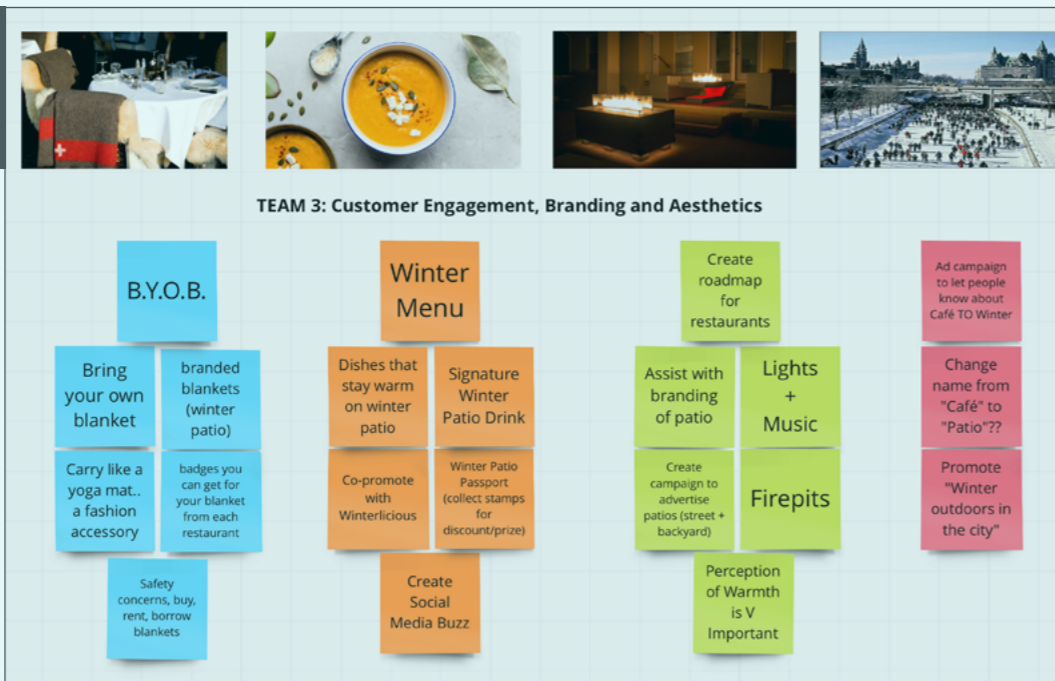
### Group 2: Furniture, Materials and Heating

- What kinds of furniture work best for winter patios?
- Can tables, chairs, serving stations be easily moved for snow clearance, etc.?
- What heating options are possible (to heat the space, the people and the food)?

### Group 3: Customer Engagement, Branding and Aesthetics

- How can we encourage people (young couples, business colleagues, families, seniors) to dine outside in winter?
- What physical and electronic branding strategies could help to unify the streetscape, support restaurant marketing and highlight the benefits of winter dining outside?
- What are the attractions that could promote outdoor winter dining (special winter lunch/dinner menus, blankets, heated seats, etc.)?

Notes from Breakout Group 3



# Steps, Recommendations and Comments

Following the work in the Breakout Groups the participants reconvened in a plenary to share their findings. Each group presented their top recommendations and took questions and comments.

DIAC has structured the recommendations emerging from the work in the Breakout Groups in three steps.

## Manage the Process → Design the Experience → Create Pilot Projects

### Manage the Process

Addressing the challenge of how to safely extend outdoor dining into the fall/winter, the plans for winterization of restaurant patios need to address not just design, but also operational issues.

#### 1. Establish Certainty

- To invest in winterizing their patios, restaurants need a 3 to 5 year commitment from the City.
- One of the things that would make this better for us is if the City would entertain a longer-term commitment to patios. That would allow people like us to make the necessary investment which is not insignificant. It would be a sizeable investment just to operate a proper patio, let alone a winterized patio.
- If the City said we have 5 years, well great. We could amortize the investment and make a longer-term commitment to our employees.
- If restaurants knew their patios would come back, there would be an industry of rentals that are brandable. They would enter into long-term contracts as a cost of doing business. Off-season materials could be warehoused. This would allow for summer and winter rejuvenation. This is happening elsewhere, e.g. Hamilton. It is all about affordability and predictability – the industry is definitely responding.
- Who pays for winterization? The larger restaurants that could afford to do more could invest just as they would to upgrade their interior dining space. The smaller restaurants may need support by joining together and working with the City or the BIAs or securing sponsorship. Restaurants could also get other private partners involved.

**Note:** Shortly after the CaféTO Winterization design charrette was held, Toronto City Council voted to make the CaféTO program permanent, to allow restaurants to make longer-term plans for expanded outdoor dining options. All application, transfer and permit fees will continue to be waived for sidewalk cafés in 2022. One-time application for year-round permits opened January 18<sup>th</sup>, and will close April 2<sup>nd</sup>, for installation as soon as mid-May, 2022. Restaurants can obtain further information and apply for permits online at [www.toronto.ca/cafeto](http://www.toronto.ca/cafeto)

## 2. Test what is Possible

- We are reacting to the pandemic so there should be lessons learned and a new vision created.
- This is an opportunity for City placemaking now.
- A design charrette is a place for brainstorming. In that spirit, we want to ask ‘what if we loosen the regulations?’ Let’s put all ideas on the table today.
- We want to discuss opportunities now and into the future. How can we help this year? Hopefully, some ideas can be implemented in 2022-23. If grand ideas to change outdoor culture emerge, we could implement those in winters to come.
- Might some curb lane patios be allowed e.g. on King from Spadina to Bathurst where patios were already operating on decks in the transit priority corridor?
- Could some curbside winter patios be permitted?
- Is open flame taboo? What flexibility do we have?
- Table top heat is not permitted – can we change that to keep people and food warm?
- There are a number of conditions where you can install a roof over a patio on private property. So this should be on the table as well. The key is what level of cover will the City accept as reasonable? Many restaurants have a patio but no roof. We could recommend how staff would evaluate opportunities to add a roof.
- Are there opportunities to retain the patio culture for the winter on side streets e.g. Market St., and impact future street construction?
- Winterized patios were proposed in the past, but there was no appetite on part of restaurants due to cost and complexity. What has changed? Participants said that restaurants need additional outdoor capacity now.
- We need flexible options for outdoor dining e.g. Block Party and Cozy Cabins, winning ideas from the [Chicago Winter Dining Challenge](#). They fit into a variety of configurations and come with seats, heat and shelter.
- New York City, and cities in Europe have good programs. Outdoor winter dining is in their culture, as it is in Whistler and Quebec City. It is a whole mindset. How about loosening regulations on curblanes to build structures for protection? This would also improve air quality and protect diners sitting next to idling cars.
- With respect to accessibility – restaurants should be able to provide a ramp over part of the floor area, but not the entire restaurant or patio. Ossington has a significant slope from Queen to Dundas. Restaurants could easily make a portion at grade and higher dealing with the street slope.

## 3. Plan for Snow Removal

- A big concern is how to keep people safe. So where do we put the snow? It can’t go on the patio. In practical terms there are ways to solve this.

- Slush splatters. We need to protect the patios. Perhaps with slush guards such as corrugated panels at the curb. Explore the use of a 3-foot slush guard around patio areas where it is safe to do so.
- Sidewalk clearance becomes most important in the winter. Restaurant owners have to maintain the street in front of their patios to a higher standard than normal.
- This is a walking neighbourhood. We have wide sidewalks but larger snowbanks, so it is hard to navigate in the winter.
- On meandering streets like Bloor and Danforth, we could create triangles for snow storage.
- There is no place to store snow if patios are very long.
- Snow clearance and where to store the snow are big issues. To maintain this program, the City and the BIAs could establish a public/private partnership with the restaurant community to ensure patio areas are cleared thoroughly and regularly to keep the streets safe.
- Consider “Uber snow clearing” using high school students.

**Note: Curb lane and curb side cafés need to be removed by Nov. 12<sup>th</sup> for snow plowing. Other types of cafés could continue to operate. The snow plowing contract ends on April 15<sup>th</sup>. But curb lane cafés may not return until May, to allow for the street maintenance required after the winter.**

## 4. Address the Needs of Different Types of Patios

One size does not fit all. Small restaurants with sidewalk patios and small frontage cafés have different needs and face particular challenges. The plans for winterization should include low cost, easy to implement ideas for smaller restaurants that could be introduced right away, as well as more ambitious longer-term plans that would apply more to larger restaurants with greater resources.

- Various types of patios may need different solutions and different approvals.
- According to the Winter CaféTO Guidelines, ‘Curbside & Curblane cafés are not possible in the winter’. Curb lane patios are closed to permit snow plows to clear the streets. But with slush guards, could curbside patios work on some streets?
- Rear laneways are another possibility, but some may not be suitable for serving food. One could find laneways not normally used and move some patios there.
- There is a wide disparity of economic conditions in neighbourhoods with various types of patios. We need to be mindful of what can be done for the smaller store front cafés and restaurants.
- There are restaurants set back with space to have a patio and canopy covering. But that is a small number of restaurants, the low hanging fruit. Many restaurants do not have a wide enough sidewalk in front to create a patio and they have had to go into the curb lane. If there are ways to solve for snow clearing and comfort there could be opportunities for hundreds or thousands of restaurants.



- The streets are very narrow in the Beaches. There is no option but to be on the curb side.
- People often aren't aware of the private patios in the back of restaurants. There needs to be better signage to promote these patios.
- plazaPOPS is looking at ways to animate space in and around the inner suburban Main Streets.
- We also need to consider those restaurants not in the BIA world.

## 5. Improve Accessibility

- We will always have to keep sidewalks open for people to walk. We cannot leave strollers and people with accessibility issues in a position where they have to go out into the street to get past a restaurant.
- Decks and platforms can improve accessibility and also help address challenges with snow.
- DineOut NYC, designed pro-bono by Rockwell Group in coordination with the NYC Hospitality Alliance, is an adaptable modular outdoor dining system that includes flooring, barriers, shading, lighting, and furniture as well as space for sanitation and restaurant equipment. It has been installed at NYC restaurants and communal dining locations. A DineOut Tool Kit was created in response to restaurant inquiries and [can be downloaded here](#).

**Note:** The City's new [CaféTO Property Improvement Program](#) offers 50% matching funding for eligible improvements including platforms or decking, fencing and accessibility improvements, (excluding furnishings), which meet Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (OADA) standards. The maximum grant is \$5,000. Further funding of up to \$2,500 is available for upgrades to meet accessibility standards, for a total maximum grant of \$7,500.

## 6. Provide Patio Space Outside Adjacency

- There are a number of restaurants without a patio that would like to have that opportunity.
- One elephant in the room is archaic Ontario liquor laws. We need to be able to provide patio space outside adjacency. How could bylaws be amended to provide this?
- Could patios be licensed stations to serve from?
- Community spaces, or City of Toronto spaces could be gathering places for a number of restaurants to serve from – not just adjacent to a restaurant. This would address the needs of restaurants that don't have space for a patio but would like to have one. This is a good idea but the City is without authority to implement.

## 7. Leverage Opportunities for Temporary Structures and Reusable Materials

- There are lots of opportunities for patios on private property. Move away from CaféTO rules to City zoning bylaws. Restaurants looking to install patios on private property should apply for a zoning review as soon as possible.
- New awning, canopy, structure or tent installations are not permitted on public property. You may only use an awning if it is approved on your existing permanent café permit. Temporary tents and structures may be possible on private property but may require a building permit.
- Architects are talking about structure e.g. Balthazar. Could be temporary, reconfigurable structures e.g. created with scaffolding and other materials to soften the look of a patio or something more permanent, amortized over time, and include moveable furniture and long retractable canopies. Both high-end and home-made, less expensive solutions are possible.
- Utilize low impact design and greenhouse principles – glass and plexiglass roofs and partial walls.
- Frame with removable windscreen and moveable roof system.
- Any solution should be temporary so the roofs/walls can be moved in or out.
- Provide for storage in off season.
- With COVID we are cognizant of health guidance and regulations. Good ventilation is required. Fully enclosed patios are not permitted.

## 8. Establish a Four Season Patio Culture

- Celebrate outdoor dining as part of promoting winter outdoors in the City of Toronto. Winter patio dining could be part of a larger initiative to encourage people to spend more time during winter in our neighbourhoods and parks.
- Many restaurants will want to operate more in shoulder seasons and on very nice days.
- Many of the patios closed at the end of September when the weather turned. But they would stay open if they thought people would come.
- In Greektown, if there was some way to winterize the patios, people would come.
- Danforth is busy at lunch because people are working from home and want a break. Outdoor dining at dinner time would be busy if there was proper lighting.
- Give people something to do and they will come out.
- There is an opportunity to create vibrancy in winter through a festival approach.
- Sunshine is the best remedy for all restaurants – summer and winter. With sunshine the customer numbers go up.

## 9. Plan for the Best Use of Space

- Practical, tactical urbanism – implement low-cost, temporary changes to the built environment to improve neighbourhoods and gathering places to create a better public realm.
- Private plazas can help revitalize suburban areas. This has been done in many US cities, converting strip malls into mini main streets. Two members of the Toronto organization, plazaPOPS, which organized WexPOPS, a 6-week pilot in Scarborough's Wexford Heights in 2019, said that they are planning a number of new pilots for the shoulder seasons. These opportunities could also help to encourage more outdoor dining in suburban areas of the City.
- Be open to moderation e.g. change to traffic patterns.
- There is a need to shift and straddle spaces with platforms to create more room for patios. Corner bump-outs and lay-by parking could be easily transformed to winter patios.
- For narrow streets such as Ossington, patios across from each other on both sides of the street don't leave much room for pedestrians, bikes, cars and buses. Can patios be offset and different lanes be used differently - three lanes for traffic and one for parking? Then pockets of unused pavement can be used for patios and parklets. These would not be adjacent, so alcohol distribution would need to move. Patio decks could pop-up to extend to the sidewalk, and straddle the furniture zone, using the slope of the road to provide accessibility. This would maintain the clearway along the face of the buildings. Water would need to be managed, and patios would slide in around hydro poles. If lanes are measured from the middle of the road, this could provide enough room for all users of the public realm.
- There is value in painting out the rules for people to follow on the road, vs. assuming it is their right, or making up their own rules.
- Patios, mid-block crossing, bike lanes, etc. could be part of a kit of parts resulting in better guidance for traffic.
- Concrete islands could temporarily extend curbs for safer intersections and create a stop for snowplows. Then use pavers and sand to allow water to move.
- Even in the summer there were challenges with parking, bike lanes and moving furniture around.

## 10. Consider a Name Change

- “Café” suggests a coffee shop rather than a restaurant.
- Possibly change to “Winter PatioTO”.

## Design the Experience

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The winter patio experience should be celebrated as special and different.

### 11. Outdoor Dining Should Not Try to Recreate the Experience of Dining Inside

- The guest expectation has to be different outside.
- People may not want to have a full meal outside in mid-winter, but may consider winter patios as a good option for a quick social gathering.
- It is difficult to get high quality service staff today. To tell them they are going to be working on a hot or very cold patio is not a great recruiting tool.
- We have to think about employees and whether they would work in a winterized environment.

### 12. Introduce White Lights to Unify the Streetscape

- Use seasonal white lights to enliven the street without conflicting with traffic lights.
- White lights, particularly a ceiling of white lights along the street, could tie things together in a better way.

### 13. Integrate Flexible Winter Landscapes

- Landscaping elements can attract and protect outdoor diners.
- Ornamental grasses can last into the winter so would be a good planting option.
- Potted cedars could be rented from a local nursery to surround the patios where there is space.
- Giant concrete planters could be used to protect the curb lane patios with different plants featured for different seasons.

### 14. Choose Appropriate Furniture and Materials

- Outdoor seating should be sturdy, comfortable and use coverings such as synthetic materials that dry easily to retain as much heat as possible.
- Long tables can bring a sense of community to outdoor winter dining. Large groups sitting close together can help to capture body heat and this should appeal to a young crowd.
- The right type of picnic tables are accessible.
- Moving furniture inside is very labour intensive. Heavy furniture made of solid wood or metal shouldn't have to be moved inside.
- Mixed density of seating will maximize use of space and provide luxury.
- There are opportunities to leave furniture out overnight on the side streets.

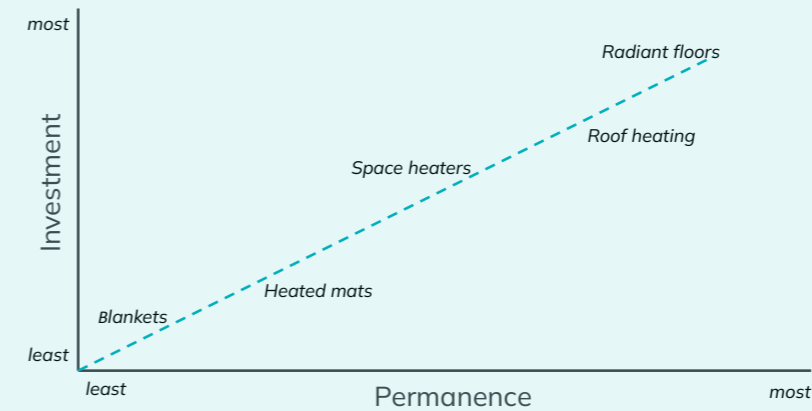
- As the goal is to also develop long-term solutions, products and materials should be environmentally sustainable.

## 15. Consider Heating Options

- A range of heating options were proposed, from the perspective of safety, efficiency, climate change impacts, permanence, timeline commitment, flexibility and affordability (capital investment and operational costs):
  - Blankets or rugs
  - Heated yoga mats
  - Propane heaters
  - Space heaters
  - Diesel-powered heaters
  - Horizontal strip heaters attached to awnings
  - Infrared directional heating
  - Greenhouse glass/plexiglass to capture heat from the sun
  - Fibreglass for half walls to let the light in
  - Poly curtains to hold in the heat
  - Radiant heating in the ceiling or floor
  - Forced natural gas under a raised floor to give heat from the floor boards
  - Solar concentrators for rows of patios
  - Japanese Kotatsu heated tables
- Structural coverings are quite important to retain heat and provide wind protection.
- Create a perception of warmth.
- Open air fires, fire pits or cooking devices (including BBQs) are not allowed within the public right-of-way.
- A range of heating options were discussed. Propane heaters present some challenges, but there does not seem to be any good alternative in a medium price range.
- How to get heat away from roof structure and down to people and floor levels?
- Heat floors with mounted blower across the surface.
- Directional heating e.g. UV, microwave and infrared panels.
- Table top heating is not permitted. Can we change that to keep people and food warm?
- Radiant flooring – if decking a patio.
- Will open flame ever be approved?
- Is there a way to bring the heat from the kitchen outside?
- Allow for flexibility if public health regulations change, and there is good ventilation for all potential solutions.

## Heating Recommendations

Heating Options  
Discussed by  
Group 2



Note: Under Ontario's modified Step 2 of the Roadmap to Reopen, a patio was required to have at least two full sides of an outdoor area open, to allow for enough ventilation to help prevent the transmission of COVID-19. If there is no roof, the patio must have at least one full side open. Open sides must not be blocked by walls or other impermeable barriers. The city works to inform restaurants to ensure they comply with the rules, and is responding to complaints and conducting inspections.

## 16. Feature Special Winter Patio Menus

- For lunch, early dinner and possibly linked to a festival event.
- People will eat outside in good weather, but they don't want to spend \$100.
- Think of quick social gatherings rather than a full meal outside in mid-winter.
- Restaurants could offer winter specials such as signature hot drinks or free appetizers and soups, chili, stews and other food that is easy to keep warm.
- Even if the people are warm, it is a challenge to keep the food warm.
- Chafing dishes, insulated dishes and induction heating could help.

## 17. Invest in Signage and Branding

- Create a simple signage system that would be relatively low cost and would be easy for restaurants to correlate along the streetscape.
- Signage is important to identify restaurants with winter patios, especially restaurants which have a back patio not visible from the street.
- A signage system could brand the individual patios if they were to be sharing a community space converted to a patio area.
- Patio signage could help to unify the streetscape and bring personality back to main street after the challenges of the pandemic.

## 18. Integrate Music and Art

- Artists can create murals on half walls and signs in-between the patios to liven up the space, add colour and interest.
- Live music can enhance the winter dining experience.

## 19. Develop Marketing Incentives

- It would be helpful to have a City ad campaign – market winter patios as a way to enjoy the great outdoors. There could be a festival within another program - possibly linked to Winterlicious. This would be the fastest and easiest way to get traction. The City is good at these kind of events.
- City promotion not a huge extra cost.
- Perception of warm, inviting environment is very important.
- How to get restaurants to participate? Create roadmap/guidebook for participating restaurants. Assist with branding. Simple to more elaborate ways to get involved. Winter patio passport could provide discount to attend all patios. Collect stamps to qualify for incentives. Could have monthly themes. Create social media buzz. Help cross-pollinate and promote.
- Identify ways for City and BIAs to support. Show City is backing restaurants. Would be a lost opportunity not to do this.
- Restaurants could create a branded Bring Your Own Blanket (BYOB) promotion with a system to collect stickers, each one depicting a particular restaurant patio. The stickers would be placed on the blankets and diners who collect enough stickers could win a free patio meal.
- Use marketing/branding to encourage people to dress warmly.
- Restaurants and the BIAs could collaborate on marketing incentives to establish greater awareness and impact.
- Communications should speak to the inventiveness and resilience of small restaurant owners.

## Create Pilot Projects

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The pilots could help to increase interest and visibility for winter patios and provide a model to encourage restaurants to participate.

## 20. Develop Pilots to Demonstrate Results

- Test the ideas in several pilot projects, addressing various conditions in different Toronto locations and neighbourhoods to show how this could be done successfully.
- Successful pilot projects are important models for how change happens.
- The pilots can be studied and applied to other places.
- Pilots could be developed for different typologies of space to show how each could work e.g. rather than patios opposite each other on both sides of narrow streets, they could be offset in certain types of conditions.
- Modelling is a design idea. Toronto restaurants have worked with designers to create many successful restaurants and patio spaces to drive business and engage customers. There is an opportunity for pilot project teams to work with designers to develop the design recommendations for winterized patios into a sample concept. The concept could then be used by one restaurant or integrated for a group of restaurant patios to demonstrate the appeal and the impact.
- Ossington Avenue has good potential as it is a popular area for socializing and dining, with a young clientele. Small changes may be possible in the near term as this street is going to be redone. But cafés on either side of this narrow street can feel too crowded. Offsets, lane painting, and platforms and café placement in the furniture zone are ideas that could be piloted here.
- Streets such as Roncesvalles, with wider sidewalks and bump outs, or King Street with café and parklet opportunities within the Transit Priority Corridor may be good options.
- Market Street, a popular side street by St. Lawrence Market with a high volume of pedestrian traffic, was also recommended.

# Cosmopolitan Cafés



Curb side patio in New York City, reflecting what outdoor dining may look like in winter – Bloomberg



New Orleans, Backyard Patio, Bacchanal



Chicago Winter Dining Challenge – Cozy Cabins



European Café

## Scenarios for Winter Dining Outside

1. Picture a weekend afternoon in winter. A family has just been skating. They are looking for somewhere to have a warm drink, a snack, a late lunch or early dinner. The main street in their neighbourhood has a strip of patios, all with twinkling lights, cheerful signage and an affordable menu posted outside.
2. It is a clear winter evening. The couple who met on Tinder are wondering where to go for their first date. That strip of patios on main street beckons.
3. A group of seniors have been out for a brisk winter walk. They decide to stop for lunch at one of the newly opened winter patios in their neighbourhood.
4. Two managers now working from home need to schedule a meeting. They also want to take a break for lunch. As an alternative to one more video conference, they arrange to meet at a local diner to take advantage of the outdoor patio lunch specials.

### Designer Connections

- If any of the stakeholders want to work with a designer to further develop and apply the ideas emerging from design charrette, DIAC can provide a designer link process to connect the stakeholders with designers from various disciplines through the design associations of Ontario.



DESIGN  
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### About DIAC

The Design Industry Advisory Committee (DIAC) is a unique, cross-disciplinary design research group established by the City of Toronto in 2001. DIAC brings together the design associations representing architects, landscape architects, planners and urban designers, industrial, interior, graphic and fashion designers. DIAC is Canada's only cross-disciplinary research group focused on leveraging breakthrough innovation at the intersection of the design disciplines to address challenging economic, social and environmental opportunities.

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Editor: Arlene Gould  
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### Thank you to all the design charrette participants.

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