Business/Retail Environment & Social Distancing

Design Element Considerations

Prepared by Old Colony Planning Council
This guide is to provide a visual example on how your community might provide additional space for pedestrians, bicyclist and local retailers and dinning establishment to operate while maintaining social distancing practices.

The examples provided in this guide could provide addition space for restaurant and bars to add table capacity, retail shops additional square footage to allow customers to shop safely and comfortably and more room for pedestrians and bicyclist to maintain appropriate social distancing guidance.
Temporarily expanding sidewalks in your community could give pedestrians the needed width to allow pedestrians the ability to social distance that might not be possible under current sidewalk width conditions.

Temporarily expanded sidewalks does not mean you have to pour new concrete or lay asphalt, simply putting a row of traffic cones, positioning jersey barriers, or installing water/sand fill barriers can achieve the desired effect of expanding the sidewalk walk for pedestrians temporarily.
The Parklet is an urban design tool where an on street parking space is transformed into an outdoor seating space for relaxation or for the provision of space for outdoor dining and retailing.

With an average on street parking space measuring a 140 sqft or more and as much as 320 sqft in some off street locations, there is a lot of room for business to add space capacity.

A temporary Parklet could provide a local business, for example a restaurant, the needed space to maintain social distancing while being able to seat enough patrons to make the financials of operating their business work.
A temporary bicycle lane or shared path in your community could give joggers and bicyclists the space needed to allow for social distancing that might not be possible under current roadway conditions.

With retail and dining establishments closed or operating in a reduced capacity to maintain social distancing guidelines, along with the canceling of summer entertainment events, people will look towards actives like jogging and bicycling to fill that entertainment void.

Installing temporary bicycle lanes or share use paths in the roadway utilizing tools like traffic cones or barriers can provide the safe space needed for people to enjoy these activities.
Open Streets is an urban design tool where a street is closed off to automobile traffic and allows for the free flow of pedestrians, bicyclists and for business to put up tents and tables for outdoor dining or retailing.

With the installation of Open Streets along a commercial corridor with shops, restaurants, and bars, hundred if not thousands of square feet can be given over to local business to operate while maintaining social distancing practices. Open Streets also encourages people to walk or bike the corridor of the closed off street which could translate into additional sales for your local businesses.
Things to Consider

Designing to Site Context

- When implementing these design recommendations, special attention should be given to the context of the roadway and appropriate safety measure taken to ensure comfortable enjoyment of the temporary design.
  - Lower speed limits if necessary. Lower speed limits will make pedestrians, bicyclist, and other users of these temporary designs into the roadway more comfortable and will encourage greater utilization.
  - If possible, restricting roadway usage by vehicles can have the added benefits of street calming which has been shown to spur more utilization of roadway space by pedestrians and bicyclist and will provide for a more inviting outdoor dining and shopping experience.

Public Safety

- Before installing temporary design elements, municipal safety service (Fire/EMS & Police) should be engaged to explain what these temporary design measures are and their purpose.
  - Discussions should be had with safety service on how lower traffic speed limits and reduce vehicle usage of a roadway will be enforce.
  - Concerns from safety services should be heard, understood, and discussed on how the design can be improve to increase safety and the ability of safety service to respond to emergency calls without impediment while still providing temporary design element.
  - ADA considerations should be reviewed to ensure residents of all abilities can enjoy the temporary design.

Elected Official/Public Engagement

- Before installation of temporary design element, Boards of Selectmen, City Councils, or other municipal legislature bodies should be engage on the possibility and feasibility of installing temporary design elements.

Engaging the Public

- A public outreach campaign of notices and other communiqué should be developed and disseminated to the pubic about these temporary designs being installed and their purpose.
Things to Consider

Engage Regional Transit Authorities

- Public transit service providers should be involved in the discussions of the installation of these temporary design elements in those communities that are serviced by public transportation.
  - Discussion about bus stop boarding and alighting of passengers and/or relocation should be discussed
  - Bus operations should be considered in the layout of the temporary design element to allow for proper bus turning radius
  - Public transit authorities should be engaged to see how they can help in meeting the transportation need to the area where these temporary design elements will be installed to reduce the desire to drive and park at these locations.

Engagement of Businesses

- The business community should be engaged about the installations of these temporary design elements and how they might benefit them.
  - Their concerns or suggestions on improvements of the temporary design element should be heard and incorporated into the design.
  - The business community should be encouraged to participate in maintenance of the temporary design element.
  - Chamber of Commerce and other business organization should be encourage to raise funds for and funds to maintenance and operate the temporary design element

Public Works

- A municipalities public works department should be engaged about the installation, maintenance, and operation of the temporary design element.
  - Feedback, concerns, and improvement suggestions from the Public Works officials on the installation, maintenance and eventual breakdown of the temporary design element should be discussed and implemented.
  - Regular communication with the Public Works Department on the performance the temporary design element should be had.
How to Implement

1. Engage your local elected officials about these temporary design element ideas
2. Engage Public Works about these designs
3. Engage municipal safety service about these temporary design elements
4. Engage the local Chamber of Commerce and/or local business to see what they think about expanding their operations into the street utilizing these temporary designs.
5. Develop a quick installation, maintenance and removal plan.
6. Engage the public on what these temporary designs are how they will benefit them, local business, and the community over all.
7. Set a date for possible ending of temporary design elements.
8. If possible, collect data on your temporary design to gage performance. Having a set of key performance indicators (KPI) can help you adjust the design to better suite the community and business.
9. Discuss if these temporary design elements should become permanent. If KPIs were collected, this will help in making that decision.
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