



## **MAYOR DAVID J. NARKEWICZ**

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**For Immediate Release – June 8, 2020**

### **City of Northampton Paves the Way for Safe On-Site Retail and Outdoor Dining in Downtown Districts**

NORTHAMPTON - Today, Mayor David J. Narkewicz announced the next steps toward promoting outdoor dining and easy curbside purchases on Main Street in Northampton and Florence, consistent with COVID-19 safe distancing practices.

On Saturday, Governor Baker announced that Massachusetts would enter “Phase 2” of the Commonwealth’s reopening plan, which includes reopening restaurants for outdoor dining and reopening retail under strict guidelines. In response, Northampton has assembled a team of department heads, safety inspectors, the health department, licensing and legal experts to help enable the city’s retail operations to open with occupancy limits, and to help restaurants to quickly pivot to serving customers outside their establishments.

“With Phase 2 reopening officially underway, the City of Northampton is committed to helping our restaurants and retail shops to get up and running as quickly as possible,” said Mayor David Narkewicz, “I’ve instructed all city departments to do everything they can to support a safe and functional return to dining out and retail in Northampton.”

Every restaurant in the City of Northampton that plans to participate in outdoor dining needs to have a plan on file with the city that describes their efforts to provide a safe experience that complies with state regulations under Phase 2. Outdoor Dining means tables where establishments serve food to patrons and assume responsibility for required hygiene and safe social distancing practices. Unmonitored outdoor seating remains prohibited at every City of Northampton restaurant in compliance with Governor Baker’s order.

As reported last week, the outdoor dining process began with hiring Toole Design and Street Plans with funding from the Solomon Foundation to design the Main Street plan - the most complex system part of this initiative. The city will work with restaurants elsewhere for expedited consideration for expanded outdoor uses.

In this next phase, the city team will work as quickly as possible to bring this vision to reality. Toward that end:

- The Mayor and the City Council worked together to temporarily suspend parking and public way ordinances in order to expedite the reopening of outdoor dining and retail in compliance with the requirements of COVID-19 safe social distancing.
- The city has launched a one-stop page on the city of Northampton website where food establishments can share plans and request expedited inspections and licensing activities. Applications for outdoor dining activities are available for both public and private spaces at <http://northamptonma.gov/2173/Restaurant-Temporary-Outdoor-Seating>.
- The city has set up a process for new outdoor dining spaces as follows:
  - Restaurants that already have defined, pre-approved outdoor dining spaces will be able to begin operations right away.
  - Restaurants applying for new outdoor dining on private space, or for public spaces not on public streets (e.g. the red brick median strip on Main Street as an interim step before larger spaces are defined) will need to have their spaces approved by the building commission prior to serving food, and will need to apply to the licensing commission for approval prior to serving alcoholic beverages.
  - Restaurants applying for on-street spaces should get their applications in immediately, but the planning for these areas may take longer due to their complexity.
- The city has waived all fees and costs related to permitting and licensing outdoor dining operations.
- The city has nearly completed the Main Street design plan, and stands ready to install the necessary safety measures to define the expanded areas with the goal of transforming Main Street into a safe and exciting environment for the resumption of dining and retail.
- The city has relaxed rules related to wearing face coverings while seated at outdoor dining establishments.
- The city has scheduled two town hall meetings for Tuesday to answer questions businesses may have about the application process, successful site designs, and how to comply with state and local requirements.
  - 1:00 pm Tuesday, June 9th - Outdoor Dining Q & A
  - 2:00 pm Tuesday, June 9th - Retail Q & A

The city continues to work with the Downtown Northampton Association (DNA) and the Florence Civic and Business Association to address multiple goals including outdoor dining space, curbside pickup space, less congested sidewalks, and easy parking.

Tax deductible donations in support of this project can be made payable to the City of Northampton ('Tourism Gift Account' on the memo line) and be mailed to Planning & Sustainability, 210 Main Street, Northampton, MA 01060. Donations by credit card or debit can be made to <https://tinyurl.com/Northampton-streetscape> (select donation and note streetscape).

For more information, please contact the Mayor's Office at 413-587-1249 or [mayor@northamptonma.gov](mailto:mayor@northamptonma.gov).