



April 10, 2017

Public Works and Infrastructure Committee
Nancy Martins
10th floor, West Tower, City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Re: PW20.9 A Framework for the Toronto Sidewalk Café Design Manual

Dear Ms. Martins:

The St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Association is a registered not-for-profit organisation, founded in 1982, it represents residents who live in the area bounded by Yonge and Parliament and Queen and the rail berm. We have been following with great interest the development of the sidewalk café design manual and the associated by-law for several years and have participated in many public consultations.

In general we are very supportive of sidewalk cafes as they give life to our streets and the Association has the following specific comments on the Design Manual's Key Principles.

Key Principle #1: Supporting Residents and Pedestrians

- *Consistent Minimum Standards for the Width of Pedestrian Clearways.* We agree that there should be consistent minimum standards for pedestrian clearways but would note that on many busy downtown streets (which often have historically narrow sidewalks) the minimum will often not be sufficient. In our opinion, it is important to develop higher standards where needed and suggest that City Staff

should be instructed to examine and identify, in particular, streets that require larger pedestrian clearways in the TOCore downtown study area. We are uncertain if streets or areas requiring these higher standards should be imposed by Community Councils or whether this should be left to City Staff.

- *Unobstructed Pedestrian Clearways.* We agree that pedestrian clearways need to be unobstructed ('clearway' should mean 'clearway'!) **This is an absolutely basic requirement** and 'clearways' should not be blocked by anything, including A-frame signs and planters.
- *Straight Pedestrian Clearways.* While we agree that most clearways should be straight, we accept that in certain locations an angled clearway may be best and exceptions should be allowed. Again, we are uncertain if these should require a motion at the relevant Community Council or whether these exceptions could be granted by City staff.

Key Principle #2: Supporting Local Businesses

- *New Sidewalk Café Configurations.* We strongly support the concept of different configurations and are pleased to see the idea of small frontage cafés, curbside cafés, parklet cafés, and café combinations. We suggest that the list of possible configurations should allow for other variations if they meet local needs and do not conflict with other Principles.
- *Fewer Restrictions on Sidewalk Café Elements.* As long as safety is maintained, we fully support the removal of restrictions. If a café is 'retro' it should be able to have a retro look, if it is modern or any other style or design it should be able to reflect this in the design.

Key Principle #3: Facilitating an Effective Transition to Apply Updated Pedestrian Clearway Regulations

- *Reduce Pedestrian Clearway Compliance Issues through Redesign and New Options.* Obviously existing cafes will need some help and some (limited) time to adapt to the new rules.
- *Stepped Compliance with the Manual and By-laws.* Though we accept that there needs to be some 'phasing in' period we cannot accept a three year or longer period for compliance. In our opinion, the minimum sidewalk clearances and the need to accommodate pedestrians, wheelchairs, baby carriages etc cannot be put off much longer. On the assumption that the new standards are in force for the 2018 café season we see no reason why anyone should be able to be "red-circled" or "grandparented" past December 2019. At the most, any "red-circling" or "grandparenting" past this date should definitely require a motion at the appropriate Community Council and should not be valid for more than two seasons.
- *Provide Resources for Business Owners.* We agree that business owners will need help and encouragement and welcome this initiative. However, we are generally NOT in favour of a public amenity such as a street bench or street tree being removed on behalf of a private café so that a safe pedestrian clearway can be created. We would not, generally, be averse to street furniture (benches, litter bins, bike rings) being relocated to assist a business owner.
- *Reduce Impacts through Planned Street Projects.* This makes good sense.
- *Pilot Projects.* We are very supportive of pilot projects and strongly support this suggestion – as long as these are properly evaluated and, if they prove disruptive, are stopped early.

In the **FRAMEWORK FOR COMPLETION** we note that there is a call for additional research and consultation. We are certainly not opposed to more information and further discussion but this process has already stretched on for many years and it is our firm view that it must be concluded in fall 2017 so that the new rules can start to apply in 2018.

It is important to remember that sidewalk cafes are on the public realm and receiving a permit to operate one is not a right. Circumstances change, areas become more heavily pedestrianised and need wider sidewalks and sometimes a boulevard café that was quite suitable in a non-residential or less busy district becomes unsuitable due to

congestion, noise or other reasons in a district that becomes more residential and busier.

The St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Association strongly supports sidewalk and patio cafes and over the years has generally managed to work with City staff and business owners on licence applications to reach a situation where everyone is happy (or at least not too unhappy.)

Though the question of fees for Boulevard Cafes is not within the remit of the Public Works and Infrastructure Committee, we suggest that PWIC may want to ask City Staff to look at the fees for the use of the public realm that are under your jurisdiction (boulevard parking for example) to ensure that they are in line with the fees proposed and adopted for other more 'civic' uses. It seems counter-productive to 'rent' public space for commercial boulevard parking at a far lower rate than the fees charged for the (much more useful and active) boulevard cafes.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Kavanagh, President, SLNA

cc. Councillor McConnell
SLNA Board of Directors