

Information Report



Service Area	Infrastructure, Development and Enterprise Services
Date	Friday, February 11, 2022
Subject	2021 Seasonal Patio Program Information Report

Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

To provide an overview of program changes implemented for the 2021 Seasonal Patio Program and engagement results of the first year of the three-year program. This report fulfills Council direction to report back with an information report on the Seasonal Patio Program in Q1 of 2022.

Key Findings

There were 63 participants in the 2021 program city-wide, with 39 applications on public property and 24 applications on private property. There were 39 applications from businesses in the downtown core.

The 2021 Seasonal Patio Program engagement survey collected 72 responses:

- 20 downtown businesses (patio program participants)
- 45 downtown businesses (non-program participants)
- 7 private patio operators outside the downtown

Overall, respondents provided positive feedback on increased economic activity and the improved vibrancy of the downtown. Negative program impacts were primarily focused on restricted parking availability due to on-street patios and closed roads. Feedback from the survey will inform continued program improvements for 2022 and 2023.

Financial Implications

Costs totaled \$381,585 for the 2021 budget year for implementation of the Seasonal Patio Program. Council had approved of \$294,700 which was funded through the Safe Restart Fund. The \$86,885 in additional expenses incurred came from the Tourism budget to cover the additional one-time barrier purchases that were required for traffic control on open streets due to increased program participation.

An additional \$167,000 of the Tourism Recovery Fund provided funding to support patio development and expansion.

In 2021, all patio application fees were waived. In 2022, all patio application fees will also be waived to support continued COVID-19 economic recovery.

The budget for ongoing program expenses was approved as part of the 2022/23 budget and totals \$43,000 per year.

Report

Details

The City launched a Temporary Seasonal Patio Program (TPP) pilot during the summer of 2020 as an emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic public health measures that restricted food and beverage service to takeout and outdoor patios only. Based on the temporary program's positive economic impact for participating businesses, on March 29, 2021, Council approved a three-year Seasonal Patio Program to run annually from April 1 to October 31 starting in 2021. The Program budget was funded from the Safe Restart Grant. A new annual seasonal patio parking stall rental fee was created in the amount of \$3.00 per square meter.

To support continued economic recovery due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all fees associated with approvals of Seasonal Patio Program applications were waived for the 2021 year. At the time of the program approval, it was expected that public health restrictions would no longer be impacting business operations and as such it would not be necessary to waive the fees in future years. However, the pandemic public health restrictions have continued. Staff recognize that the business community continues to face operational hardships which will likely continue into the summer months and will again be waiving fees for the 2022 seasonal patio season.

Staff prepared a temporary use by-law to support 2021-2023 Seasonal Patio Program [By-law Number (2021) – 20592]. This temporary use by-law is in full force and effect for the duration of the 2021-2023 Program and was passed by Council on March 29, 2021.

Improvements from Temporary Patio Program 2020

Revised Guidelines

The application process was streamlined with new tools to target higher quality applications and patio layout. This includes:

- Improved layout and language of the application process.
- New patio drawing checklists inclusive of accessible patio design details.
- Pre-engineered and approved raised patio platform designs and non-raised patio designs allowing for immediate installation of on-street patios in the downtown rather than requiring an additional building permit.
- Improved information regarding accessible customer service.

Application Process

Staff worked across departments to directly facilitate the application process and support businesses in their compliance with the Patio Program Guidelines.

- All business types were able to apply in 2021, with some exceptions for private property businesses.

- Staff provided in-person consultations prior to submitting their application.
- Available one-on-one support throughout the application process.
- Liaised with Bidmii platform to connect businesses with contractors for patio construction.
- Placement coordination of City waste, recycling, green bins, and planters to enhance accessibility of patios and layouts. All applications were circulated to Accessibility Services for review and comment to ensure accessibility guidelines were met.

Communications

Improved tactics were undertaken to increase communication of program updates and impacts for both participants and non-participants.

- New weekly patio email informing patio applicants of program updates, road closures and compliance issues.
- New email contact (patios@guelph.ca) created as a central location for inquiries and concerns.
- Improved promotion through new interactive [patio location map](#).
- Increased number of signs detailing patio locations and parking locations were added in downtown parking lots and in St. George's Square.
- Increased number of road closure signs to re-direct through traffic further from the closure site.
- Increased website and social media program updates.

Inspections

Staff conducted city-wide inspections to ensure that patios were operating within the [Seasonal Patio Program Guidelines](#).

- Staff provided one-on-one support, details, and tools to support applicants in their compliance with the Patio Program Guidelines.
- An additional internal resource checklist was developed by Accessibility Services and shared with staff conducting inspections. The checklist pulled the accessibility compliance requirements from the Patio Program Guidelines.
- Two rounds of inspections were completed by security and bylaw staff once in July and again in August.

Most non-compliance infractions impacted the accessibility of patios due to deviations from the approved patio layouts upon installation by applicants. Other non-compliance infractions included obstruction of access to bicycle parking, noise, and lighting.

Road Closures

Responding to feedback received from downtown businesses and transit riders from the 2020 temporary program, the closure of the Macdonell Street and Wyndham Street North intersection was part of the 2021 patio season only and approved from May 21 to September 6, 2021.

- The closures took place from Fridays at 9 a.m. to Mondays at 5 a.m. and started on June 11 due to public health restrictions.

- New road closure signs were installed at several key intersections leading to the downtown core advising motorists of weekend closures at the onset of the 2021 program.
- Traffic Engineering conducted 8-hour turning movement counts at the intersections of Macdonell Street and Wyndham Street North, Quebec Street and Wyndham Street North prior to program start to ensure traffic volumes were available.
- No significant operational issues were experienced, and no further mitigation action was deemed necessary during the closure periods.
- Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health conducted a vaccination pop-up clinic within the intersection on July 30, otherwise no other programming was conducted in the closed road area.
- There are no road closures planned for the 2022 and 2023 seasons.

Tourism Recovery Fund

In 2021, \$700,000 was allocated to the Tourism Recovery Program to support Guelph's tourism businesses and organizations. Under the second stream of this program, tourism operators could apply for up to \$10,000 per business towards physical adaptations to adjust operations to support their recovery and protect the health and safety of their employees and visitors.

Seventeen patio specific applications were funded through the Tourism Recovery Fund in 2021 totaling \$167,000. Funding supported patio development and expansion including patio construction, building materials, furniture, heating, lighting, and labor.

Engagement

A survey was conducted between December 17 to January 10, 2022, and distributed to all patio participants and downtown businesses in order to gain insight on program improvements made in 2021 and recommendations for future years. The full report is available in Attachment-1: 2021 Seasonal Patio Program Engagement Survey Report.

A total of 72 complete survey responses were received.

Key Notes from Survey Responses:

Of the 20 downtown businesses with a patio that responded:

- Almost 70 percent indicated experiencing a positive impact to their business' ability to generate revenue.
- Nearly 90 percent indicated employment either remained the same or had increased above the norm.
- The majority noted that the application process, as well as communication from the City, had improved over the 2020 program.
- Regardless of the COVID-19 restrictions, nearly all business indicated they would have opted to participate in the program.

Of the 45 downtown businesses without a patio that responded:

- Almost 90 percent have their customers access their business primarily through on-street parking.
- Nearly 80 percent saw either no impact or positive impact to their business' ability to generate revenue during the re-opening.

General Feedback:

2021 Seasonal Patio participants:

Overall, program participants believed that the program was successful in increasing revenues throughout the summer, and that it supported their business by expanding usable space at a time when public health restrictions required distancing. They reported that the program improved the customer experience, and for those in downtown felt it made the core more attractive to patrons. Continued program improvements included increased promotions and more directional signs for parking.

Downtown businesses without patios:

Non-program participants in the downtown believed the program created a sense of place and an increased vibrancy that attracted customers to the City's core. Many of non-participants that responded to the survey reported concerns with the impacts of on-street patios on parking.

Given this feedback, the following continued improvements will be considered in 2023:

- Continued education and engagement with key stakeholders to improve accessibility of patios
- Faster response time to noise complaints
- Improved promotions and wayfinding signs

Financial Implications

Costs totaled \$381,585 for the 2021 budget year for implementation of the Seasonal Patio Program. Council had approved of \$294,700 which was funded through the Safe Restart Fund. The \$86,885 in additional expenses incurred came from the Tourism budget to cover the additional one-time barrier purchases that were required for traffic control on open streets due to increased program participation.

These additional barriers are now part of the City's assets and have been utilized for other purposes outside of the Seasonal Patio Program.

An additional \$167,000 of the Tourism Recovery Fund was utilized to provide 17 patio applicants with funding to support patio development and expansion.

In 2021, all patio application fees were waived as per Report 2021-50 (\$210 for private patios, \$715 for public patios and \$3.00 per square foot on-street patio fee). In 2022, all patio application fees will also be waived to support continued COVID-19 economic recovery.

The budget for ongoing program expenses was approved as part of the 2022/23 budget and totals \$43,000 per year mainly for staff time related to barrier installation and teardown, enforcement and inspections, and cleaning.

Consultations

Downtown businesses

Downtown Guelph Business Association

Patio program participants

Strategic Plan Alignment

Powering our Future

- Fostering downtown business innovation to support a thriving downtown Guelph
- Building collaborative partnerships with businesses
- Ensuring policies and zoning bylaws support a healthy economy and are consistent with environmental priorities
- Encouraging the growth of Guelph's employment base, offering meaningful opportunities for all

Attachments

Attachment-1 2021 Seasonal Patio Program Engagement Survey Report

Departmental Approval

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