



# BRINGING LIFE TO PORTSMOUTH'S RESTAURANTS & RETAILERS

DESIGNERS WORKING  
FOR A COMMUNITY  
IN A TIME OF CRISIS

WORKBOOK CREATED BY  
THE PORTSMOUTH  
DESIGN PROFESSIONALS  
ALLIANCE



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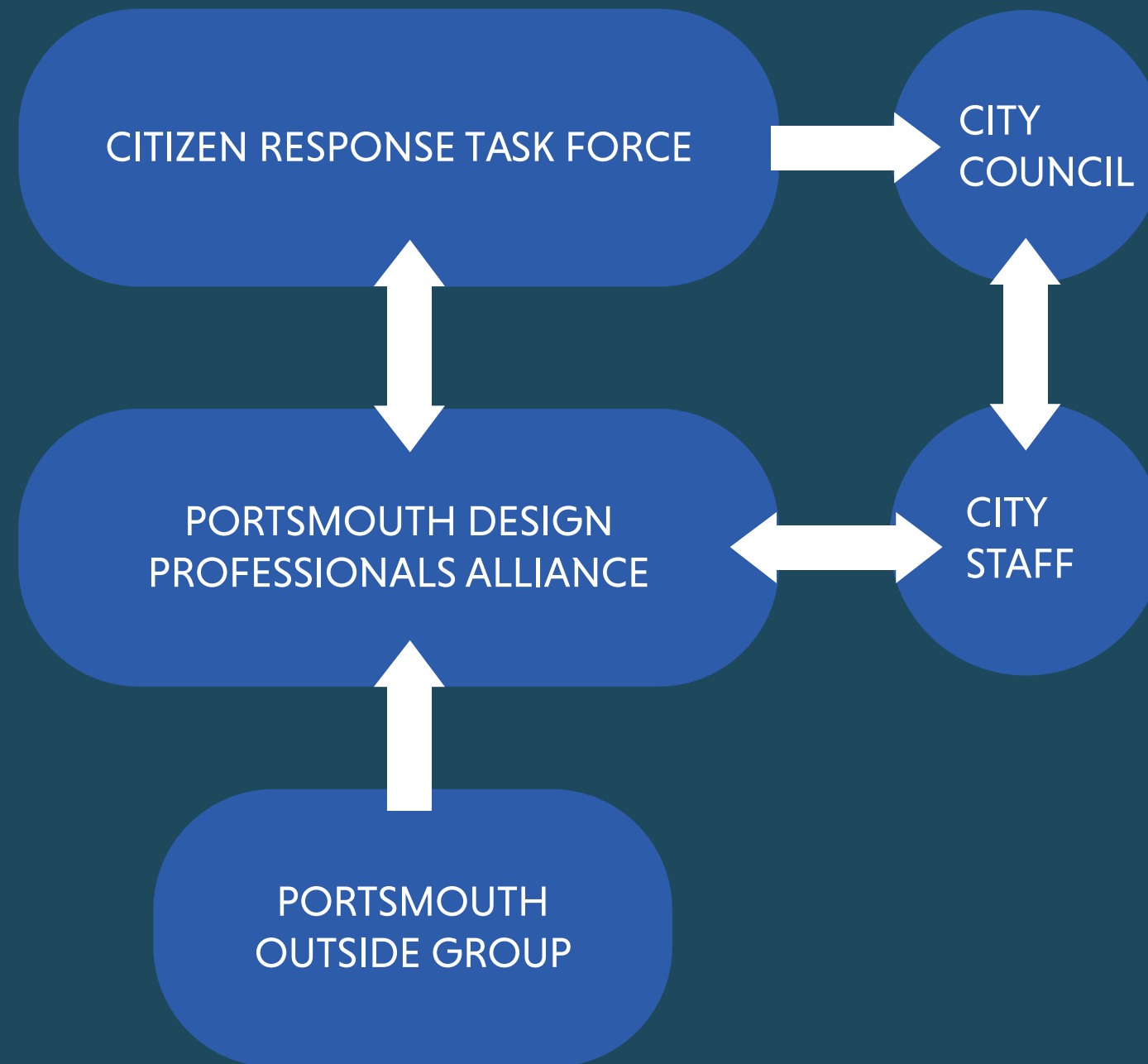
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# A DESIGN COMMUNITY RESPONDS



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The City Council has created a 19-member Citizen Response Task Force to urgently address the plight of Portsmouth businesses. The task force is made up of specialists and residents from all walks of City life. We thank its members and list them here:

James Petersen, Petersen Engineering,  
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Various members of Portsmouth City staff provided guidance to the Citizen Response Task Force including the following departments:

- Planning
- Fire
- Police
- Public Works
- Parking

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“We want to help our city, and design is what we know how to do.” Brian Murphy, Architect

We’re responding to an emergency, inspired by the clarion call of urgently articulated needs from downtown stakeholders like Evan Mallet, chef-owner of the Black Trumpet, and the Portsmouth Outside group of restaurant and cafe owners.

Our collaborative design group -- including local architects, planners, engineers, graphic designers, 3-D renderers, communications professionals, and economic development experts -- has quickly assembled itself to lend a pro bono hand. We offer our combined talents to help hasten the economic recovery of our downtown area. Because the crisis demands it, we can be fast and nimble, ready at short notice to provide a creative vision -- concepts and guidelines -- for adapting streetscapes to re-stimulate shopping and dining out. We want to play a role in strengthening the economic heartbeat of our City.

We can be the design arm of the Citizen Response Task Force and respond to the emerging needs it identifies. This will include the needs of downtown businesses, retailers, and restaurants -- in other words, the entire commercial base, possibly extending to other areas of the City. Meanwhile, we are ready to help the task force reimagine key City blocks. For example, we can apply our concepts to repurpose parking lots and traffic lanes, expand sidewalks or narrow streets, while maintaining traffic through-flow. This document includes sample concepts for familiar downtown locations -- not presented as specific solutions but meant to stimulate discussion.

These concepts are only the starting point.

- Daniel Street from the Memorial bridge to Market Square
- Congress Street, two blocks from Market Square to Maplewood Avenue
- Pleasant Street from Court Street into Market Square
- Market Street to Bow Street
- Penhallow Street

The concepts we present have the following key characteristics. They are:

- Adaptable, flexible, and tweakable as circumstances change
- Inclusive, equitable and welcoming -- meeting or exceeding national standards for handicapped access and accessible parking
- Designed to keep streets open and functional for regular city traffic while maintaining flow-through at appropriate speeds
- Designed for quick and inexpensive construction
- Coordinated extensively with key City staff including Juliet Walker, Todd Germain, and Karen Conard
- Include easy-to-understand renderings so public stakeholders and City boards can act quickly and efficiently

In collaboration with the rest of our team, Tangram has produced graphic renderings to help the task force visualize opportunities. Because this is a concept-only stage, the plans shown in this document naturally require added detail and vetting prior to implementation. Each participating business can decide for itself what kind of furniture, lighting, umbrellas, tent structures, and other design elements it wants. Safety issues, such as street-side barriers and road markings, as well as wiring, remain the purview of the City and are conditioned by any financial aid it is willing to provide.







# STUDY AREA





# TRAFFIC & CIRCULATION

LEGEND	
	New curbside dining areas
	Adjacent on - street parking areas retained or added
	New curbside retail
	Retained through streets on effected roads





# BUSINESSES, RETAILERS, & RESTAURANTS IN CRISIS

## A UNIQUE CHALLENGE

None of us has been through a crisis like this. Within only a matter of weeks, a pandemic has caused serious illness and death throughout our nation and the world, turned our work and family lives upside down, demanded we hunker down in our homes, affected our exercise and leisure activities, disrupted the education of our children, caused all kinds of hardship, and crippled our economy. We've watched families, friends, and our neighbors suffer. Many people we know are furloughed or have lost their jobs completely. The crisis did not come with an instruction manual and we are forced to think on our feet as we face challenges to every aspect of our lives and seek solutions.

Portsmouth's downtown -- a vibrant mix of historic architecture, tourism, restaurants and cafes, public spaces. and shops -- has seemed at

times like a ghost town. Restaurants have been closed by order, retail shops have had to shutter themselves, and businesses have locked their doors to staff and clients alike.

As we now move into the phased re-opening of our economy, our State government has begun lifting some restrictions. For example, restaurants that have only been able to offer take-out and delivery services, will soon be allowed to offer limited indoor again. Retailers have also begun to open, subject to the constraints of social distancing and health precautions. The cash flow these businesses depend on is starting to sputter back to life. As our downtown area navigates the gradual reopening, our group is ready to contribute and fast-track design concepts that will help resuscitate the economic heartbeat of the town we all love.

But it has to happen fast. Some businesses are financially stretched to breaking point.

# RESTAURANTS: EXPANDING DINING OUTDOORS

The restaurant sector is faced with enormous challenges in both capacity and logistics. Restaurants, cafes, and other food and liquor services have been virtually closed except for takeout service. Though restrictions are starting to loosen, State reopening requirements still mandate six feet of social distancing between individuals or parties. With their capacity limited, restaurants desperately need to boost their business by extending their operations and offering outdoor dining on sidewalk and roadway space.

We believe the concepts and information in this workbook can greatly assist restaurants to survive during the challenges of the coming summer and fall season. Later in the workbook we include a “rules of the road” section that provides safety and design guidelines for modifying roadways, parking, and sidewalk areas in downtown Portsmouth. In addition to the more specific “rules of the road,” there are some more general principles restaurants have to consider.

## PLANNING PRINCIPLES FOR OUTSIDE RESTAURANT TABLES

- Table layouts for restaurants and cafés must conform to State social distancing guidelines and, where required, screens or other protected barriers established.
- The State Governor’s requirements are further supplemented by the City of Portsmouth health department.

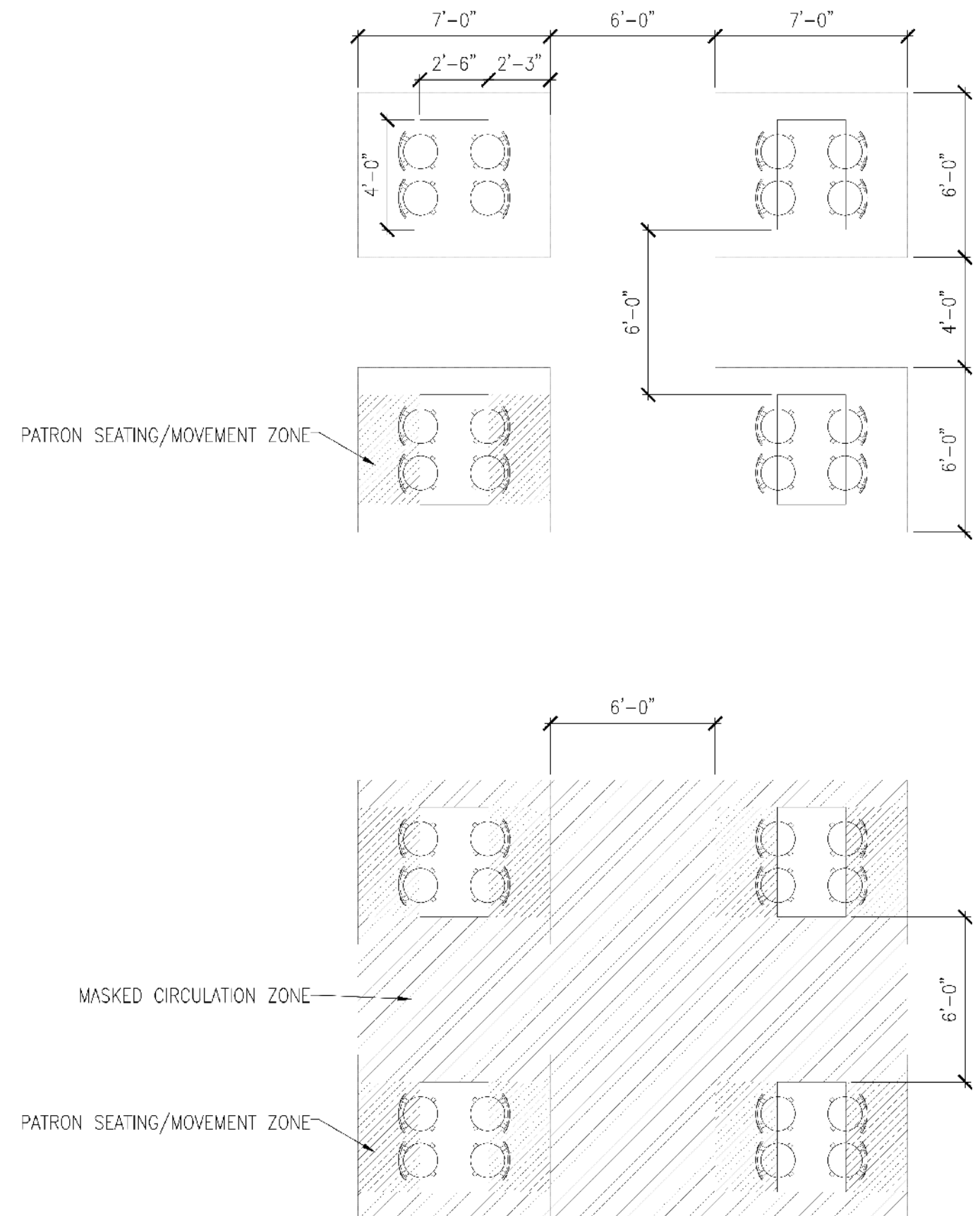
## PLANNING FOR STREET FRONTAGE

There are several functional components to this part of the design of street-front dining, based on the social distancing requirement of 6 feet from sidewalk curbs. Some specific considerations include:

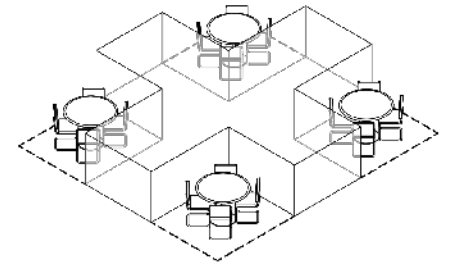
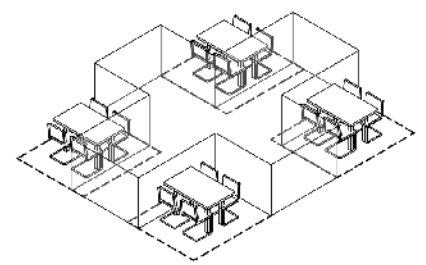
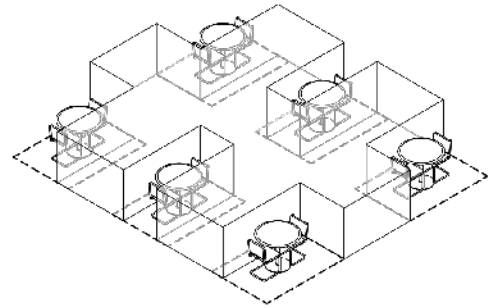
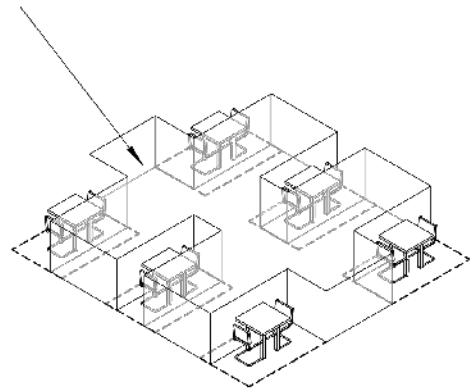
- The measurement between chairs at tables is from the backside of the chair with a person sitting in it.
- Where public sidewalks are extremely narrow additional buffer space may be added where feasible.



- A typical parallel parking space in Portsmouth is 8 feet deep and approximately 20 feet long. Social distancing cuts out 6 feet of the 8 feet of depth. In order to capture adequate space with four tables and chairs, plus the barrier to a travel lane, at least 4 to 6 feet of additional width of the street needs to be reallocated to the dining needs. However, this cannot narrow the travel lane of the street less than 12 feet as provided by guidance from the fire, police, and planning departments.
- All tables should be accessible and the 6 foot of distancing allows for ramping from sidewalk elevation to street elevation. In some cases it would be beneficial to bridge the sidewalk level to the street level with a "dance floor," probably made of plywood with bracing underneath to create a more level and fully accessible connector for the 8 foot depth of a plywood sheet. That can create the necessary 6 foot social distancing space as well as aid circulation, ideally some kind of "red carpet" treatment to denote the space and also making it feel welcoming.

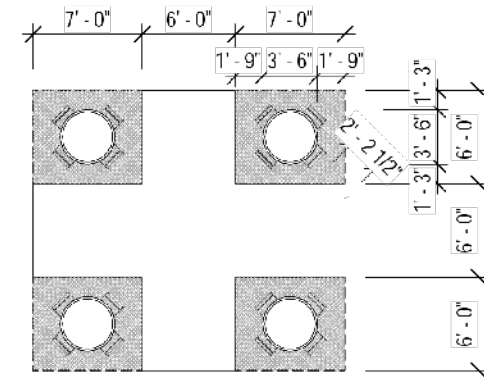
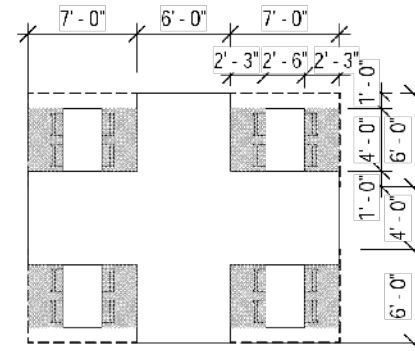
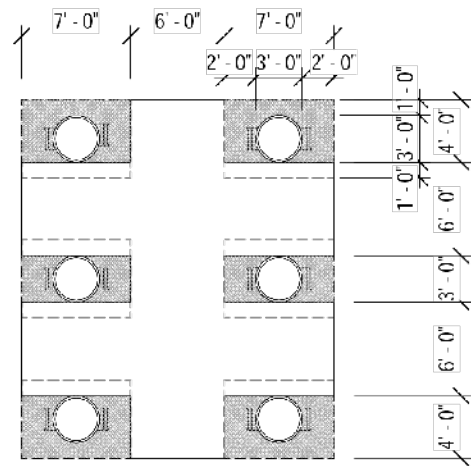
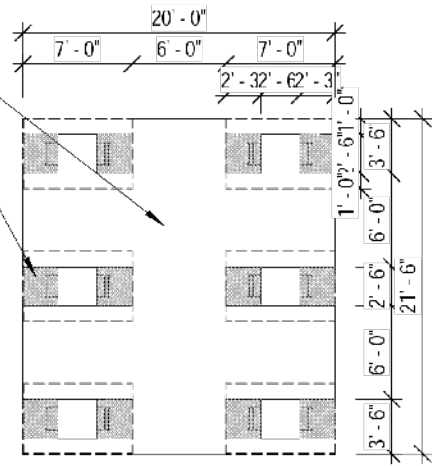


MASKED CIRCULATION ZONE,  
TYP.



MASKED CIRCULATION ZONE,  
TYP.

PATRON SEATING/MOVEMENT  
ZONE, TYP.

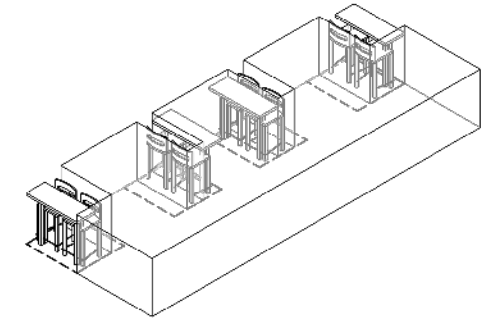
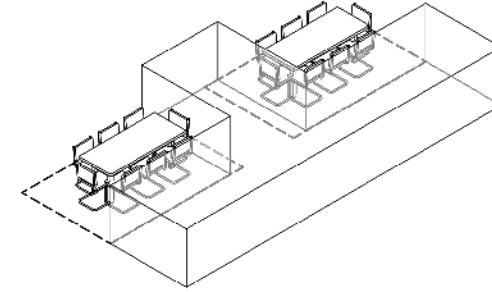
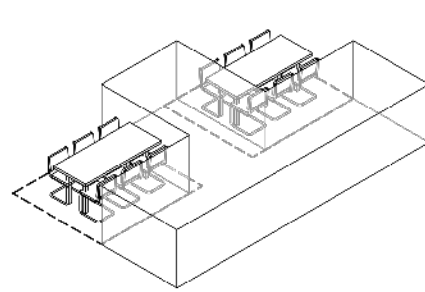
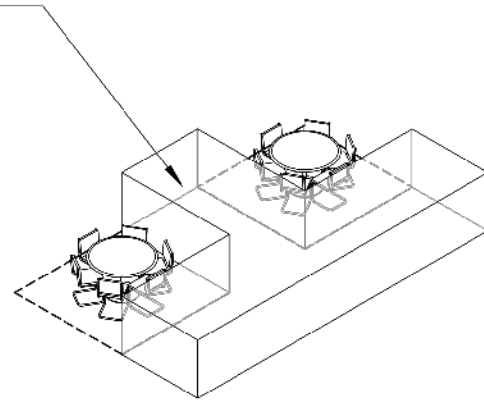


**FURNISHING LAYOUT STANDARD OPTIONS FOR PORTSMOUTH COVID-19 OUTDOOR DINING**

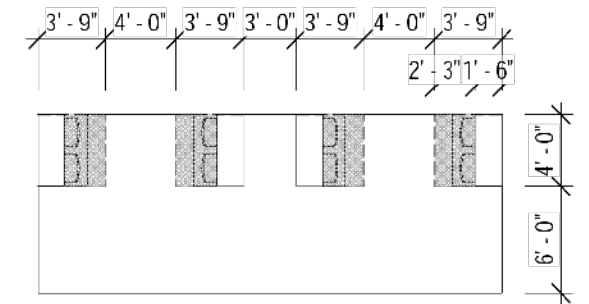
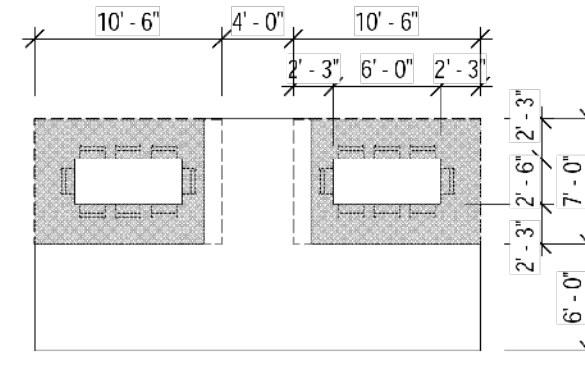
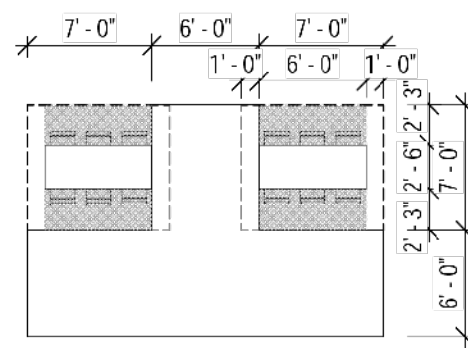
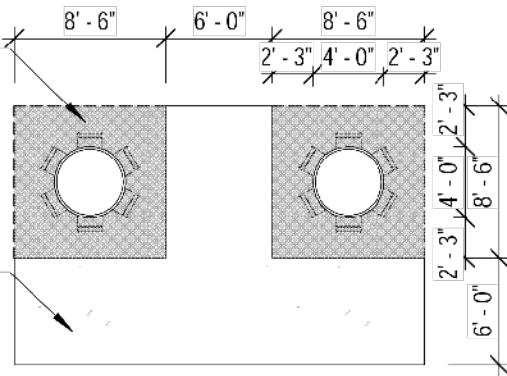
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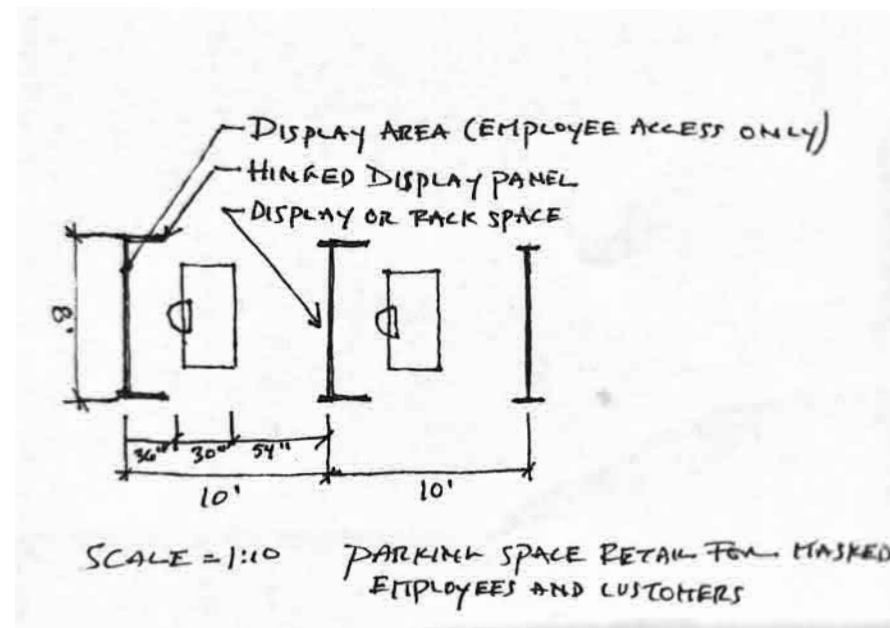
MASKED CIRCULATION ZONE, TYP.



PATRON SEATING/MOVEMENT ZONE, TYP.



MASKED CIRCULATION ZONE, TYP.



**FURNISHING LAYOUT STANDARD OPTIONS FOR PORTSMOUTH COVID-19 OUTDOOR DINING**

SCALE: 3/32" = 1'-0"

# RETAILERS: CUSTOMERS BACK IN THE SHOPS

Our retailers have long been an essential part of downtown life in Portsmouth. The current crisis has meant many weeks where stores were closed completely. As the State lifts restrictions in phases, retailers are now focused on how best to re-open while observing the necessary health requirements. Recognizing that the requirements of retail shops differ from those of restaurants and cafes, our team thought about how best to guide retailers with practical design principles and help them participate in expanding their space outdoors.

## PRINCIPLES AND KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Retail businesses are a key part of downtown vitality. Concerns about retail business need equal consideration as public streets and parking are repurposed.

If retail space mixes with restaurant space on a street, short-term parking spaces should accommodate pick-up, deliveries, and take-out.

Deliveries, garbage pick-up, and service access for retailers are important to accommodate. Garbage pickup locations, in particular, might be shared.

Longer-term parking should be retained or created if space exists. Parking may be time-limited depending on availability.

Doorway access for retailers can be more important than space on the street.

Retailers may want to place chairs outside or on the sidewalk for waiting customers.

## PARTICIPATION

If demand for on-street space exceeds supply, allocating space will be based on business location, demand for outside space, relative floor space, and the outdoor space required for social distancing or to meet New Hampshire or City requirements.

Alternatively, a lottery or similar system might be used. Shops might share outside space.



# DESIGN GUIDELINES: RULES OF THE ROAD

City staff from all key departments -- planning, public works, and emergency services -- retain oversight and must approve the solutions we propose. Drawing on our design expertise in areas such as outdoor dining and its many specific requirements, our team can produce concepts that can be implemented quickly and that adhere to City design requirements and standards.

## DESIGN INTENT

We define a series of standards and expectations to assist, promote, and encourage temporary outdoor restaurant seating and retail sales areas in the streets and on the sidewalks of downtown Portsmouth. The thrust is to create temporary solutions for the summer and fall of 2020.

## CITY APPROVALS

The appropriate City staff must approve the final configuration of outdoor use areas, placement of safety barriers, and definition of vehicular and pedestrian travel ways. Our group is confident that fast results are possible through a combination of both public policy

actions that facilitate creative use of streets and sidewalks and the preservation and maintenance of public welfare and safety.

## PUBLIC LEADERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Citizen Response Task Force includes a diverse group of community members, each of whom provides a unique perspective of Portsmouth economic life. They are tasked with fast-tracking solutions and cutting through red tape wherever necessary. While our team will provide the concepts for quick implementation, the owners of individual restaurants, retail shops, and businesses remain responsible for securing municipal permits.

## DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR TEMPORARY SOLUTIONS

The guidelines we present here augment the design standards that the City of Portsmouth has already refined for the COVID-19 crisis, as well as the conventional engineering practices and American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) design standards for providing pedestrian space adjacent to vehicular traffic.

We also stress that concepts we present here are not a “one-size-fits-all” solution. In fact, they may not suit all City streets or offer benefits for every business. Each street, parking area, and individual business location must be assessed on a case-by-case basis. This approach ensures that we achieve the best use of each space and maintain the proper balance between public and private interests.

## TRAFFIC

Our concepts aim to maintain through traffic on all roadways. Complete road closures are not part of this strategy.

Design solutions must maintain:

- A minimum of 12-feet of paved travel lane for one-way traffic
- Where possible, a 14-foot travel lane that would facilitate passing a pulled-over vehicle
- A minimum of 24-feet of paved travel lane for two-way traffic
- Crash-proof barriers of either water-filled plastic or concrete “Jersey barrier” in strategic locations (but not necessarily continuous)

## PEDESTRIANS AND CIRCULATION

- Keep public transit stops open and do not use them for new outdoor use areas.

- Provide adequate pedestrian circulation for all new outdoor use areas.
- Convert existing sidewalks to retail and restaurant uses provided they are wide enough to support both needs.
- Minimum clear sidewalk width at no less than 6’, though, based on demand, specific locations may require greater width.
- Any new outdoor use areas that are adjacent to active roadways must have barriers along their entirety to protect patrons.
- Protective barriers must meet or exceed the barrier protection requirements of a concrete “Jersey barrier.”
- Gaps in barriers are only allowed to avoid the obstruction of designated crosswalks.
- Provide City-approved traffic and wayfinding signs where appropriate.

## EXISTING OUTDOOR SPACES

- Some businesses already have their own outdoor space, and this should be considered to ensure equitable division of public space when allocating new outdoor areas.



- Any new outdoor use area should be arranged in consideration of and may be combined with existing outdoor spaces.
- New Hampshire and Portsmouth health codes require enclosures for establishments serving alcohol, as well as setbacks from restaurant seating for social distancing on public sidewalks.
- Street frontages for retail display must also observe social distancing requirements.
- The City of Portsmouth is soon expected to release specific guidelines for interpreting social distancing and other code requirements.

## PARKING

- Parking spaces and loading zones along a roadway may be adapted subject to the following restrictions:
  - Handicap spaces and adjacent painted loading areas must remain open and unaltered -- or be relocated to an acceptable alternative American Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant location and configuration.
  - A review of any proposed adaptation must identify the number of existing and proposed parking and loading spaces.

- To compensate for the loss in parking the City will coordinate signage that designates the nearest public parking facility.
- Existing loading zones must remain open and unchanged unless the space exceeds demand and affected businesses and the City agree on alternative locations (delivery methods can be explored if the conversion of street-side delivery locations conflicts with the placement of street-side retail or restaurant spaces)

## DRIVE-UP AND PICK-UP

- The City may allow designated areas for drive-up and pick-up business within existing parking spots, subject to the following restrictions:
  - If a plan uses existing loading zones extensively as pick-up areas, loading may have to be restricted to certain periods to pick-up business to function.
  - Multiple businesses can consolidate pick-up areas, probably requiring some form of site-specific signage.
  - Ideally, plans will place pick-up areas in front of businesses or residences that do not want or require outdoor sidewalk or street space (for example, offices or businesses such as jewelry stores that may not want to display their product outside.)

# DOWNTOWN CONCEPTS

## SAMPLE DESIGNS FOR FIVE STREETS

This section includes sample designs for five different downtown locations. The examples illustrate how we can quickly stimulate outdoor dining and retail activity by adapting downtown streets, on-street parking, and sidewalks. For example, by adding restaurant tables and retail frontage, public spaces can quickly be transformed and restaurants and retailers -- whose indoor business, occupancy, and capacity is currently restricted because of the crisis -- can expand outdoors and increase capacity.

These scenarios are just examples and not meant to be definitive solutions for specific businesses in the featured locations. Rather, these designs represent the potential and promise for meeting the urgent needs of our restaurants and retailers. The designs are a starting point to spark ideas and inspire specific solutions. Our examples

can act as models for solutions in both our downtown area and beyond. The actual implementation of these ideas is limited only by the scope of our imagination and the resources of business owners and the City.

What follows are illustrations of five sample locations that include site plans drawn to scale, street views in perspective, other supplemental sketches and diagrams, and narrative descriptions.



# CONGRESS STREET & MARKET SQUARE



Two blocks of Congress Street are featured here. The first block is from High Street in Market Square down to Fleet Street. We identified the angled parking on the north side of the street as a possible area to convert for restaurant and commercial space. The designs show restaurant seating and commercial retail display areas. A design challenge in this area is the slope of the street, which may require some form of a terraced flooring system. Some parking is reserved for food take-out and accessible parking.



MARKET SQUARE: EXISTING

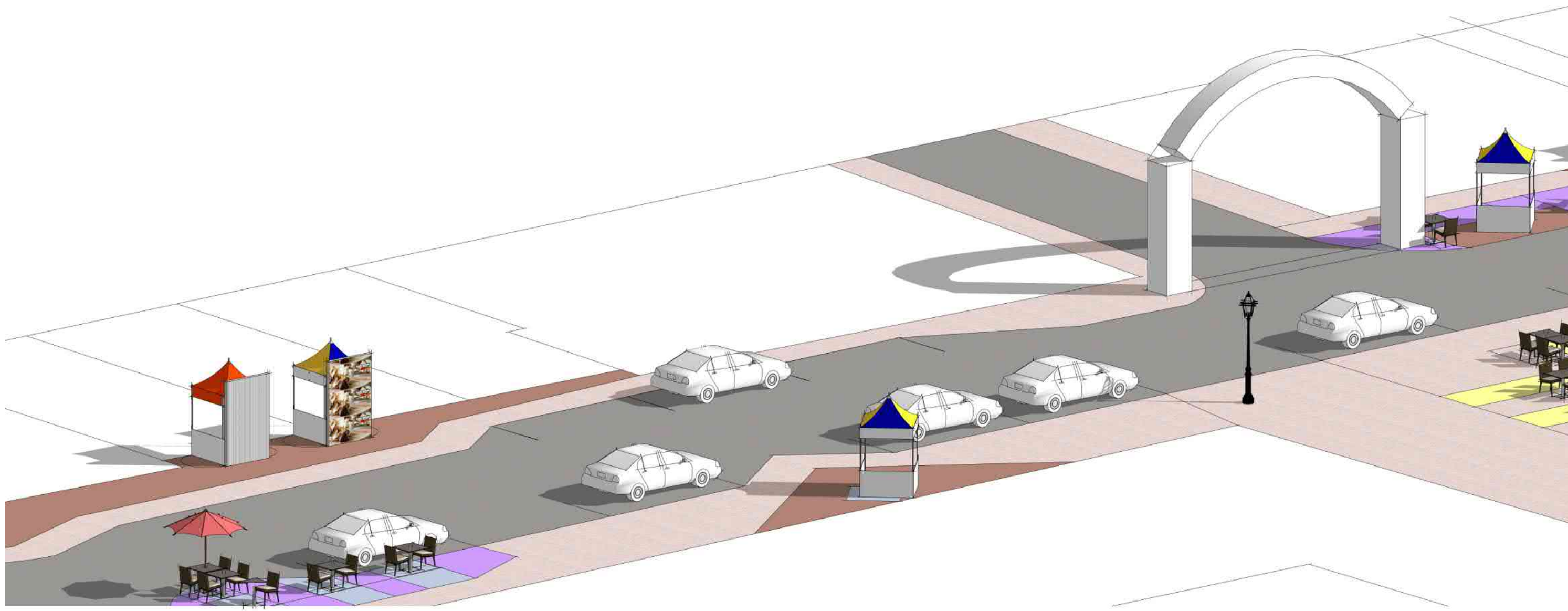




MARKET SQUARE: PROPOSED

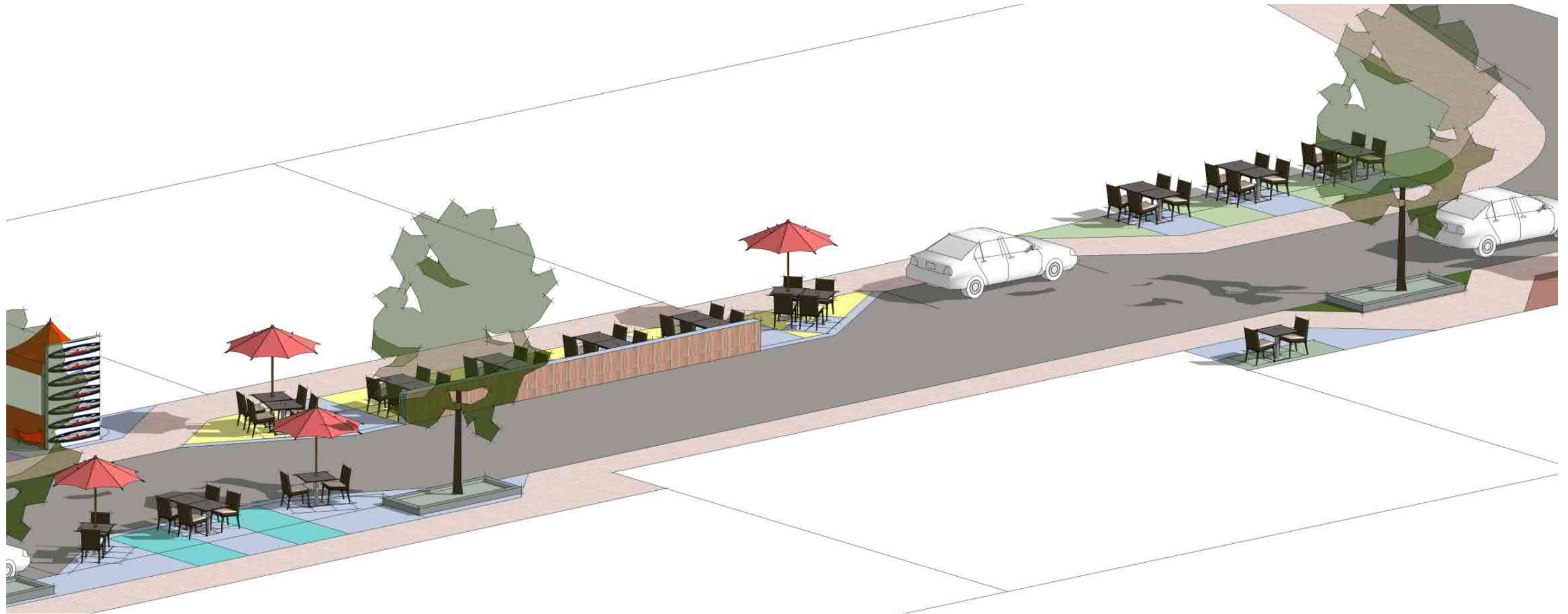






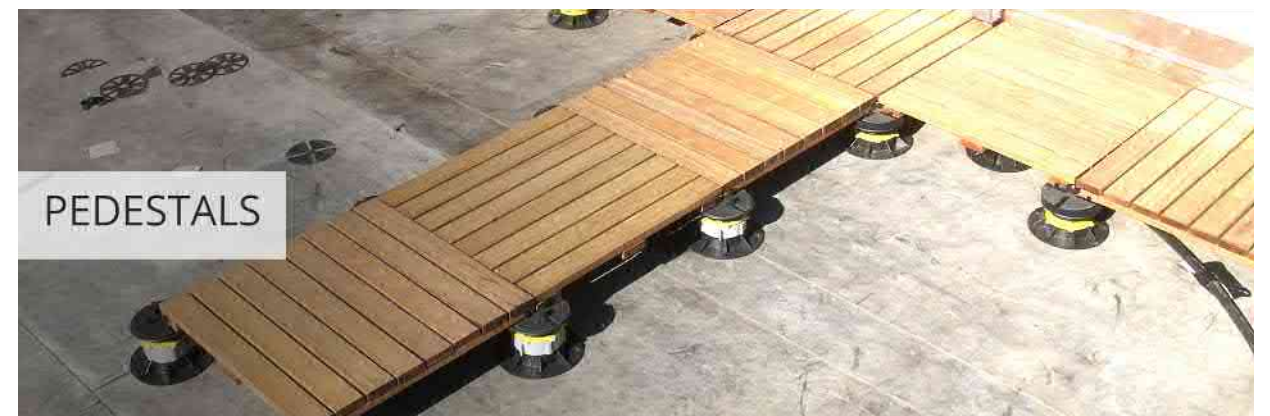




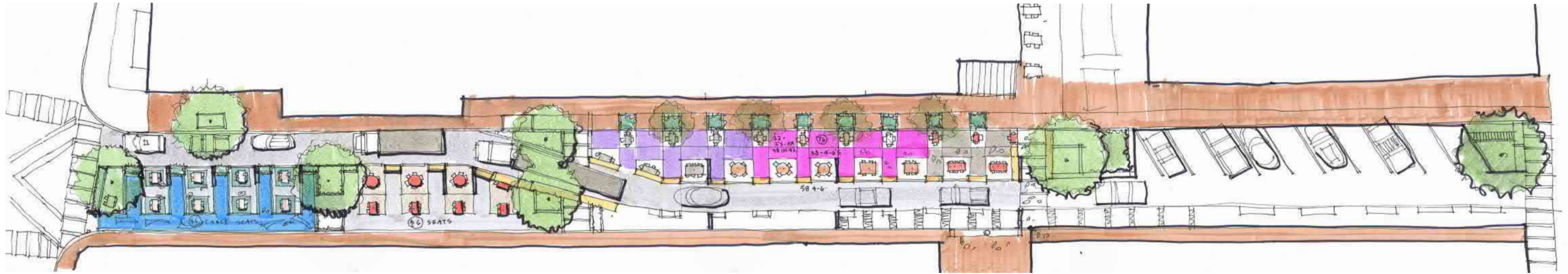












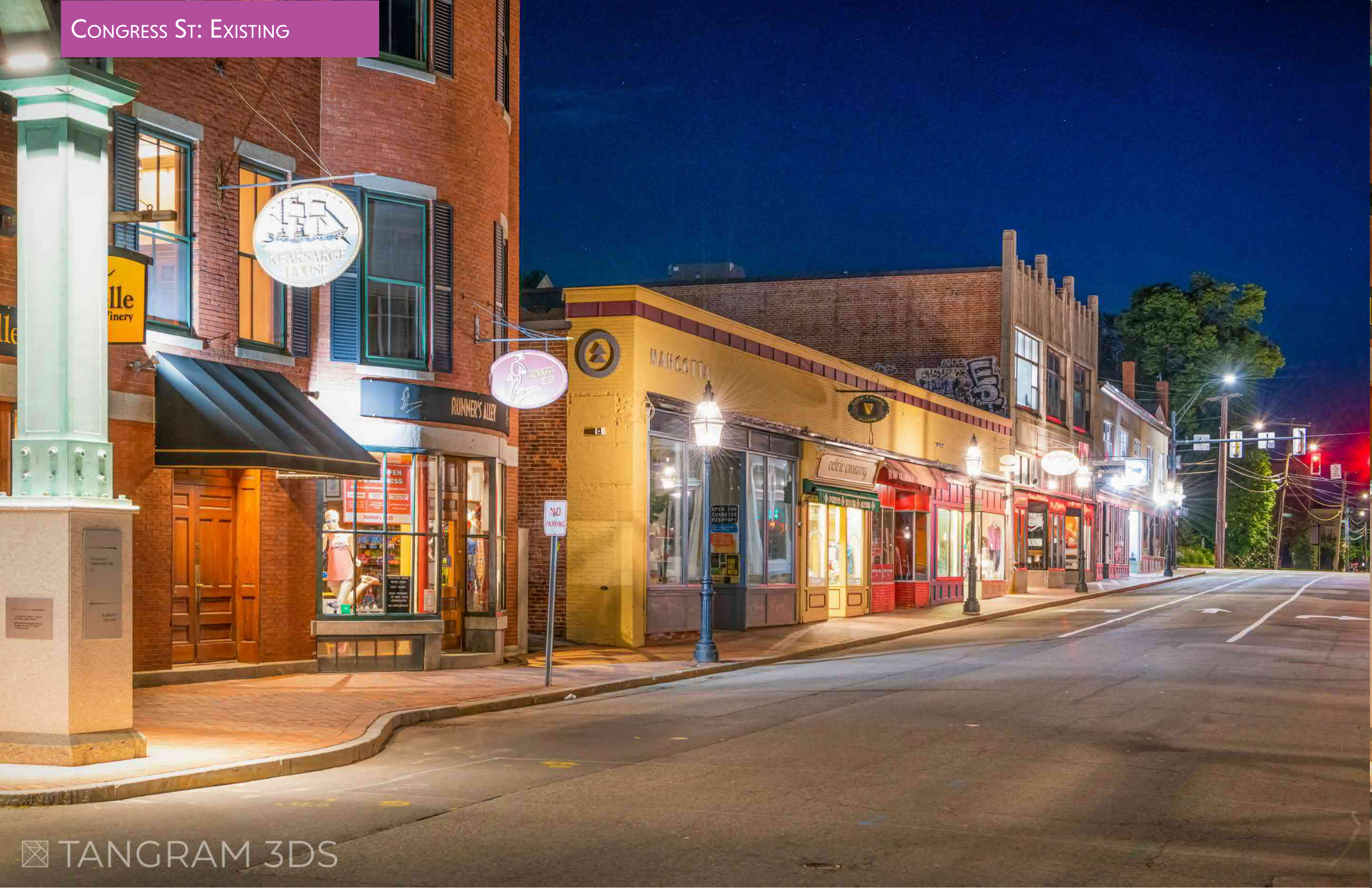
A second concept is shown for the second block of Congress Street from Fleet Street to Maplewood Avenue. The basic layout has restaurants on opposite sides – a block of restaurants on the north side near Vaughn Mall and then another block on the south side near the corner of Maplewood Avenue. The scenario calls for the travel lane to shift from one side of the road to the other. The City and designers will need to study the traffic flow requirements and how to avoid congestion at the traffic signals and determine viability where Congress Street meets Maplewood Avenue.

Some details:

- Three new parallel parking spaces
- All angled parking retained and moved from curbside into Congress Street
- 16 retail kiosks
- 88 restaurant seats, excluding Popovers (remains as is)
- Seating areas divided into 5 platforms to mitigate slope
- Uploaded adjustable pedestal system as an option to mitigate slope



CONGRESS ST: EXISTING



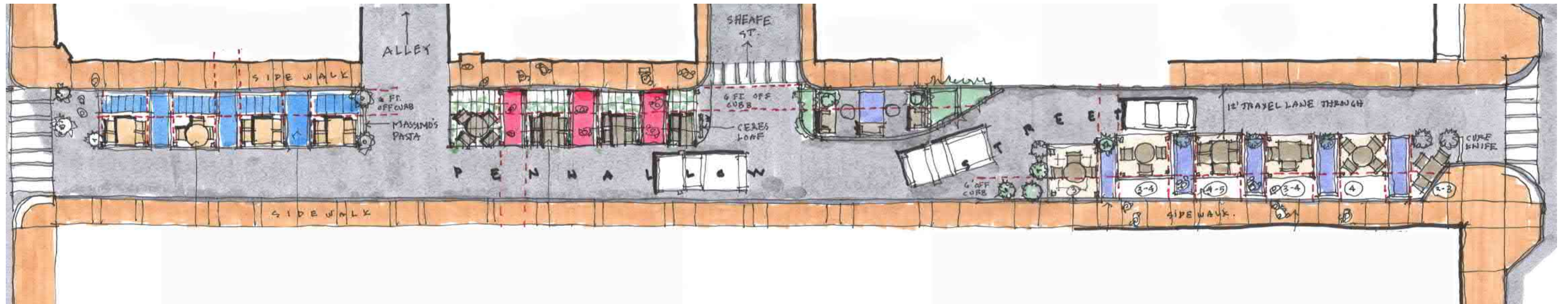


CONGVAARESS ST: PROPOSED





# PENHALLOW STREET



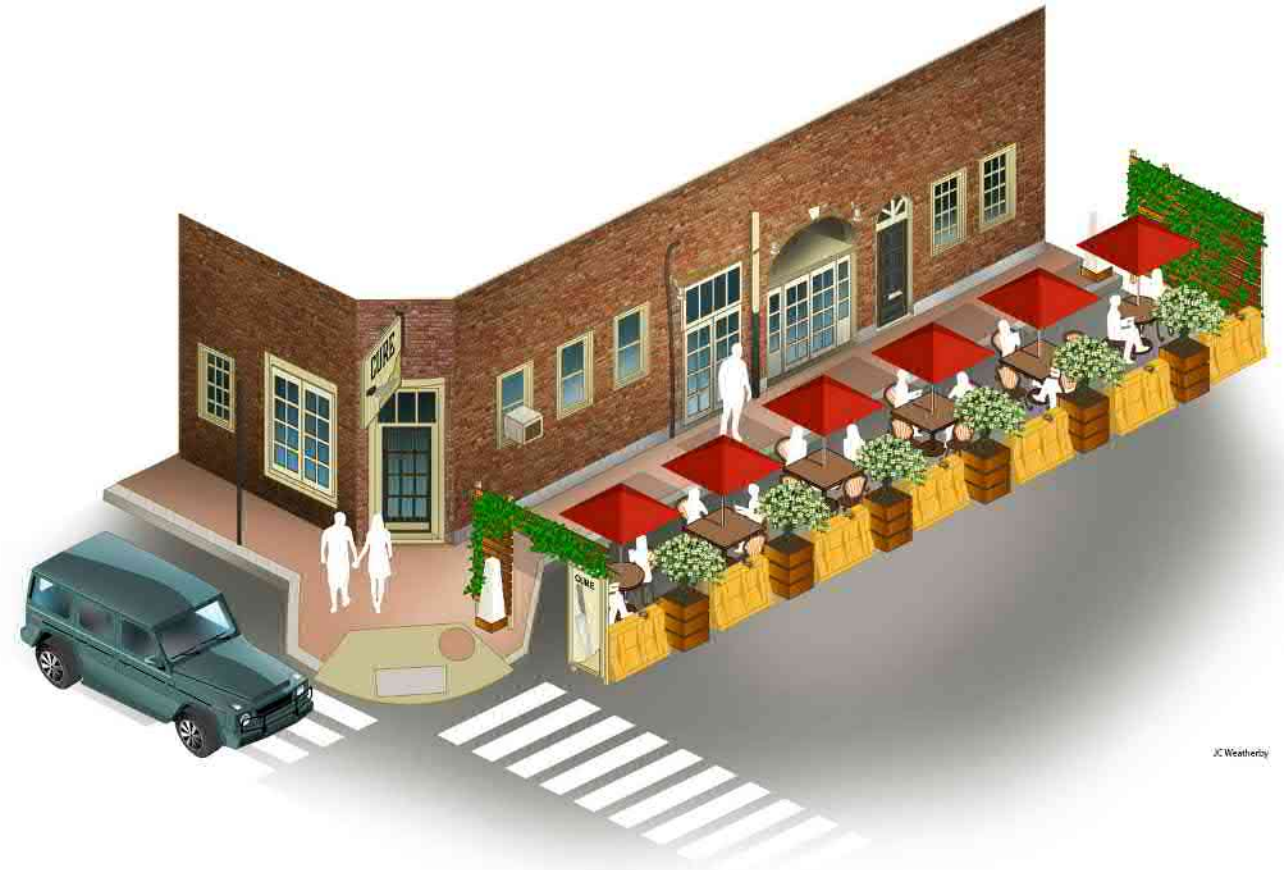
Like Market Street, Penhallow Street is narrow but has less traffic. There are two restaurants on the east side and one on the west side. The scenario for this street is similar to several others where the traffic lane switches from one side to the other. Some details:

- 10 existing parking spaces converted to either a travel lane or dining space.
- 32 seats shared between Ceres Bakery and Massimo's for alternating daytime and evening use
- 25 seats for Cure





J. Weatherby



J. Weatherby



J. Weatherby

Illustrations by  
Carson Weatherby



PENHALLOW ST: EXISTING

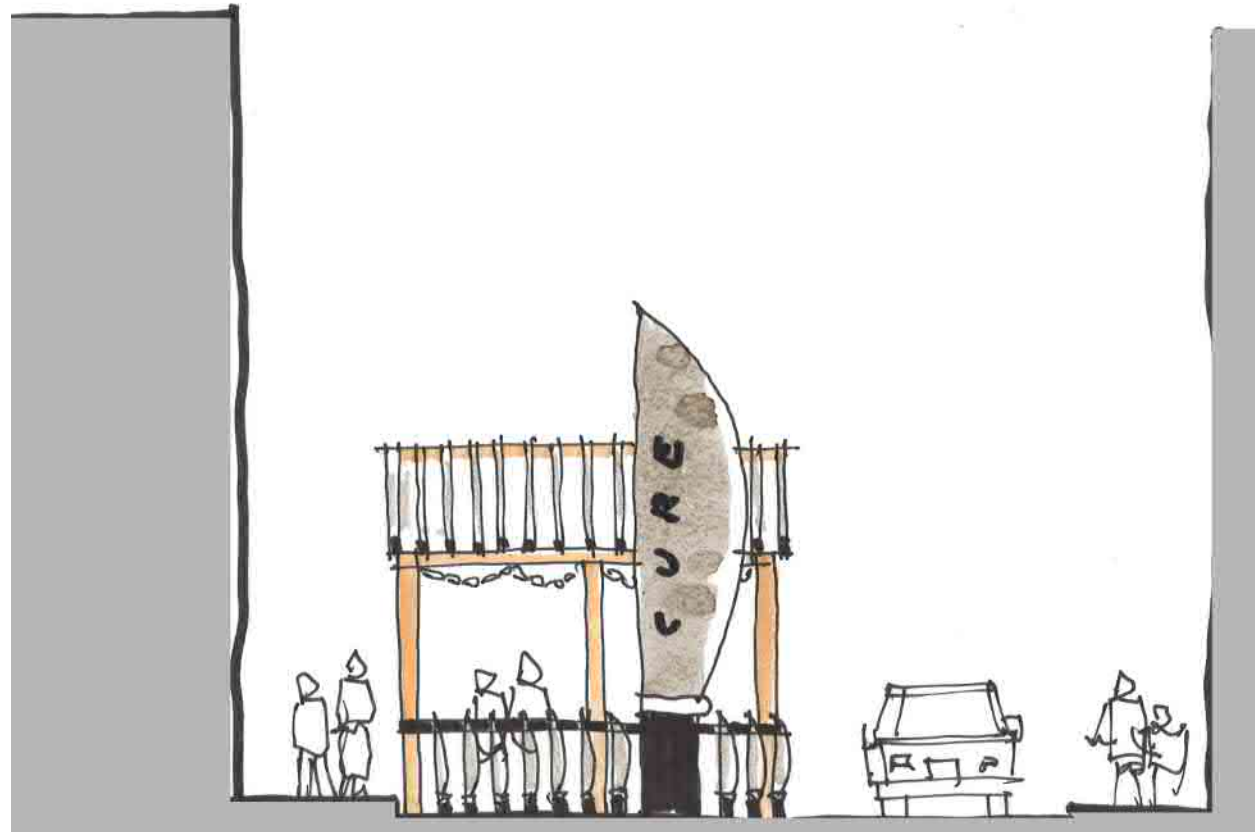




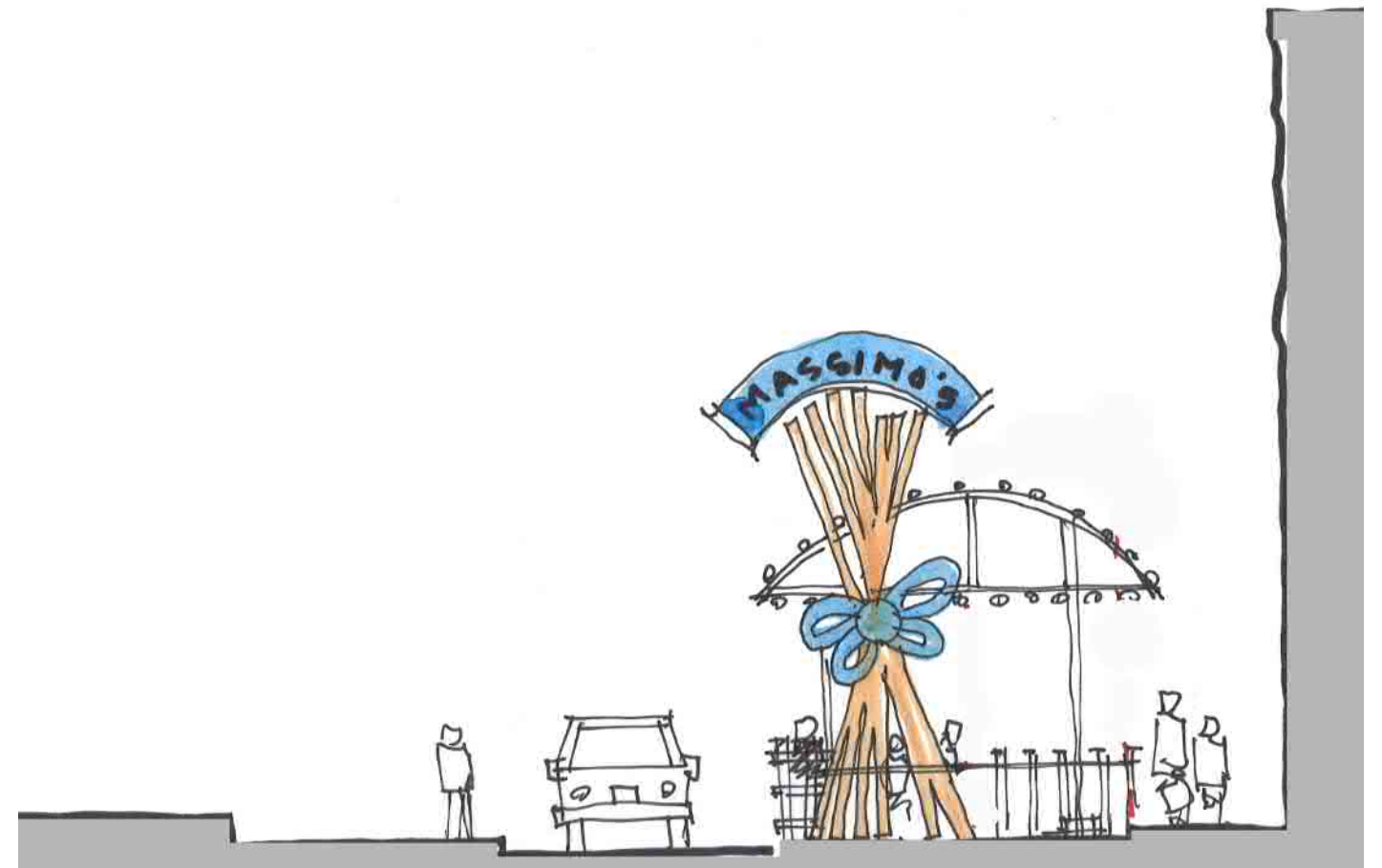
PENHALLOW ST: PROPOSED







Sidewalk CURE outdoor dining public art 12 ft. traveling lane on Penhallow St. Sidewalk



Sidewalk 12 ft. traveling lane on Penhallow St. MASSIMO'S outdoor dining pasta public art Sidewalk

Illustrations by Robert White

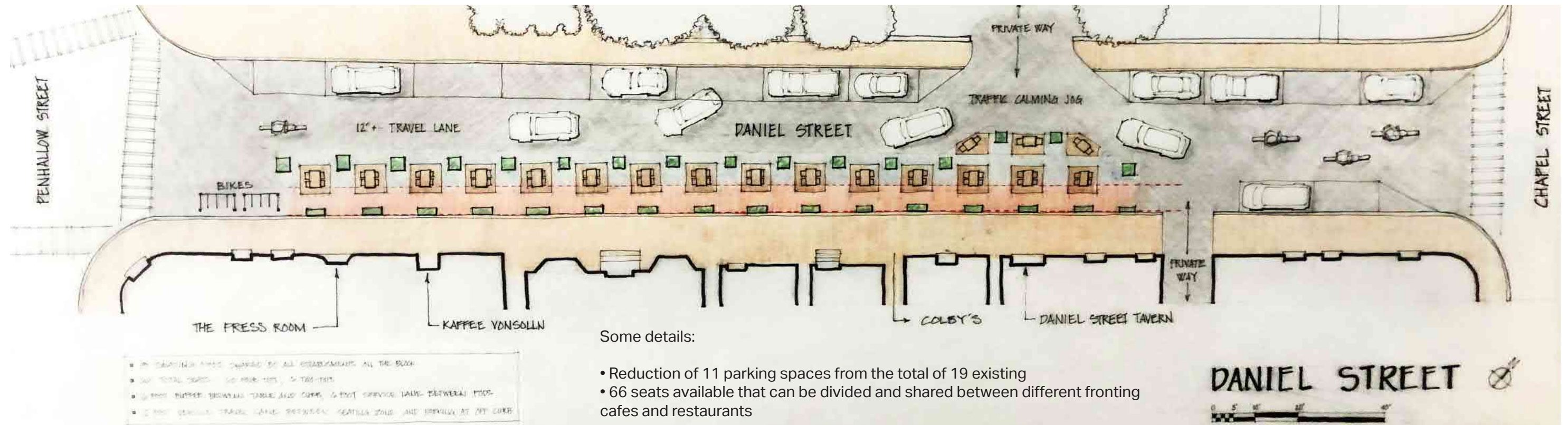




Sidewalk      12 ft. traveling lane on Penhallow St. going toward Daniel St.      CERES BAKERY outdoor dining at street level Public art baguette trellis or shade structure      Sidewalk

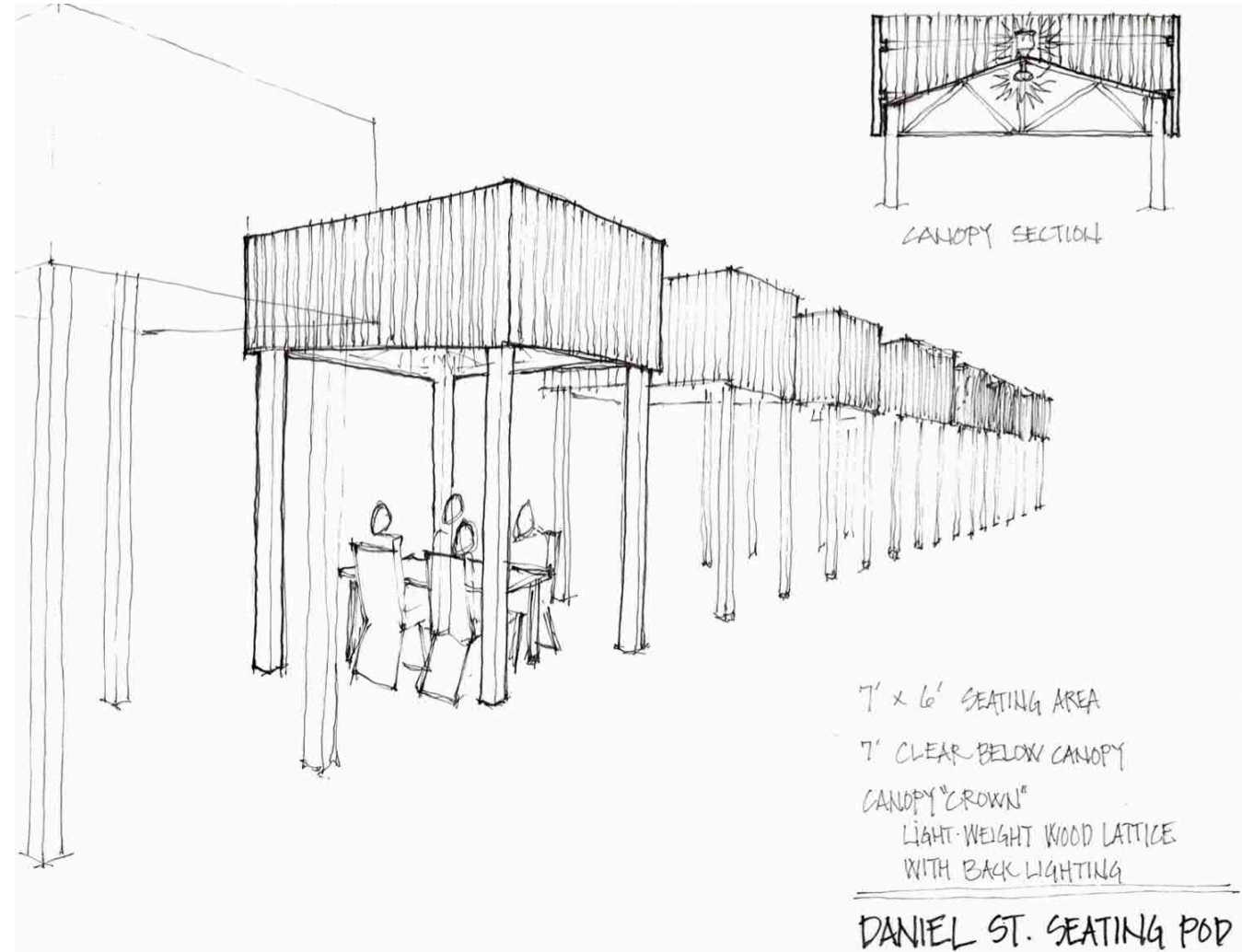
Illustrations by Robert White

# DANIEL STREET



Daniel Street is the main approach to the downtown area from Memorial Bridge and public art announces arrival into the outdoor public zone. The art sets a tone and works to calm traffic. The seating occupies the existing parking on the left side of the one-way street, while on-street parking remains on the right, leaving a 12' travel lane. Where vehicles enter the modified street a second traffic-calming measure might be a bump-out of tables that aligns with the entrance to the McIntyre Building drive. The obelisks and the jog together signal a zone safe for diners and pedestrians. A later section describes the obelisks and gateway concept in more detail.

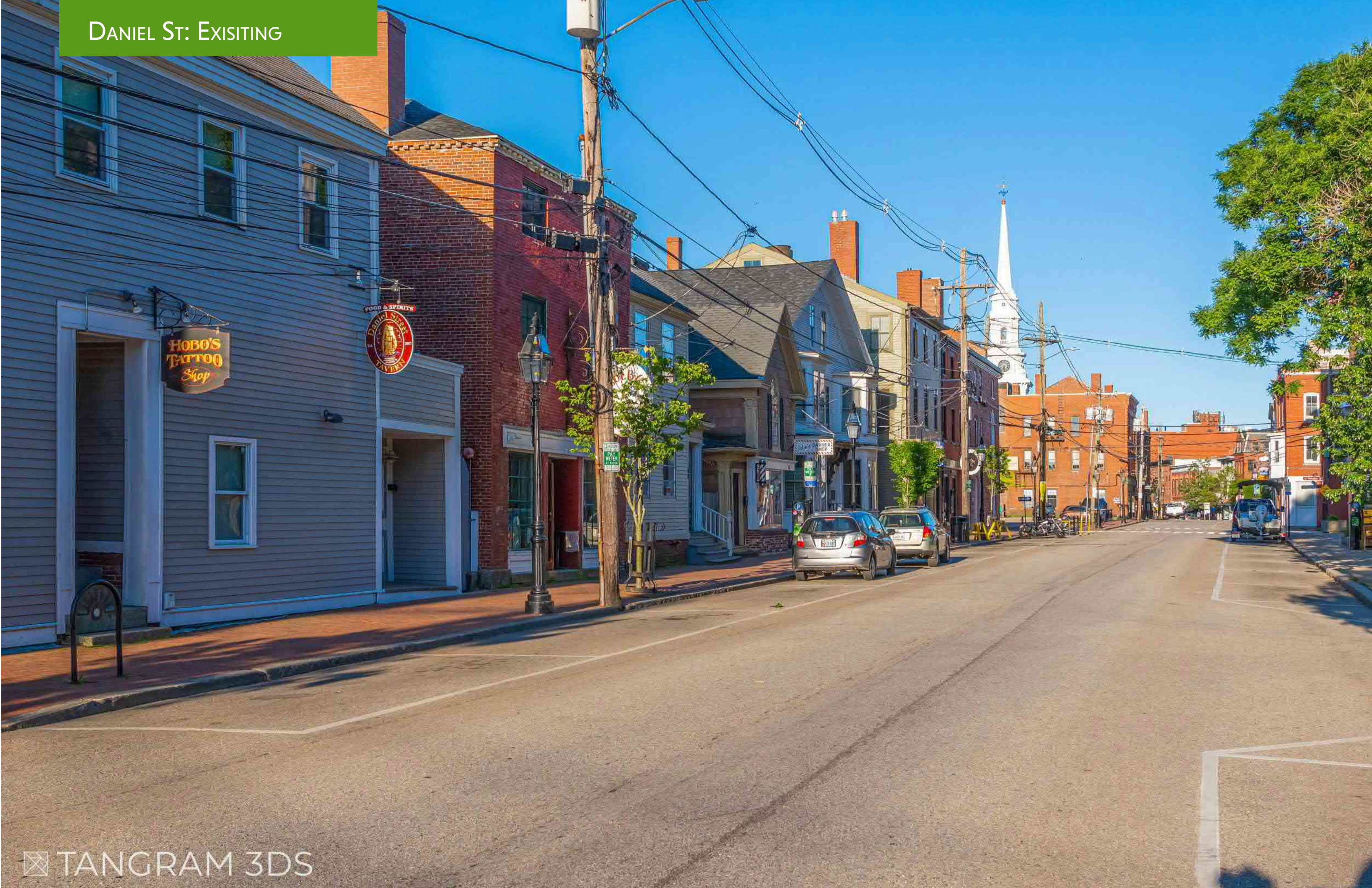




The restaurant table arrangement uses the basic 4-top module and adds some 2-tops to maximize seating along the street. The seating could be shared by restaurants and bars on the ends (Daniel Street Tavern and The Press Room) and provide temporary enclosures around half the seating to serve alcohol in the evenings. During the day the balance of the tables are free for use by Colby's diners and those that purchase from Kaffee Vonsolln or other neighborhood cafes and want to enjoy sitting outside. The flexibility of seating means restaurants can maximize seating during peak hours and have seating available for the general public at all times of day, much like the café tables in Market Square.

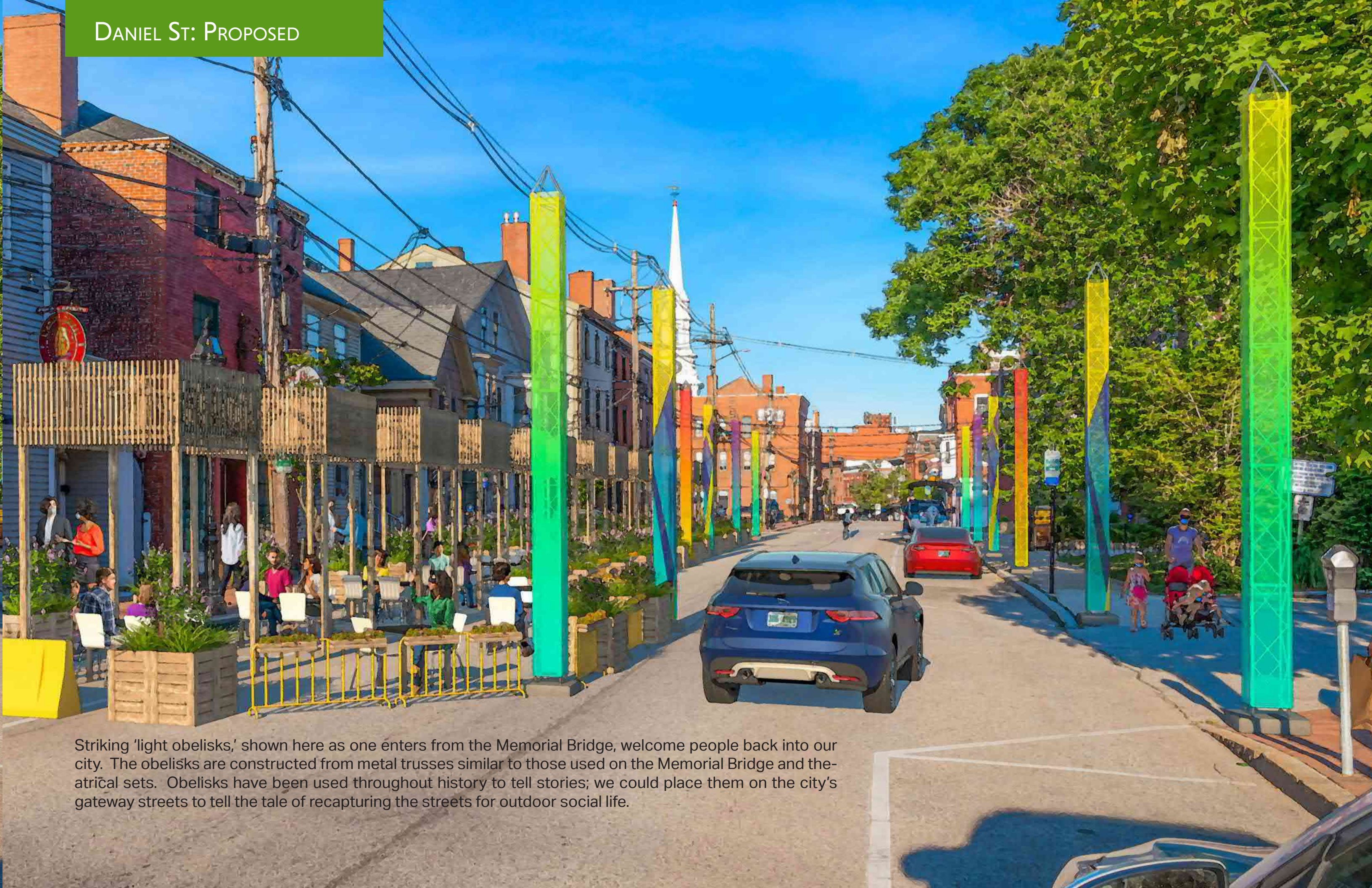


DANIEL ST: EXISITING





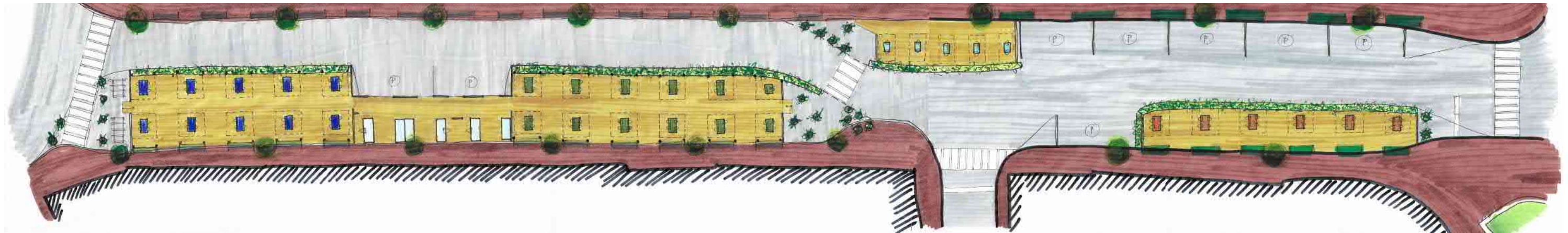
## DANIEL ST: PROPOSED



Striking 'light obelisks,' shown here as one enters from the Memorial Bridge, welcome people back into our city. The obelisks are constructed from metal trusses similar to those used on the Memorial Bridge and theatrical sets. Obelisks have been used throughout history to tell stories; we could place them on the city's gateway streets to tell the tale of recapturing the streets for outdoor social life.

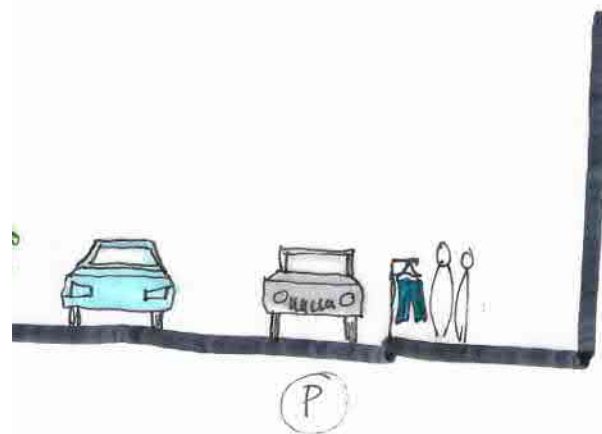
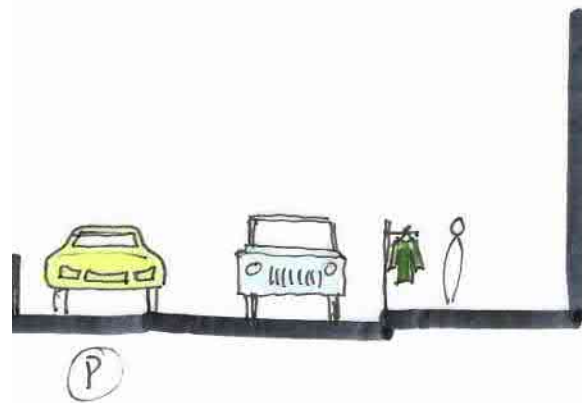
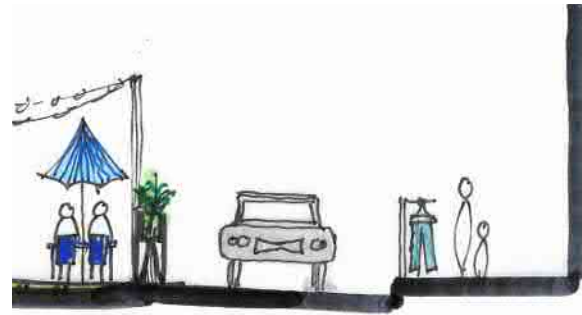


# MARKET STREET



Market Street has a large number of retailers in addition to popular restaurants such as the Gaslight, the Portsmouth Brewery, Cup of Joe's, and Durbar Square. The travel lane down is narrowed to 12' for the length of Market Street so that the rest of the space can be dedicated to a mix of outdoor dining and retail displays. On-street parking spaces remain available closer to Market Square to accommodate the need for accessible parking, deliveries, and curb-side pick-up.





The scenario includes a zone for retail kiosks and clothing racks on both sides of the street, in addition to expanded retail areas between the Gaslight and Brewery outdoor dining spaces. Each space includes a point-of-sale station and space for a clothing rack or table. This concept can be expanded to other parking spaces, or into outdoor dining areas, depending on the need.

The concept includes a greenery buffer between the seating and the travel lane -- from something as simple as planter boxes on top of plastic barriers to a more complex solution of built-up planters. Tall columns for stringing lights on either side of seating and retail areas help create the feeling of an outdoor room. Some details:

- 19 parking spaces reduced to 8
- 40 seats for Gaslight
- 46 seats for the Brewery
- 10 seats for Cup of Joe's
- 24 seats for Durbar Square
- Parking spaces in central locations for drop-off and pick-up
- Frontage spaces to accommodate outdoor retail display (existing large delivery area may need relocation)



MARKET ST: EXISTING





MARKET ST: PROPOSED



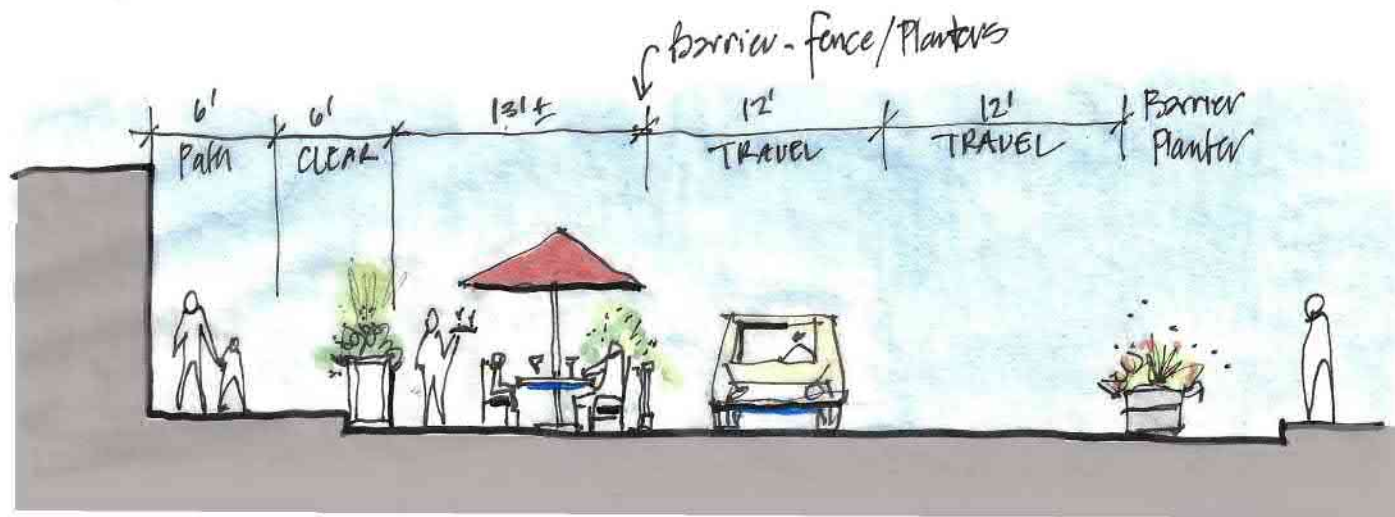


# PLEASANT STREET

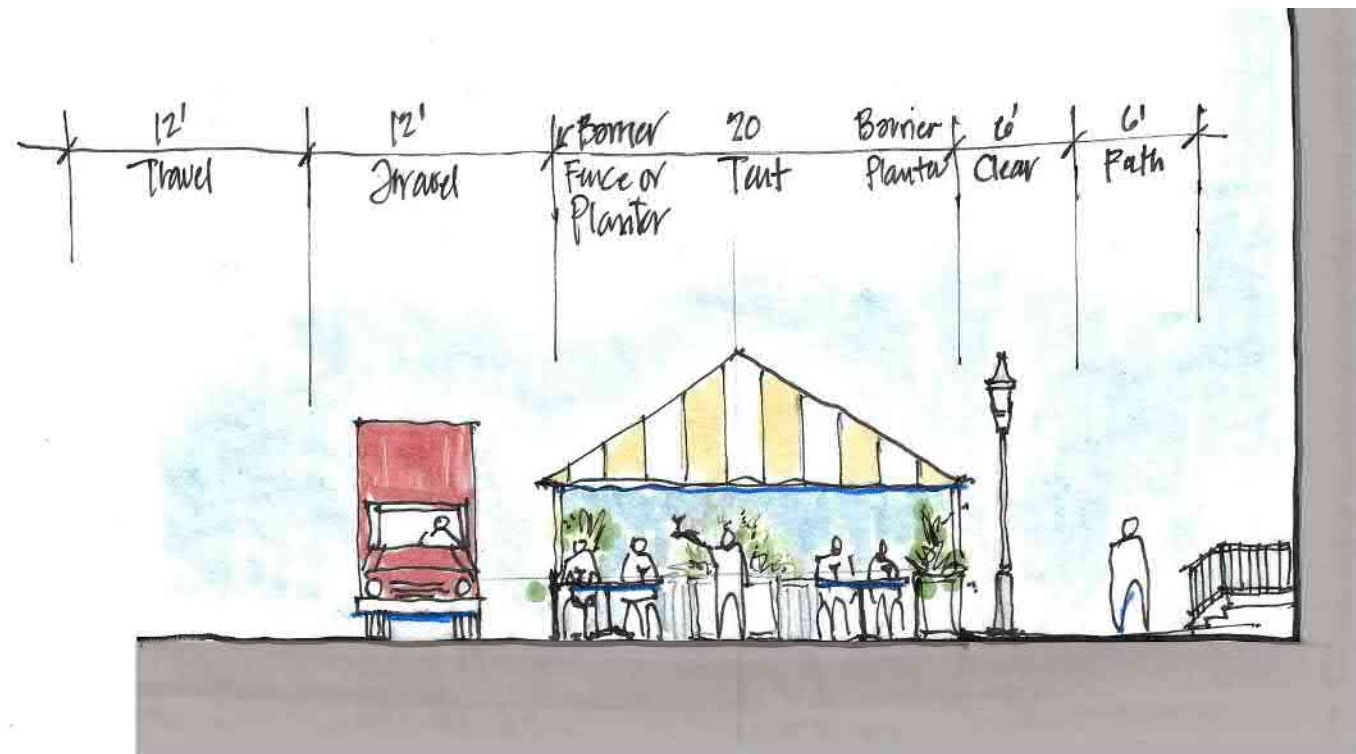


This scenario covers the two blocks of Pleasant Street from Court Street to Market Square. (Recently approved outdoor dining for Tuscan Market -- already successfully established -- is not included.) For the rest of the street the adaptation of diagonal parking spaces offers seating opportunities on both sides. The extensive width of the street provides adequate circulation space for the road to remain functional from State Street to Market Square. The concept includes outdoor dining space on the east side of the road from Court Street to State Street.





Clipper Tavern



Thai 5

- 8 existing diagonal parking spaces retained on the west side of the street between Court Street and State Street.
- Restaurant frontage for the Clipper Tavern via travel lane reduction
- 9 existing parking spaces at the frontage of the Book & Bar and 4 of 5 existing spaces in front of Thai Bistro retained for drop-off and pick-up with the rest re-allocated for restaurant seating.
- 11 existing diagonal parking spaces on the east side retained with the balance allocated for restaurant seating for the Rusty Hammer and the Gelato Bistro (with the possibility for retail frontage)
- Market Square is not included in this document



# MAKING IT HAPPEN

## **How will all these ideas come together to meet the urgent needs of this crisis?**

The publication of this workbook -- quickly assembled by some of the most talented architects, engineers, and designers in town -- signals the start of a sprint to revitalize restaurant and retail life in the streets of Portsmouth. It is meant to be more like a compass than a finished proposal. It is meant to guide and inspire. Our team knows from experience that people often see drawings and design proposals like these and believe they are a finished work. We want to stress that this is not the case here. These renderings are merely a starting point. How they are transformed into reality -- picture residents and visitors dining outdoors on sunny days or shopping along the sidewalks -- will depend on what the businesses themselves want, how much support and resources the City provides, and our civic imagination. We've never been here before and, while the economic situation is dire at the moment, we can also let ourselves feel some excitement and optimism about a new kind of outdoor life on the streets of our town, however temporary.

In the late hours of Monday June 15th, the Portsmouth City Council unanimously approved a motion to delegate the responsibility for implementing an action plan to the City Manager and the citizen response task force. Our team is positioned to collaborate with the task force and City staff in the planning, public works, fire and police, and health departments, and bring our collective professional design skills to the table. The businesses we want to help survive -- the restaurant owners and retailers -- are already identifying their needs and challenges so we can move quickly to design solutions. Members of our team are already walking the streets with key City officials to begin implementation of street adaptations.

## **KEY SUCCESS FACTORS FOR WINNING THE RACE**

This study provides potential concepts for quickly implementing an emergency revitalization plan to provide restaurants and retailers with expanded outdoor spaces.



**The citizen response task force** will work closely with the Chamber of Commerce and other networks to reach out efficiently to the business community and determine who wants to participate in this program.

Our alliance of designers is dedicated to assisting and collaborating with the relevant task force committee and City staff and keeping the process moving quickly, creatively, and pragmatically.

The City manager and task force committee plans to send out regular updates. Things will move fast and every day we can expect dramatic results as street life starts to buzz again around outdoor dining and retail spaces. Even allowing for the social distancing and health precautions we still need to take, people will again be able to enjoy good food and browse the displays of retailers.

Should the City manager have any concerns about authority, resources, and health and safety issues, she is directed to look -- with input from planning, police, fire, health, and public works.-- to the Council for their advice and approval.

Regular communication through the paper and social media can also keep people posted so there are answers posted Before the likelihood of confusion about change traffic patterns, parking in other aspects of the downtown environment.

## SOME HARD-WON WORDS OF WISDOM AND ADVICE

Based our collective experience we offer some suggestions:

- Measure twice, cut once
- Talk to the right people, ask the right questions, get the right information, and figure out the best approach to avoid making impulsive mistakes
- Aim before you fire
- Just getting something done is not good enough. With a bit of thought, planning, and precision it can get done right

Make sure everyone who wants to be is in the loop

Reach out to people in the downtown business community who are willing and enthusiastic to talk. We have already learned from some business owners that these concepts are not right for their needs. A retailer may not have the staff to expand outdoors. Or may simply lack the funds to do so.

### **Do a really fine job**

Transform our local economy with initiative expansion into outdoor spaces we must apply quality standards that match our requirements for public spaces and that complement and enhance the existing beauty of our City.



## **FINANCIAL RESOURCES ARE ESSENTIAL**

All stakeholders in this revitalization effort are asked to aggressively pursue all potential funding -- emergency funds from State and Federal sources, nonprofits, contribution funds, and so on. These funds can help businesses bridge the present moment of financial vulnerability and reach the other side -- a future where cash flows are restored, and business can survive. A modest allocation of funds from the City will see enormous return on the investment if it helps bring visitors and their spending into the City again, keeps businesses alive, and maintains property values and our commercial tax base.

The City Council has already made an initial allocation of \$100,000, mostly earmarked for adapting the Foundry Place parking garage as a temporary center for the performing arts. There are several other ways the City can assist recovery as outdoor dining and retail spaces expand:

Create a "package deal" turnkey acquisition for quantity seating tables and other appurtenances in modules that a restaurant can simply say yes and there would be a purchasing opportunity. A furniture project manager could be designated to oversee the operation and secure the package deal contract with an outdoor furniture supplier.

Create a revolving loan fund -- similar to the Payroll Protection Pro-

gram (PPP) -- that encourages eligible businesses to access funding. If a business adheres to the full program, loans could be forgivable.

Stabilize taxes: properties that improve their frontage would be exempt from adjustments to their property value. In fact, the City could consider a prorated tax reduction that reflects the extra effort, expense, and risk a business undertakes to stay afloat.

## **PRIVATE RESTAURANT AND COMMERCIAL FRONTAGE DEVELOPMENT**

We recognize that it's important that, working along parallel lines to the concepts presented, businesses may want to remain autonomous and create and implement their own solutions. Of course, we welcome this wholeheartedly. The recent establishment of outdoor dining at the Tuscan market shows that an enterprise can take leadership and develop its own attractive, functionally safe, and legal configuration for outdoor dining -- including serving alcohol. We encourage the City and the City Manager to approve such private efforts as quickly and efficiently as possible.

## **CITY PARTICIPATION IN GATEWAYS, WAYFINDING, AND STREETSCAPES**

The sudden expansion of outdoor dining and shopping spaces in our downtown streets may take some people by surprise. We highly recommend that the City communicates clearly to the public how and why the character of central Portsmouth is changing, even if only temporarily.



Such notifications can reach citizens through the usual communication channels, but our design proposals themselves can play a role here. Our design workbook proposes a series of welcoming obelisks along the gateway streets that lead into the heart of our City. The mood they intend to establish is one of celebration: life is coming back to the streets. The obelisks are a symbol of hope and optimism and prepare visitors visually for something new and exciting downtown.

In this vein we make the following suggestions. We could use the City public art fund to:

- Help pay for these structures and ensure that the designer is engaged to assist in their acquisition and installation.
- Create a series of panels or banners to “brand” streets and identify businesses whose normal commercial signage may be obscured by canopies or tents. Local graphics companies could handle purchasing and installation.

In moving ahead quickly and efficiently with these broader concepts of gateways, banners, and street-branding, we recommend the task force committee guide the Council toward additional policy actions that may be necessary. For maximum success, the task force, designers alliance, City staff, and Council must share a foundational agreement in principle about the vision presented here and how exactly it is best realized. We are confident that, with enthusiastic energy, resources, good will, and imagination, we can make it happen!



