



**PORTLAND BUSINESS
ALLIANCE**

Leading the way

Memorandum

Date: November 14, 2012

To: Sarah Figliozzi, City of Portland, Portland Bureau of Transportation

From: Downtown Retail Council

Re: Downtown Retail Council Position on Street Seats Program

Background

The Downtown Retail Council (DRC) has been provided information regarding the PBOT Street Seats pilot program, a program that allows business to expand their café seating into on-street parking spots. After considering the pilot program, the DRC believes that the Street Seats program creates access, safety and equity challenges in the downtown, and opposes the application of the Street Seats program in the downtown.

Recommendations

We appreciate the city's effort to find ways to enhance street vitality and support businesses. However, given the limited supply of downtown on-street parking and right-of-way access, as well as the density of diverse uses that downtown serves, the DRC believes the Street Seats program would negatively impact the overall business environment. Specifically, Street Seats could negatively affect business vitality by reducing the shared resource of on-street parking and loading zones, which causes equity disparities by enhancing some businesses to the detriment of others' access. The DRC also is concerned with the safety issue of conflicts between patrons and vehicles, given that the Street Seats are adjacent to the travel lane and without buffer.

While the DRC opposes the continuation of Street Seats program in the downtown, we recognize that this program is one of many elements that compete for use of the downtown right-of-way. In order to protect access to the diversity of businesses and services located downtown, the DRC provides some criteria to begin a framework for the city to use to manage competing uses in the right-of-way:

- 1) Protecting access should be the first priority; converting on-street metered parking spots and loading zones for non-auto parking use should be avoided. If on-street metered parking spots or loading zones are considered for conversion, a no net loss policy of parking spaces and loading zones in the central city should be implemented. For areas that have on-street parking occupancy rates at 80 percent or higher during peak times, no on-street parking conversion should occur.



**DOWNTOWN
RETAIL
COUNCIL**

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- 2) For areas that are outside of an 80 percent or higher parking occupancy rate, the following criteria should be applied:
 - a. Street Seats may be allowed only if the sidewalk adjacent to the property is less than 8ft and will not allow for an on- sidewalk café.
 - b. Street seats may be allowed only in lieu of, and not in addition to, already zoned and permitted sidewalk cafes.
 - c. Applicants for Street Seats must have approval of all other businesses on their shared block-face.
 - d. Applicants for Street Seats that lease space must have property owner's approval.
 - e. Street Seats may only be allowed for bricks and mortar restaurants; mobile food carts and other retail businesses may not apply for Street Seats.
 - f. Street Seats should not be permitted on blocks where on-street parking has previously been removed for bike corrals or bike rental kiosks.

Conclusion

Thank you for your consideration of these comments. We welcome further discussion on developing a framework for maintaining access in the right-of-way, and increasing activity in the downtown in a way that promotes business vitality.