

For Immediate Release

City of Marion Public Service Announcement

City of Marion Relaxing Parking Regulations to Allow Outdoor Seating.

On Tuesday, May 19, 2020, the Marion City Council approved a request by Planning Director Heather Cotton to allow the Planning and Development Department to temporarily relax minimum onsite parking requirements for local businesses, and to allow administrative-level approval for the issue of sidewalk café permits. This policy has been approved in anticipation of a new executive order to allow restaurants and other establishments to resume dine-in services at reduced occupancy.

The City wants to support businesses in their recovery by providing temporary flexibility for outdoor-dining and merchandise display while adhering to the State's Executive Order. Cotton stated, we have looked at several options, and felt that this was something that could be implemented quickly and at little to no additional cost to businesses.

Under the policy, businesses would be allowed to use thirty percent of their onsite parking to establish temporary outdoor seating and merchandise display. Downtown businesses without onsite parking would be able to expand outdoor seating and merchandise display under an active sidewalk café permit.

City Council also approved modifying the sidewalk café approval process. Previously, a sidewalk café application required city council approval. Council has granted staff the authority to permit new sidewalk café applications without City Council approval. This authority will streamline the approval process allowing for same-day permitting for applicant's having adequate liability insurance and a signed liability waiver.

A zoning permit will not be required for any lawfully established business wanting to temporarily expand outdoor seating and merchandise display unless the space is on public property and does not have an active sidewalk café permit. While a zoning permit and inspection is not required, businesses must adhere to the following requirements.

- The total number of tables and chairs inside and outside may not exceed approved posted occupancy.
- All new outdoor seating conducted on public property will require a sidewalk café permit. Please contact the Marion Planning and Development Department at 828-652-3551 for questions and specific requirements.
- Constructing, installing, and/or erecting any material used to shelter the public, including but not limited to a canopy, tent, or awning may require a building permit and/or fire inspection. Please contact the Marion Planning and Development Department at 828-652-3551 for questions and specific requirements.
- ADA accessible parking spaces may not be utilized for outdoor seating or merchandising.

- All outdoor seating and merchandising shall be setback a minimum of twenty-five feet from the edge of any road having a speed limit greater than 25 miles per hour.
- A clearly visible barrier shall be installed around the perimeter of an outdoor seating area to separate seating from onsite parking.
- All aisles, walkways, and sidewalks shall maintain a six-foot width for adequate clearance for social distancing and minimum ADA accessibility requirements.
- Businesses serving or selling alcohol shall comply with all applicable state and federal laws, which may be more restrictive.
- Businesses shall abide by all local, state, and federal executive orders, as well as North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services and Centers for Disease Control guidelines for protecting public health.

The Marion Business Association has created an emergency resources page that can be found at <https://hometownmarion.com/emergency-resources/>. The site features federal, state and local assistance programs to help businesses recover. A complete copy of the City's policy can be found there or on the City of Marion's website at www.marionnc.org. For questions or additional information, please contact Development Review Administrator Lauren Auton at (828) 652-3551 or at lauton@marionnc.org.