

Patio Program Review

Proposed Program Updates

Standing Committee Meeting
November 26, 2025
RTS 18234

Agenda

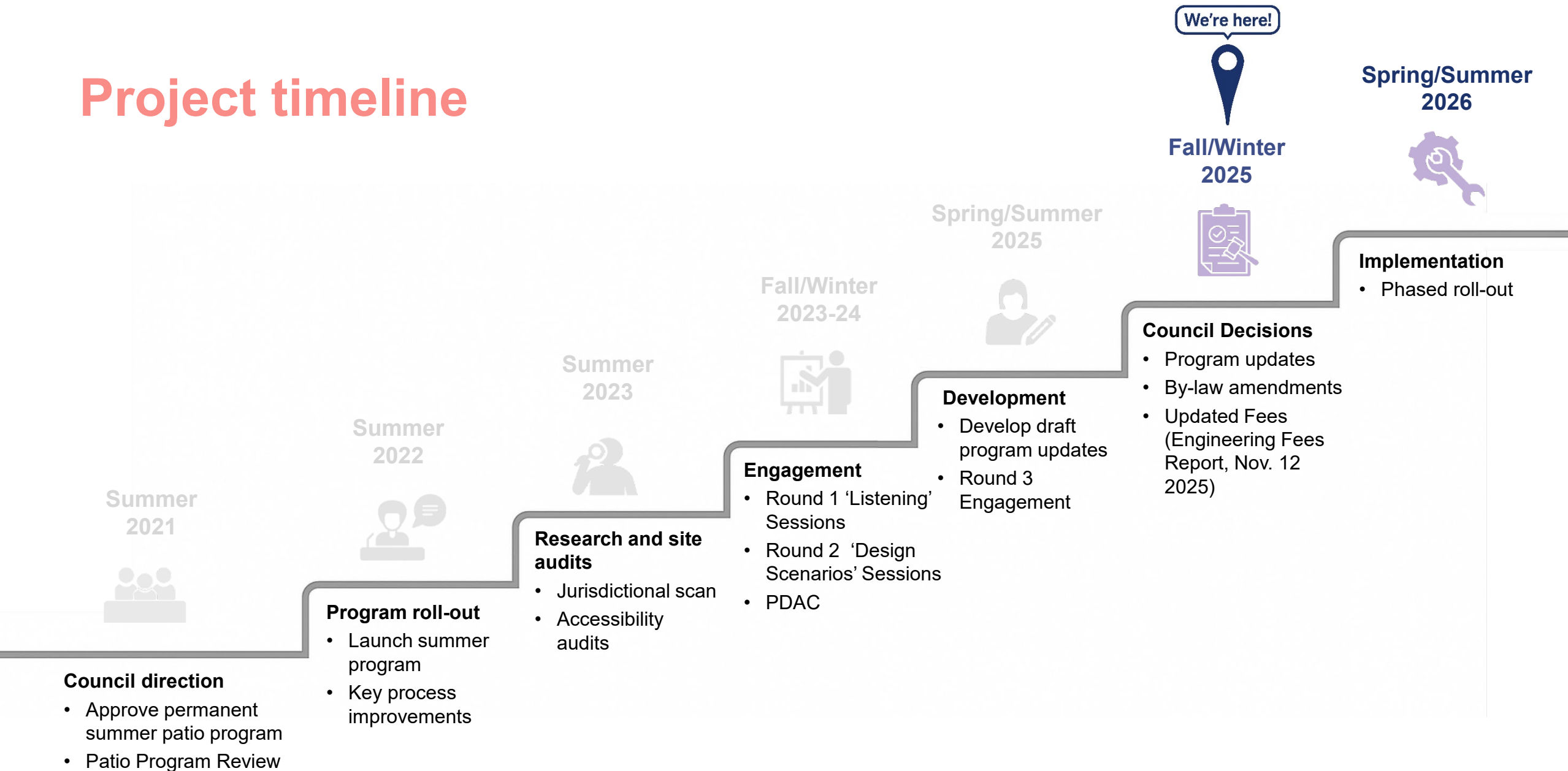
1. Background on the Patio Program Review
2. Proposed program updates for summer 2026
3. Updated permit fees and financial tools for businesses
4. Next steps



Council direction (Sep 2021)

- A. Approved a permanent summer patio program (including curbside patios).
- B. Directed staff to undertake review of Patio Program (year-round and summer) including **design guidelines**, **accessibility policy** and **fee review**.

Project timeline



Key objectives for Patio Program updates

**Provide clear
accessibility and
safety
requirements for
curbside patios**

while

**Enabling more
flexible design
options**

**Maintain
streamlined
application
process** by
minimizing new
requirements +
reducing steps
where possible

**Improve public
realm management**
by clarifying roles
and responsibilities
with permit holders,
and encouraging
compliance

**Update permit
fees** to support
program and
public realm
management
while

**Providing
financial tools** for
businesses

3 rounds of stakeholder engagement

with permit holders, BIAs, food/hospitality industry reps, PDAC

Round 1 (Q3 2023)

Listening & Learning

- Identified challenges, opportunities and needs from the Patio Program
- Accessibility concerns
- 4 workshops (51 participants), plus online questionnaire

Round 2 (Q1 2024)

Design & Objectives

- Draft design scenarios for curbside patios, accessibility policies
- Preliminary permit fee review
- 4 workshops (73 participants)

Round 3 (Q2 2025)

Review of Proposed Updates

- Presented draft recommendations (outlined in this report)
- 3 workshops (29 total participants), plus survey on proposed program updates

What we heard

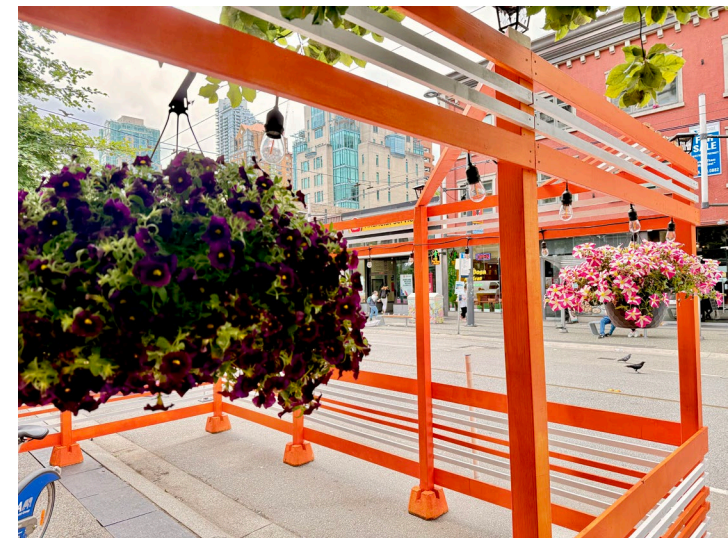
Key feedback from stakeholders

- Businesses want a **range of patio options**, from 'cheap & cheerful' to more ambitious
- Interest in **more flexible design elements** such as overhead covers and improved weather protection, decks, lighting
- Need **guidance on achieving accessibility** such as designs for sloped sites, and concerns about cost impacts
- High **costs for seasonal patios** (building, removal, storage) but also mixed views on year-round patios
- Permit process is **complex and can be costly** (inc. engineering drawings)
- Interest in **innovative approaches**, such as diverted sidewalks (to enable 'patio row') and 'shared patios' for neighbouring businesses

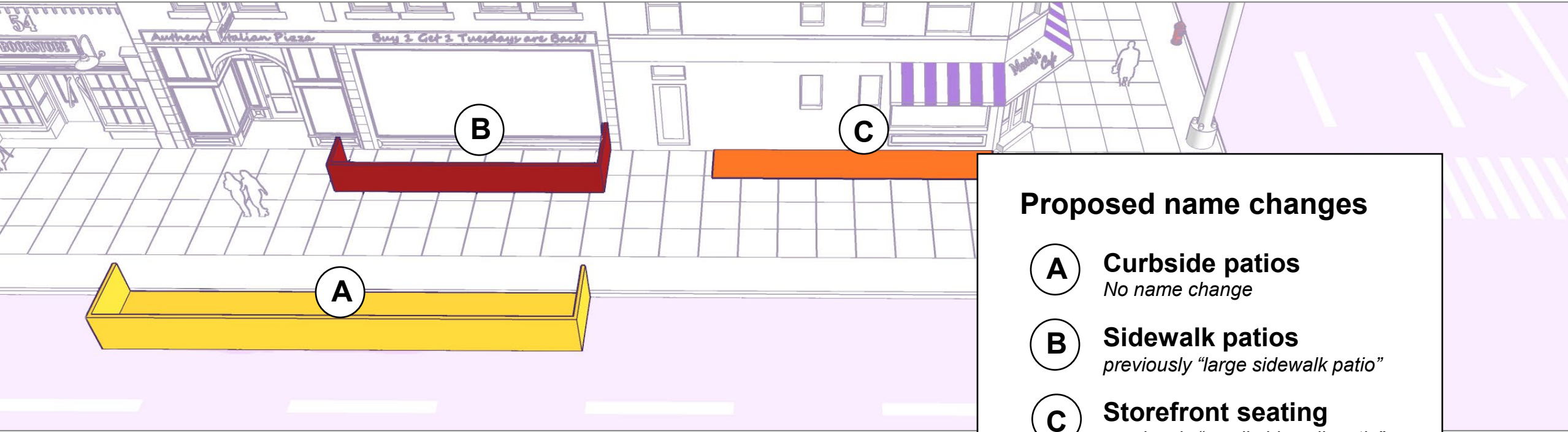
How we're responding

Proposed updates for 2026

- Summer curbside patios: new accessibility requirements, expanded design options, process improvements
- Storefront seating (formerly small sidewalk patios): transition to no-fee, permit-light option
- Relaxed washroom requirements to enable 'added seats' on patios
- Improved compliance approach
- Updated fees & new financial tools
- Name changes to patio types



Types of patios in the program



Proposed name changes

- A** **Curbside patios**
No name change
- B** **Sidewalk patios**
previously “large sidewalk patio”
- C** **Storefront seating**
previously “small sidewalk patio”

For summer 2026, most design guideline updates will apply to **summer curbside patios**. Following 2026, we will continue to roll out updates for other patio types.

Updates to Storefront seating


Objective: Create a **low-barrier outdoor seating option** for businesses and encourage a vibrant public realm

- Renamed from “small sidewalk patios”
- Eliminate fees
- Expand eligibility (include non-food businesses)
- Permit-light: Simplify process for City and businesses



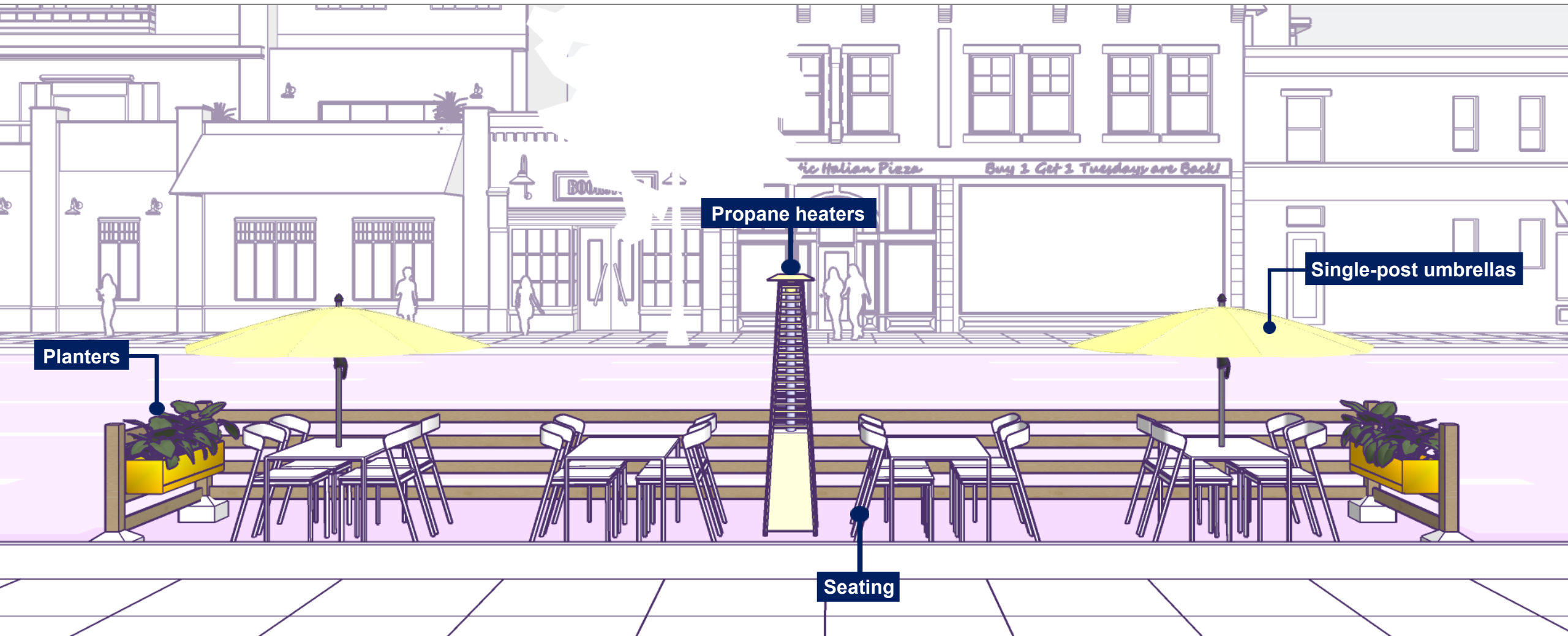
Updates to **Sidewalk Patios** (future)

- Renamed from "large sidewalk patios"
- Next phase: Updates to design guidelines and process to align with curbside patios

The background image shows a city street scene. On the left, there is a multi-story building with a sign that reads "Mayflower Place". In the foreground, there is a construction barrier with a striped pattern. Behind the barrier, there are several large umbrellas and some outdoor seating. The text "Proposed updates for 2026: summer curbside patio design guidelines" is overlaid on the image in a large, white, sans-serif font. A yellow vertical bar is positioned to the left of the text.

Proposed updates for 2026: summer curbside patio design guidelines

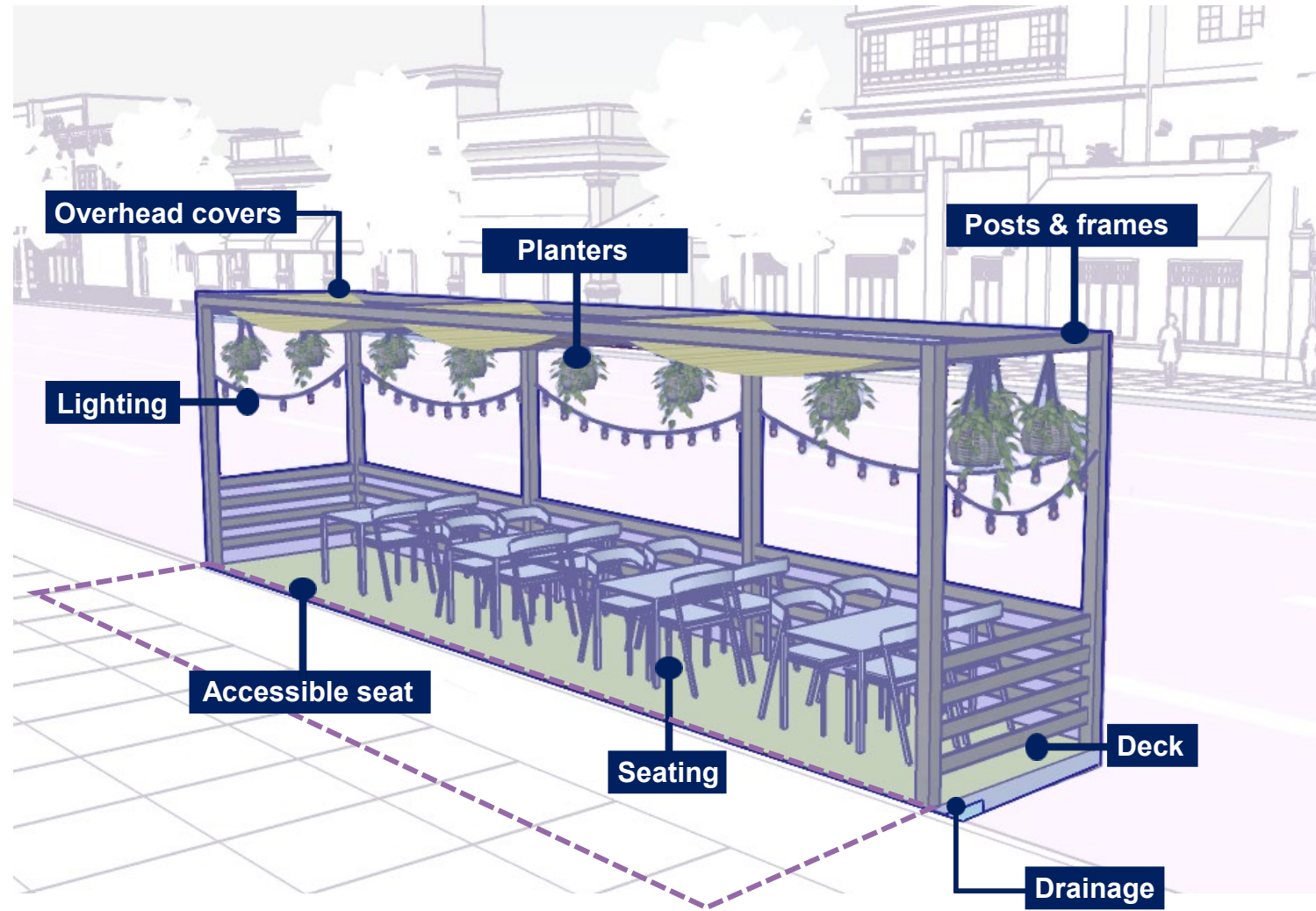
What's currently allowed in curbside patios?



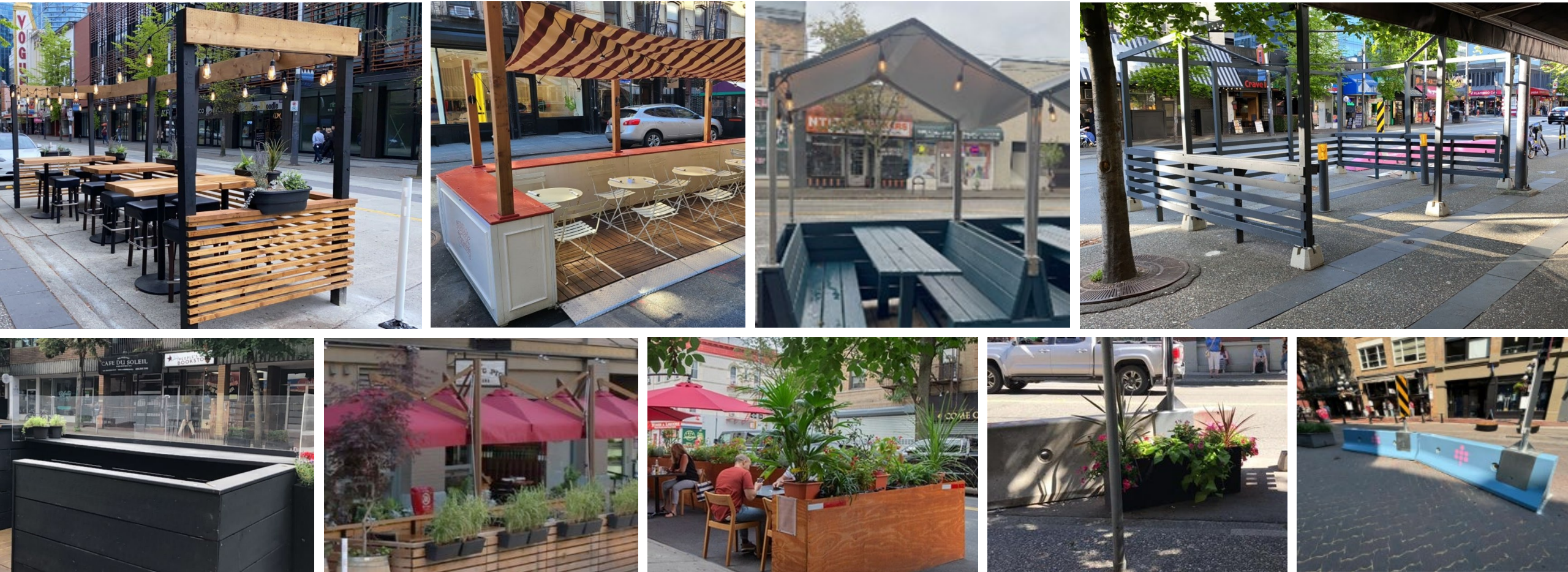
Proposed updates to design guidelines

Unlocking **more flexible design options** while maintaining **safety and accessibility**

- Posts and frames
- Lightweight overhead covers
- Railings and wind screens
- Electrical (overhead)
- Accessories & public realm enhancements
- Patio footprints spanning boulevards



Proposed updates to design guidelines

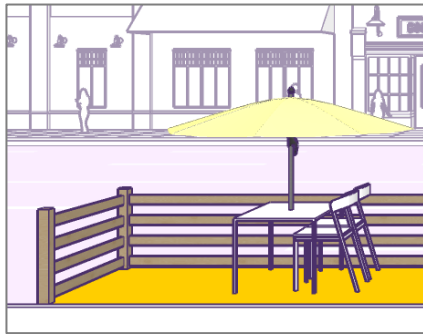


Top row (left to right): posts/frame, lightweight overhead covers, patio spanning blvd

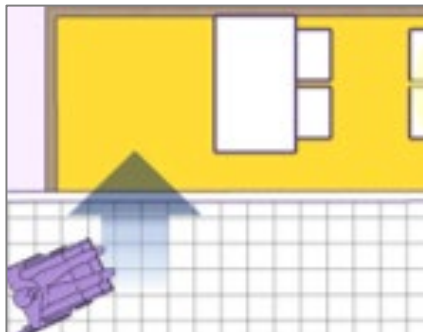
Bottom row (left to right): transparent wind-screen, cantilevered umbrellas, railings and integrated planters, public realm enhancements, painted barrier

Accessibility policy update

Proposed new accessibility requirements for curbside patios:



Minimum one accessible seat



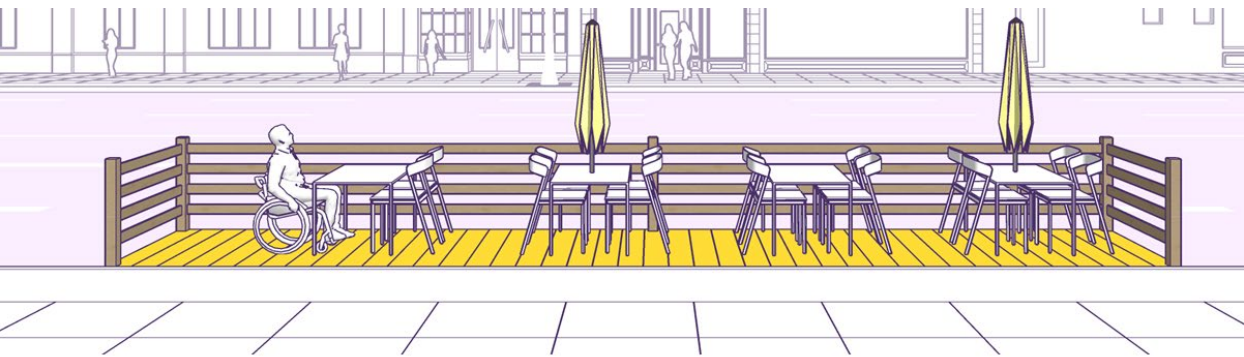
Accessible path of travel and entry onto patio

Background: Council adopted Accessibility Strategy in 2021, committing to support the full participation of persons with disabilities

Existing patios **have up to 3 years** to meet new requirements

Options for curbside patios to meet accessibility

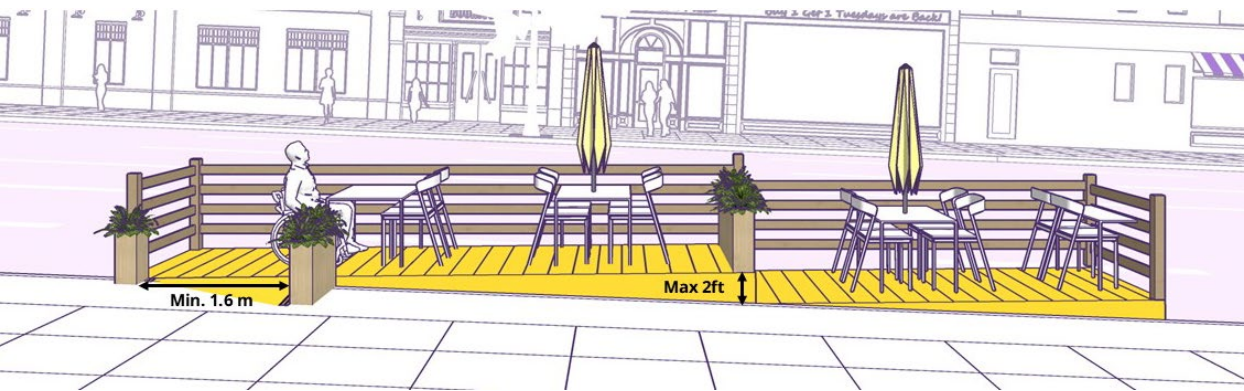
A. Full deck



B. Partial deck



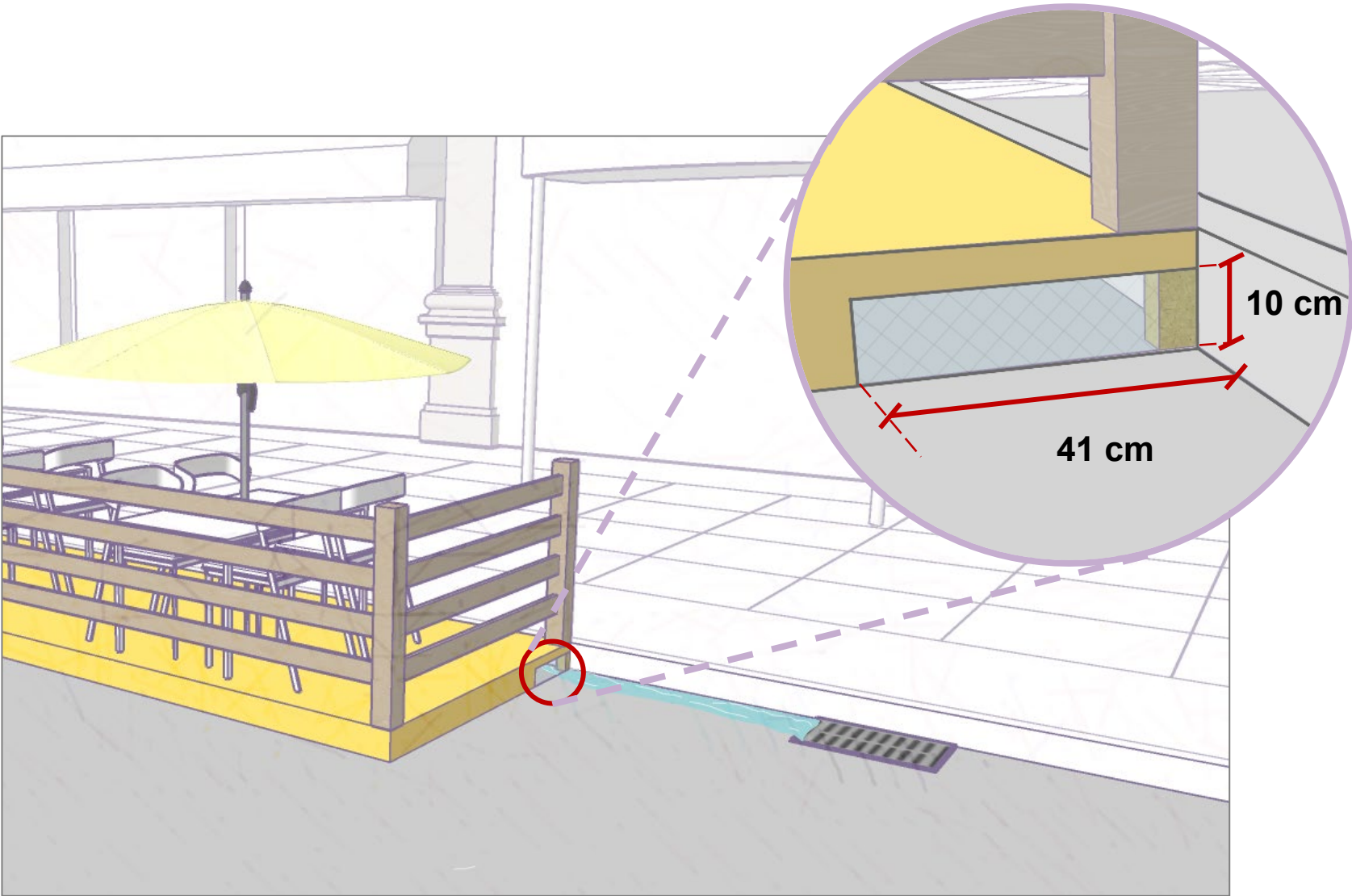
C. Terraced deck (on sloped sites)



D. Ramp



Drainage requirements for decks and ramps

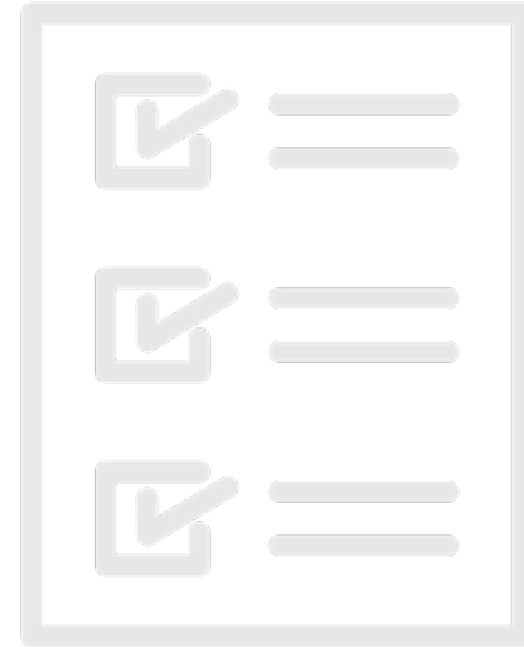


Current conditions

Streamlined application process

Objective: Minimize additional application requirements for new design guidelines

- Proposed VBBL amendments to:
 - ✓ Eliminate requirement for sealed engineered drawings for decks < 2 ft and simple overhead structures
 - ✓ Enable 'added seats' (increased occupant load) not counted in washroom calculations
- Working with DBL and VFRS to streamline
- Applying learnings from Water Street and Granville Street pilots



Future guidelines development

- Updates for **sidewalk patios**
 - Apply learnings from curbside patios; streamline process
- Explore **options for greater enclosure** and management needs for potential year-round curbside patios
 - Transition year-round curbside patio trial
- Explore **innovative approaches**:
 - Sidewalk diversions: enable patio rows along building frontage (BIA or partner-led)
 - Shared patios: enable businesses to share space



Ongoing process improvements

- Alignment of **public and private property patio** programs

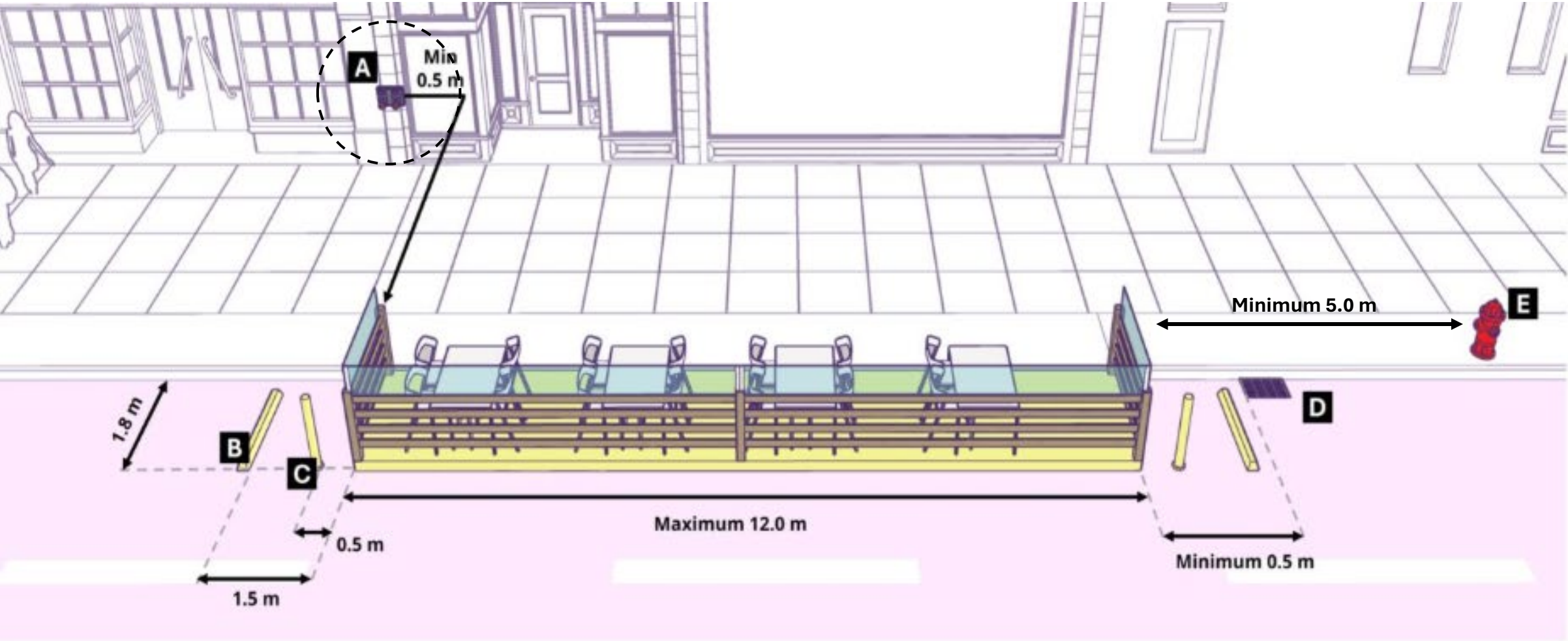


The background image shows a city street scene. On the left, there is a multi-story building with a sign that reads "Mayflower Place". In the foreground, there is a cafe with outdoor seating. The cafe has several large umbrellas, one of which has the text "PARALLEL49" on it. In front of the cafe, there are several white and grey striped construction barriers. The overall scene is in a light, desaturated color palette.

Updated Compliance framework

Objective: Enable a **streamlined process with reduced requirements** while ensuring **improved safety and public realm management**

How the patio fits in the public realm



- A** FDC
- B** *Wheel Stop
- C** *Bollard
- D** In-ground Utilities
- E** Fire Hydrant

** indicates items supplied and installed by the City.*

Curbside patio safety

- City delivers **Traffic Safety Measures (TSM)** to help protect patios in the curb lane
 - ✓ Wheel stops, bollards and object markers for each patio
 - ✓ Concrete barrier for some locations
- Requires annual review and technical design for each patio location
- Installation, removal and seasonal storage
- Annual cost: ~ \$210k



Impacts of non-compliance on the public realm

- × Wrong dimensions or location - Traffic safety and emergency access risks
- × Structures outside footprint – Safety and accessibility
- × Pooling and debris – Street operations, access to businesses
- × Covering utilities – Blocks city access for planned work and emergencies
- × Vacant or unmaintained patios – Impacts streetscape and other businesses



Managing the public realm as a shared responsibility

City's role:

- ✓ Provide streamlined application process while communicating responsibilities through clear guidelines and terms & conditions
- ✓ Traffic safety measures
- ✓ Site audits
- ✓ Education-first compliance approach, followed by additional enforcement tools

Business' role:

- ✓ Apply for and obtain patio permit
- ✓ Ensure patio complies with key requirements (incl. safety and accessibility)
- ✓ Maintain patio and surrounding space
- ✓ If applicable: LCRB licensing



Costs, fees and business supports

The City is operating in a **period of significant economic uncertainty** and has a constrained operating budget.

Businesses are facing financial challenges including **increasing overhead and operational costs.**

What we heard:

- Staffing resources
- Costs of commercial leasing
- Permit and licensing fees
- Additional costs for patio design, seasonal removal and storage, upgrading to new requirements



2025 Patio Program Fees

Curbside and Sidewalk Patio Fees

Location	Application fee (non- refundable)	Summer rate (Apr 1 to Oct 31)	Year-round rate (Apr 1 to Mar 31)
Downtown	\$267.44	\$106.89/ m ² + GST	\$182.96/ m ² + GST
Outside of downtown	\$267.44	\$75.74/ m ² + GST	\$129.77/ m ² + GST

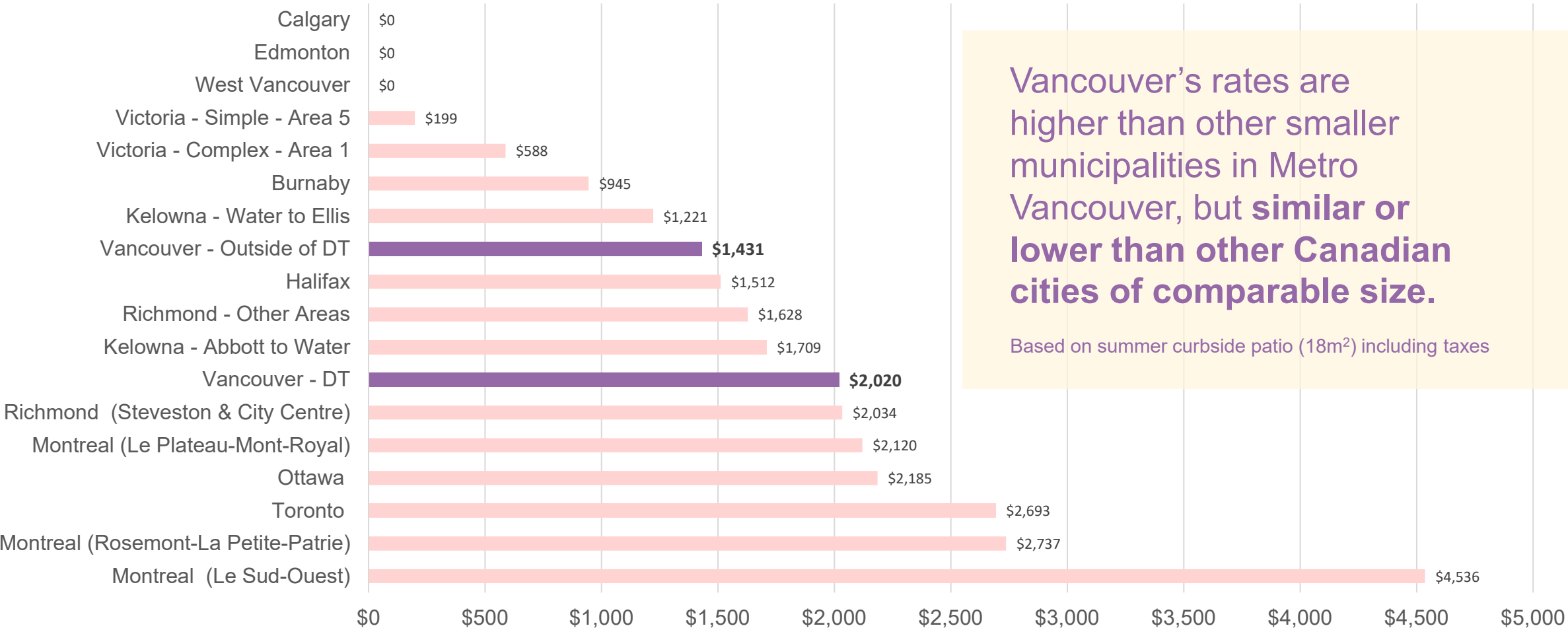
Permit fee for **average summer curbside patio** (18m²):

- Downtown Vancouver: **\$2,020** incl GST
- Outside of Downtown: **\$1,430** incl GST

Storefront Seating (Small Sidewalk Patios) Fees

Fees	Year-round rate (Apr 1 to Mar 31)
Application Fee (non-refundable)	\$66.84
Each set of a table and two chairs	\$154.33 + GST
Permit subject to a minimum fee	\$462.99 + GST

Patio Permit Fees: Vancouver and other cities



Patio Permit Fees

Permit fees will be updated per Council decision on the 2026 Engineering Fees Report (Nov 25, 2025).

Proposed tools to support businesses:

- ① **One-time permit fee reimbursement**
 - One-time 100% permit fee reimbursement when business builds patio to new requirements.
- ② **Other cost and time saving tools for businesses**
 - Eliminate requirement for engineer drawings for simple patio structures
 - Added seats without counting towards washroom requirements.
 - No fees and permit-light for storefront seating.
 - Ongoing process improvements.

Final engagement findings

Response to proposed program updates

- **80% are supportive** of the proposed updates overall
- **PDAC** supports proposed accessibility requirements

Proposed guidelines:

- 72% of businesses say summer curbside patio guidelines meet their needs
- 83% say guidelines are clear and understandable
- 78% with existing patios say it is feasible to upgrade to meet new guidelines within 3 years
- 66% without existing patios say it is feasible to build a patio to meet new guidelines

Application process and approach to compliance:

- 98% say updates to application process are clear
- 90% say roles and responsibilities reasonable

Other business feedback:

- Further streamline application process
- More coordination with LCRB

Proposed by-law amendments

To support these Patio Program updates, we are proposing by-law amendments to Council:

1. Vancouver Building By-law amendments for 'added seats' (increased occupant load) and exemptions for decks and lightweight structures – led by DBL.
2. Street Vending By-law amendments to support 'storefront seating' and update patio names – led by ENG.

Updated patio permit fees in 2026 Engineering Fee Report: Street Vending By-law amendments

Next steps:

1. If approved by Council, enact by-law amendments (Dec 2025)
2. If approved, roll-out program updates for 2026 summer patio season
3. Ongoing program updates and process improvements: 2026 and on

Thank
you