CITIES big and small are rapidly changing their streets, sometimes over the course of several days, to help their residents stay safe in a time of crisis and to allow businesses to re-open.

Research shows that it is safer being outdoors than being indoors, and outdoor dining is now permitted in most cities and towns. Restaurants are using the sidewalk, parking spaces and lots, roadways and other outdoor spaces to create seating areas. The question is what do these outdoor dining spaces look like? How do we keep diners safer next to moving traffic?

This visual guide includes recommendations and examples of barriers that are beautiful, inexpensive, easy to build, and safe. They were designed to be universal and may not include all regulations that a municipality may have already established. Please check with your municipality first to make sure your design will be in compliance with guidelines and requirements. For inspiration, see the following pages and @designforsixfeet in Instagram.
RAISED PARKLET

For optimal access, a raised platform leveled with the sidewalk has been used in many municipalities as “parklets” or “street seats”, even before the pandemic. This allows unobstructed access for everybody without having to navigate a curb.

WOODEN PLANTERS

Examples below show a continuous wall of 36” planters (left) and planter boxes on wheels (right) that can be moved into place and allow a more flexible arrangement.

South End, Boston, MA; Jonathan Berk

Brooklyn, New York, NY; Miriam Kelly

Hudson, Columbia County, NY; Two Hawk Hudson

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STURDY BARRIERS

Examples on this page include barriers that are not planters. If built sturdy and heavy enough to withstand impact, they can offer more space for seating inside the area.

PLANNING FOR THE ELEMENTS

Lighting can be mounted to an extended frame to allow for more pleasant dining experience in the evening. Make sure to secure such items in inclement weather or heavy winds.

ADA COMPLIANCE

A simple ADA ramp can be built using plywood or similar sheet material.
AFFORDABLE SOLUTIONS

Milk crates come in different colors, are recyclable and can be stacked to build to from a barrier. They can also be used to store items or plant flowers and even double as benches if equipped with a frim surface. 48 crates are enough to secure one parking space and cost less than $250.

Similarly shipping palettes come in different sizes and can be arranged to form a sturdy protection around the perimeter of a parking space. The cost per palette is less $10.

A simple barrier out of stacked 6 by 6 timber can be enough to secure diners from oncoming traffic and can be decorated over time with additional plants or lights. This is an elegant solution for several businesses working together.
AFFORDABLE SOLUTIONS

To save on material cost, planters can also be interspersed with lighter materials such as bamboo fences, smaller flower pots or 1x4 wood along as the corners are secured and no movable element protrudes into the street space.

Similarly, typical barriers can be spaced further apart and interspersed with plants.