

Downtown Outdoor Dining Grant Program

PROGRAM DETAILS

The Downtown Baton Rouge business community is rebounding from the COVID-19 pandemic, and it is evident that outdoor dining is here to stay, even as capacity and other pandemic-related restrictions are eased. Outdoor dining and sidewalk café seating provide establishments with additional seating capacity and the potential for additional revenues in return, however they can be costly and difficult to implement in the downtown area. Building on the Downtown Development District's work with City-Parish government to develop the Sidewalk Café ordinance, the DDD is launching a program to help businesses implement outdoor dining areas. This new grant program will provide funds to offset the cost burden of purchasing tables and chairs, as well as technical assistance to help business owners navigate the application and permitting processes needed to create outdoor dining areas.

Restaurants, cafes, bars, and other dining establishments within the DDD who wish to create outdoor dining areas are encouraged to apply. The grant program will provide the following:

- 50% reimbursement of the cost of approved dining furniture (must submit receipts)
- Reimbursement of Sidewalk Café application fee (\$150) and first year permit fees (up to \$208)
- Assistance from DDD staff on drafting permit application, including developing required seating layout plans, photos, and other supporting materials
- Maximum grant award of \$1500, which includes furniture, application, and first year permit fees

Eligible Applicants and Locations: All business owners operating an establishment located within the Downtown Development District boundaries.

Review Criteria:

- Recognized need for improvements
- Design compatibility with surrounding streetscape
- Business has suitable outdoor space to implement or expand outdoor dining

Expenses Eligible for Reimbursement:

- Café-style tables and chairs
- High-top tables and chairs
- Other outdoor dining furniture and seating approved by DDD staff
- One-time Sidewalk Café application fee
- Sidewalk Café permit fees for first year

Ineligible Expenses and Activities

- Interior dining furniture and seating
- Labor costs
- Construction of outdoor structures such as decks and patios, landscaping, painting, building upgrades, or maintenance.

Program Procedures

- Submit attached Preliminary Application to the DDD including budget, photographs, and proposed seating options.
- DDD staff will review the application and notify the applicant of their eligibility for the grant.
- If accepted, the business owner will then complete a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement and receive official approval in the form of a Notice to Proceed letter from the DDD.
- Business owner will obtain the necessary Sidewalk Café permits (DDD staff can assist with application process, if needed).
- The business owner is required to present copies of all original invoices and receipts of payment upon completion of project.
- Any unapproved changes will void the grant. If grantee decides to change the project after approval they must contact the DDD Office.
- Final review of improvements will be carried out by the DDD and the recipient will be reimbursed up to \$1,500.00.
- All projects must be completed within three months of Notice to Proceed.
- Limit of one grant per business.

The property improvements may not begin until official approval in the form of a Notice to Proceed letter has been issued by the DDD. All permits and approvals are the responsibility of the grant applicant and must be obtained before final DDD approval and reimbursement. Preliminary site visit and final inspection of the project must be completed by DDD Staff.

Please submit completed application to Ryan Benton at the Downtown Development District at rbenton@brla.gov.

Feel free to contact us at 225-389-5520 or rbenton@brla.gov with any questions you may have regarding the grant program.