

St. Catharines continues efforts to support local business during lockdown

Jan. 19, 2020 — With local businesses continuing to face adversity during another COVID-19 lockdown, the City of St. Catharines is moving forward on several initiatives to aid them including the return of free parking to City spaces and lots, and the extension of its temporary outdoor patio program.

Council approved both measures on Monday night, bolstering the extensive work of several City departments in supporting local businesses.

With the hopes of drawing more shoppers to the downtown and other commercial areas for their essential needs, parking in all City lots, garages and on-street spaces will be free until the end of April. For more information on parking visit stcatharines.ca/Parking. While parking will be free, the City will continue to enforce parking restrictions related to safety, such as fire routes, as well as restrictions for loading zones and curbside pickup spaces.

Additionally, the City's [temporary outdoor patio program](#) will continue until the end of 2021. The program, first introduced in spring 2020, allows restaurant and bar operators to expand outdoor business areas to offset limitations on indoor dining under COVID-19 emergency orders. Staff will also examine the return of temporary downtown road closures during the warmer months to allow for expanded patio operations on weekends.

“The impacts of the pandemic have been particularly hard on our local small businesses that play such an important role in the functioning of a robust local economy, delivering jobs, and helping to maintain our city as the vibrant destination it has become,” said Director of Economic Development Brian York, adding, “the hospitality sector especially has seen severe impacts which the City is working to offset through the means it has available.”

The return of free parking and extension of the patio program enhances ongoing work on behalf of the City to aid local business, such as the PickupSTC.ca project, recently expanded to LoveSTC.ca, providing a one-stop online portal for residents to access and shop local businesses providing curbside pickup and online services. The City's economic development team, together with partners, has launched a host of initiatives under its [Pandemic Recovery Plan](#), including the extension of the Digital Mainstreet program; reinvention of downtown events, such as the STC Holiday Square, to bring residents downtown in a safe environment; and advocacy / marketing efforts.

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