

# Staff Report



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To	General Committee
Subject	Pilot Winter Downtown Patio Program Update and Recommendations
Date	October 1, 2025
Ward	All
From	S. Schlichter, Director of Economic and Creative Development
Executive Member Approval	B. Araniyasundaran, P. ENG., PMP, General Manager of Infrastructure and Growth Management
CAO Approval	M. Prowse, Chief Administrative Officer
Staff Report #	ECD009-25

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## **Recommendation(s):**

1. That the approved Pilot Winter Downtown Patio Program in Resolution 24-A-118 be included as incorporated as an annual program as part of the Barrie Downtown Patio Program, and referred to as a "Winter Downtown Patio".
2. Business Licensing By-law 2006-266 be amended to include under Schedule A, a "Winter Downtown Patio".
3. That Winter Downtown Patios be subject to all terms and conditions associated with the standard downtown patio program, with the following conditions:
  - a) Right of Way Activity Permits for Winter Downtown Patios will be issued to support breweries and restaurants to maintain their patios from November 16 to the second Thursday of April, with a minimum sidewalk clearance of 1.5 meters for pedestrian access and the understanding that approved patios will not require the relocation of City infrastructure, including but not limited to bollards;
  - b) Adequate snow storage can be demonstrated; and
  - c) That all other provisions within the Business Licensing By-law 2006-266 as amended and the Snow Clearing (Downtown) By-law 2008-212 remain in full effect during this period.

4. That the number of approved Winter Downtown Patios be limited to a maximum of six businesses per year on a first-come-first-served basis.
  5. That the Winter Downtown Patio be incorporated into the current “Patio Program” Fees By-law, such that program participants pay one \$400 fee per year to participate in the Downtown Patio Program, and a lease rate of \$0.40 per square foot per month, requiring applicants to only submit amendments to their ROWA permits to move between winter and standard patio permit requirements.
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## **Executive Summary:**

The purpose of this Report is to **provide Council with an update on the outcome of the pilot Winter Downtown Patio program, with a focus on evaluating its municipal and business operational impacts. The findings outlined in this Report are intended to inform whether the program should be continued, modified, or expanded in future years.** Through this evaluation, staff have assessed both the benefits and challenges of the pilot through discussions with the participants and internal departments affected, in order to provide recommendations that align with opportunities to animate the downtown, and ensure safe passageway for both pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

## **Key Findings:**

The **City’s current patio program has been successful in supporting restaurants and breweries during the spring, summer, and fall seasons.** The program has provided businesses with additional seating capacity, enhanced vibrancy in the downtown, and contributed to a more active streetscape. It has become a valued initiative for both business owners and the community, aligning with broader goals of economic development and downtown revitalization.

**In 2024, a pilot winter patio program was introduced to extend the benefits of the existing patio program into the off-season months at the request of the BIA and Flying Monkeys Brewery.** Council subsequently approved a winter patio for Flying Monkeys Brewery from November 15<sup>th</sup> until April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at a reduced allowance of 8 feet from the building, as well as up to two additional Permits to support two additional patios to open between March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025 and April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2025. Donaleigh’s secured a permit to open a winter patio from March 15<sup>th</sup>.

**This initiative allowed participating businesses, Flying Monkeys and Donaleigh’s, to maintain patios through all or a portion of the winter season** on a reduced setback allowance, creating opportunities to test operational feasibility and community interest while continuing to animate the downtown during traditionally slower periods.

The pilot program demonstrated that on a limited scale, winter **patios can be accommodated during the winter season.** Businesses remained responsible for snow clearing and maintenance of their patios.

**The business community and BIA have expressed support for the continuation of the winter patio program as an annual offering.** Participants noted the value of additional revenue during slower months and the ability to maintain customer engagement year-round. Feedback from the pilot indicates that formalizing the program would provide consistency for businesses while supporting the City's objectives of fostering a vibrant and resilient local economy.

In order to annualize the program, the following implementation actions are recommended:

- The winter patio season be defined from November 16 to the second Thursday of April (the standard Patio Program is in effect outside of these dates).
- The program allow a maximum of six businesses per year on a first-come-first-served basis to ensure that adequate winter controls can be maintained.
- The Winter Downtown Patio Program process align with the Summer Downtown Patio Program process, requiring interested business owners to contact the Downtown Barrie Business Improvement Area (BIA) to receive pre-approval from the BIA.
- The Winter Downtown Patio fee be incorporated with the overall Patio Program for First Time Applicants and Second Time and Subsequent Applicants (refer to Financial Implications).
- Business Licensing By-law 2006-266 be amended to include under Schedule A, the "Winter Downtown Patio".
- That all other provisions within the Business Licensing By-law 2006-266 as amended and the Snow Clearing (Downtown) By-law 2008-212 remain in full effect during this period.
- That the Right of Way Activity Application for Outdoor Winter Patios on Municipal Property in the City Centre be created with the same general terms and conditions as the standard outdoor Patio Program that includes insurance, and validation of Liquor Licence, Health Unit and site location information.

Additional considerations and standards to implement an annual Downtown Winter Patio Program include the following:

#### Accessibility

**All approved patios must have a minimum sidewalk clearance of 1.5 meters** in order to ensure safe and accessible pedestrian passage along sidewalks and right-of-way areas. This reduced allowance balances the needs of participating businesses with the City's responsibility to maintain clear, unobstructed access for the public.

#### Maintenance

**All approved patios must be designed in a manner that does not require the relocation of City infrastructure, including but not limited to bollards,** to avoid additional costs, operational impacts, and potential service disruptions. This requirement ensures patios are integrated seamlessly while preserving the integrity and functionality of existing municipal assets.

**Snow removal remains a key consideration** for the Winter Downtown Patio Program, **as the City must continue to meet its legislative obligations regarding accessibility and the safe maintenance of public spaces. To balance these requirements with**

**business participation, staff have recommended limiting the number of available permits for winter patios, which will be issued on a first-come, first-served basis.** This approach helps ensure snow clearing operations and accessibility standards can be effectively maintained throughout the season.

### **Financial Implications:**

**There are no additional financial implications, outside of staff time to the City should the pilot program be formalized as an annual program under the recommended conditions.** Business owners will continue to be responsible for snow removal and ongoing patio maintenance. In addition, with the recommended criteria requiring that only patios not impacting City infrastructure (such as road bollards) be eligible, as well as the condition of a cap on the number of patios being approved for the program, the need for Roads staff to provide additional human resources to support the program will be limited.

The primary area of increased demand is anticipated within the Traffic and Right of Way Activity (ROWA) Services team to review amendments for applicants moving between winter and standard patio permits. **Given the upward limit of up to six winter downtown patios, staff believe that this program can be supported within the existing resources, fee structure, and established existing lease rates of the standard Patio Program, which is as follows:**

#### First Time Applicants

If you are applying for a Patio (winter or standard) for the first time, the total fee is **\$400.00**. This fee covers the administrative costs associated with the issuance of a Right-of-Way Activity Permit and 1 (one) inspection visit.

Additional lease fees are waived for businesses constructing first year patios.

#### Second Time and Subsequent Applicants

Fees are charged as follows:

1. **Patio Application Fee of \$400.00.** This fee covers the administrative costs associated with the issuance of a Right-of-Way Activity Permit and 1 (one) inspection visit.
  - a) If the applicant has an approved Patio Permit (winter or standard), their ROWA permit will be updated to include the additional patio layout at no additional cost.
2. The lease rate of \$0.40 per square foot per month for the lease of City sidewalk space for the purpose of a Patio will apply.

## Alternatives:

The following alternatives are available for consideration by the Infrastructure and Community Investment Committee:

Alternative #1 – Infrastructure and Community Investment Committee could choose not to adopt the pilot program as an annual program and instead conclude the initiative following the end of the pilot period.

This alternative is not recommended, as the business community has directly expressed interest in seeing the program continue. Formalizing the program would allow participating breweries and restaurants the opportunity to generate additional revenue during the slower off-season months, supporting local economic vitality, especially in the downtown core. Furthermore, there is no anticipated strain on City resources associated with transitioning the program to an annual basis, making continuation both feasible and beneficial.

Alternative # 2 – Infrastructure and Community Investment Committee could choose to adopt the pilot program as an annual program with no limitations on the number of patios approved during each winter season.

This alternative is not recommended as while no issues have arisen under the current cap of three participating businesses, changing winter conditions could create access challenges and negatively impact public walking areas if participation is not managed. To mitigate these risks, City staff recommend maintaining safeguards through caps on the number of patios permitted, with the flexibility to revisit the program on an annual basis and make recommendations to revise program requirements.

## Strategic Plan Alignment:

Affordable Place to Live	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Open for business environment to help encourage job creation</li></ul>
Community Safety		
Thriving Community	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create and foster programs and opportunities to support community wellness</li><li>• Continue to support a vibrant downtown</li></ul>
Infrastructure Investments		
Responsible Governance		

## Additional Background Information and Analysis:

From an internal perspective, City Enforcement Services reported no complaints or issues related to the operation of winter patios during the pilot program. Staff responsible for processing the additional ROWA Permits noted no additional impacts outside of the

standard patio approvals process. Roads and ROWA staff are supportive of transitioning the pilot into an annual program with the reduced setback allowance of 8 feet, noting that leaving bollards in place will minimize confusion for pedestrians and drivers while also reducing the need for additional staff resources.

The Downtown Barrie BIA also expressed support for the program, noting that at least two additional businesses have indicated interest in participating in an extended patio season. The BIA reported that the feedback they collected from the businesses that participated in the pilot was positive, highlighting that a year-round patio program strengthens storefront attraction and contributes collectively to the vitality of the downtown. They believe that a permanent program would not only benefit the participating businesses but also create a unique year-round outdoor attraction that distinguishes Downtown Barrie from other municipalities. Similar to how the City's original patio pilot program was later replicated by other municipalities and BIAs across the province, Downtown Barrie would again be setting a precedent with this new year-round program.

From the business perspective, participating operators have demonstrated commitment by investing in their winter patios and strongly supporting the continuation of the program. They emphasized the value of winter patios in creating an inviting experience in the downtown and acknowledged the City's role in supporting the process through clear and prompt communication, particularly around accessibility requirements. The participating businesses noted that they were aware of the importance of snow removal, and remained vigilant on ensuring the sidewalk and patio were cleared at all times, something downtown businesses are already required to maintain.

Specifically, Flying Monkeys continued to reiterate their winter patio to best suit the streetscape and improve based on guest's engagement with the space (refer to Appendix).

While the program has been well received by all stakeholders, it is important to recognize that the number of patios approved for the winter months and the severity of seasonal weather conditions may introduce new challenges over time. Not all patio spaces are identical, and therefore, consistency across the program through clear eligibility criteria is recommended to ensure safe, sustainable, and equitable implementation.

### **Consultation and Engagement:**

There was no formal public consultation required in relation to this Report. Engagement with impacted stakeholders included informal interviews with the past pilot participants and relevant internal city departments.

### **Environmental and Climate Change Impact Matters:**

There are no environmental and/or climate change impact matters related to the recommendation.

**Appendix:** Appendix A - Flying Monkeys' Winter Patio

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## Appendix A – Flying Monkeys Winter Patio

