Public Space Advocates Applaud New, Permanent Open Restaurants Bill

Statement from the Design Trust for Public Space

New York, NY. — Today, New York City Council is moving forward a bill to make the emergency Open Restaurants program permanent, with the Department of Transportation continuing to manage outdoor dining. Restaurants can keep using their current dining structures until November 2024, with permanent design guidelines to be released at a later date.

Design Trust for Public Space Executive Director Matthew Clarke issued the following statement in response:

“This is a win for New York City. Outdoor dining has helped to save jobs, stimulate local economies, and bring life to our city streets. This bill is an important first step to creating a permanent program that is successful in the long-term, remedies the issues with the emergency program, and will allow for new uses of our curb lane. We are encouraged to see the seasonal timeline expanded, and by crucial policy points like caps on fees so all restaurants can participate, that rulemaking will enable better design of the program, and that NYC DOT will continue to spearhead the program.”

We applaud the Mayor’s Chief Public Realm Office Ya-Ting Liu, City Council, and the entire administration for getting this done. With our Alfresco NYC Coalition, we have compiled design guidelines and policy recommendations for this permanent program, based on months of site visits, roundtable discussions, research, and individual interviews with public space and accessibility advocates. We look forward to working with the City to create an Open Restaurants program that centers design excellence.

Beyond supporting local restaurants and small businesses, the Outdoor Dining program has shown the vast potential of public space and how we can better utilize our sidewalks and curbs for community use.”

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About the Design Trust for Public Space
The Design Trust for Public Space is a non-profit organization that unlocks the potential of New York's public spaces. Our unique model catalyzes urgent design ideas for a more just and equitable city. Founded in 1995 by Andrea Woodner on the tenet that New York City's cultural and democratic life depends on viable public space, today, the Design Trust is a nationally recognized incubator and thought leader that transforms New York City's shared civic spaces—streets, plazas, parks, public buildings, transportation, and housing developments—to create a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable city. In our 28 year history, we've taken on over 40 projects across all five boroughs with project partners including city agencies, community groups, and private sector experts, inspiring replicable models for urban issues and advancing the role of public space as a driver of long-term equity and social justice globally.

For more information about the Design Trust for Public Space, visit designtrust.org.