

NRC Press Release, August 2020:
City of La Crosse Neighborhood Revitalization Commission
invites new uses of public streets during the pandemic

The Neighborhood Revitalization Commission of the City of La Crosse seeks to support business and property owners during the pandemic by facilitating new uses of public space. Drawing on emerging national and international practices which modify the urban infrastructure to support public health, essential services and the safety of employees, we invite stakeholders in the City of La Crosse to consider these three inexpensive and simple changes to street configurations.

The National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) has issued the guidance “*Streets for Pandemic Response and Recovery*” at the url <https://nacto.org/streets-for-pandemic-response-recovery/>. These include new uses of public space such as:

Sidewalk Extensions: Provide space for people to comply with physical distancing guidelines while walking or waiting outside. Convert curbside parking or motor vehicle-lane to pedestrian space, use light separation such as reflective barriers or delineator posts to mark walking space, and use typical temporary lane control signs ahead of vehicle closure locations.

Pick-up and Delivery Zones: Convert curbside parking spaces or travel lanes to high-turnover pick-up or delivery zones serving essential businesses. Select locations that support essential services or are crowded, commit to an initial timeline, install light separation materials such as cones, sawhorses, barricades, paint, or traffic tape, post temporary signage, and cover up parking regulation signs as needed.

Outdoor Dining: Provide space for outdoor dining so that restaurants can comply with physical distancing guidelines while resuming dine-in operations. Establish “street dining zones” by temporarily closing streets or lanes or repurposing parking spaces. Waive permit fees within the “street dining zones,” establish occupancy standards, and commit to an initial duration and hours of operation.

These changed layouts reflect current [Centers for Disease Control guidance](#) for restaurants and bars, updated June 30, 2020, which suggest “Modified Layouts and Procedures” and emphasize offering “drive-through, curbside take out, or delivery options as applicable,” while recommending that restaurants and bars “Prioritize outdoor seating as much as possible.” But other uses of sidewalks, parking spots, and travel lanes might also be possible, for adding more physically-spaced pick up and drop off zones at schools or child care locations, for outdoor markets or shopping, transportation, entertainment, or activities.

Property or business owners should contact the Planning and Economic Development Department (608) 789-7512 for assistance in applying to the Board of Public Works for short-term and long-term street privilege permits under Chapter 40, Article 4 of municipal code. While the application for permits is an already-established process, because of the current crisis, the Board of Public Works commits to offering wide flexibility for new uses of public space to meet the needs of restaurants, shops, businesses, and other groups for the duration.

Sources: National Association of City Transportation Officials, “Streets for Pandemic Response & Recovery,” May 21, 2020; Centers for Disease Control “Considerations for Restaurants and Bars” accessed July 10, 2020.

https://nacto.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/NACTO_Streets-for-Pandemic-Response-and-Recovery_2020-05-21.pdf