



City of Portland Historic Landmarks Commission

Briefing

SUMMARY MEMO

Date: April 12, 2023
To: Sarah Figliozzi & Nick Falbo, PBOT
From: Benjamin Nielsen, Design / Historic Review
(503) 865-6519, benjamin.nielsen@portlandoregon.gov
Re: Briefing on Healthy Business Permit & Public Street Plaza Programs
Summary of January 23, 2023, Design Commission briefing

Thank you for taking advantage of the opportunity to hold a preliminary briefing with the Historic Landmarks Commission regarding your development of standards and guidelines for the Healthy Business Permit program, Street Seats, and the Public Street Plaza program. I hope you find it informative and valuable as you continue with on these projects. Attached is a brief summary of the comments provided by the Historic Landmarks Commission at the January 23, 2023, briefing. This summary was generated from notes taken at the public meeting and a subsequent review of the public meeting recordings. To review those recordings, please visit: <https://efiles.portlandoregon.gov/Record/15797173/>.

These Historic Landmarks Commission comments are intended to guide you in further design exploration of your project. These comments may also inform City staff when giving guidance over the course of future related land use reviews, if any should be needed. It should be understood that these comments address the project as presented on January 23, 2023. As the project evolves, the comments, too, may evolve or may no longer be pertinent.

Preliminary briefings are not intended to substitute for other Code-required land use or legislative procedures.

Please continue to coordinate with Benjamin Nielsen, as necessary as you prepare your formal land use application and as you prepare your application.

Encl:
Summary Memo

Cc: Historic Landmarks Commission

This memo summarizes **Historic Landmarks Commission** comments provided on January 23, 2023.

Commissioners in attendance on January 23, 2023 include: Maya Foty, Kristin Minor, Kim Moreland, Peggy Moretti, Matthew Roman, and Andrew Smith

Commissioners remarked that these street seats and street plazas are one of the good things to come out of the pandemic, though they found that these need to be more regulated and standardized now that the pandemic is ending.

On street seats:

- Commissioners asked how street seats could work on busy streets like NE MLK Blvd. They knew of several businesses that could benefit by being able to incorporate street seats on busy streets. They also questioned if there should be different standards for street seats along busy streets.
- Commissioners appreciated seeing support for BIPOC businesses and positive images of African Americans enjoying these spaces.
- Though commissioners have noted the success of these spaces and expressed support for businesses that rely on them, they also noted issues, particularly around maintenance, safety, and vandalism.
 - Commissioners have seen many of these sit unoccupied during the winter months, and many are dirty, tagged, and/or covered with trash. Commissioners thought it would be appropriate to disassemble these spaces during the rainy season.
 - They also noted the impacts on the streetscape—particularly those street seat installations that block views to the sidewalk and businesses behind and those that create accessibility and walkability issues.
 - Conversely, commissioners also noted that these are intended to be temporary structures and that they should not appear to be too permanent.

On public street plazas:

- For plazas that become very successful and/or for little used streets, commissioners believed that PBOT should elevate the design of these spaces, removing some of the asphalt in the street, planting trees and plants, and allowing longer-term, more-permanent installations.

For both street seats and public street plazas:

- Visibility of pedestrians, bikes, cars, and businesses were noted as important considerations for all installations.
- Where connections to historic structures are proposed, commissioners stressed that extra care is needed to ensure that historic structures not be degraded or harmed.
 - Aside from connections to buildings, some examples the Commission specified are ensuring that historic horse rings, glass blocks in sidewalks, and signs in the street not be covered or damaged.
- Commissioners thought it would be important in any situation to ensure that there are good neighbor agreements or a local improvement district in place on blocks that host street seats and plazas to ensure that it is clear who is responsible to maintain and care for these spaces.

- One commissioner said that it is important to consider sustainability in design of these spaces.

Files related to this Briefing can be found here:

<https://efiles.portlandoregon.gov/Record/15695074/>.

Please contact me with any questions.