



## **AIA New York Statement of Support for Open Restaurants**

The American Institute of Architects New York is expressing its strong support for the Open Restaurants program. The program, which allows for expanded outdoor dining, must be made permanent. Restaurants are a key part of the culture, street life, and economy of our city. As such, the City should ensure that our restaurants remain economically viable business by allowing them to continue serving customers on sidewalks and streets.

Design is an integral part of dining, and therefore must be strongly considered by the city in the process of making the Open Restaurants program permanent. We are glad that the zoning text amendment will open more parts of the city to outdoor dining. This will create more vibrant neighborhoods with greater street life, while allowing the sidewalk café and roadway café programs to operate as a single entity, easing compliance for restaurateurs and designers.

Furthermore, the program's parameters, which will be determined later by agency rulemaking, must incorporate key aspects of good design based off design guidelines for outdoor dining. Design guidelines will not only assist agencies in crafting rules but will also provide insight for restaurateurs. These design guidelines must be written by those with expertise; they should be authored by architects who design outdoor dining spaces for restaurants and architects who work in agencies overseeing compliance with the program.

The city must also recognize the importance of a well-functioning compliance scheme for the program. Sufficiently high fees should be instituted to ensure that the program has the requisite staff to oversee it. Architects should also have to sign off on applications for more long-lasting structures to ensure rules are followed. Without proper oversight, some restaurants may abuse their privileges to use public space and create safety hazards.

Open Restaurants has been a very successful program throughout the pandemic, keeping countless restaurants in business and their staff employed. However, there are inherent risks to providing private businesses with public space. These potential challenges can be avoided by following principles of good design in the rulemaking process.

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