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Item 2



# Indoors, or out? In Monterey, outdoor dining on the rise

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By Phillip Molnar

[pmolnar@montereyherald.com](mailto:pmolnar@montereyherald.com) @PhillipMolnar on Twitter

**MONTEREY &&** Outdoor seating is no longer just for snooty European cities.

The city of Monterey this month approved two more applications for outdoor seating, and two more are in the pipeline. Those projects will join several sidewalk seating areas already in place, putting more life on the street and, hopefully, causing visitors to pause and think about dining at those establishments.

"We're excited about all of them," said Rick Johnson of the Old Monterey Business Association. "In many ways, it is changing the mood of downtown."

Montrio Bistro on Calle Principal and the not-yet-opened Lalla Fish on Cannery Row got the council's approval. Applications for Wine from the Heart on the Alvarado Mall and Gianni's in New Monterey have also put in requests. Cibo Ristorante at Alvarado Street and Del Monte Avenue also plans to add outdoor seating.

They will join recent outdoor additions like MYO Frozen Yogurt at the south end of Alvarado Street, Caffe Trieste and Alvarado Street Brewery and Grill. Other downtown establishments had some sort of outdoor seating before it was in vogue, including The Crown and Anchor, Mucky Duck, Pino's Italian Cafe and Koko's Cafe.

Monterey senior planner Christine Hopper said Trieste sought outdoor seats in November 2013, based on the vision of architect Henry Ruhnke of Wald Ruhnke & Dost Architects, and seemed to kick off something of a trend.

"They were the first ones," she said.

She said when restaurants use parking spaces to create seating areas or "parklets," such as Trieste, it requires an architectural review and an encroachment permit. They can cost property owners from \$50,000 to \$70,000, she said.

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Pacific Grove City Council also approved its own Parklet Pilot Program, where the city will pay \$15,000 for each approved project if traffic-related issues arise. Happy Girl Kitchen, Cafe Ariana and Big Night Bistro have added outdoor seats.

There is at least some mild resistance to the growth of outdoor seating. The Monterey Peninsula Water Management District plans to send out a letter Friday to remind seating-approved restaurants that more seats do not mean more water.

An official there said the district wants to remind restaurants that the state is in a drought. Restaurants' water allocation, and permits, are based on the number of seats, and the district is concerned that seating is being treated in an unregulated fashion.

Hopper sees things differently.

"Currently, it doesn't require additional water to have outdoor seating," she said. "If it is a nice day, most people are going to sit outside. If it is poor day, they are not going to sit outside."

Moe Ammar, president of the Pacific Grove Chamber of Commerce, said restaurants are a vital part of the city and already have a tough time with low profit margins.

"Restaurants need every piece of support we can give 'em," he said. "As far as I'm concerned, the water district should just stay out of it."

Hooper said there is no set Monterey ordinance limiting outdoor seating but the city may slow down after its recent seven permits.

"I know that the City Council doesn't want to lose all parking on Alvarado Street, so this may be it for a while to see how it goes," she said.

*Phillip Molnar can be reached at 831-726-4361.*