

SIDEWALK CAFÉS

The adopted Del Mar Community Plan, the Del Mar Streetscape Plan, the recent Kennedy Smith Report, and virtually every study done in Del Mar over the past 43 years that I have lived in Del Mar – all recommended and encouraged sidewalk cafés as a means to enhance the pedestrian orientation, the character, and vitality of our village.

Sidewalk cafés provide an ideal environment for social interaction and casual dining. They are a special place to enjoy a glass of wine with friends or simply to relax in the open air and watch as clouds change colors with the sunset. We often remembered the delightful vitality and social interactions in the small villages of Europe with their multiple sidewalk cafés.

We also know how much residents and visitors have enjoyed the sidewalk café and outside dining at Americana Restaurant in Stratford Square. With this in mind, and in keeping with the Del Mar Community Plan and other plan recommendations, it was decided to further enhance Americana's sidewalk café on 15th Street and add a sidewalk café to Jimmy O's. As it existed, Americana's 15th Street outside dining was not up to code, very crowded, and uncomfortable. It was also unattractive due to the picket type fence railing and mass of newspaper racks. To enhance the physical appearance, the brick design on the Camino del Mar side of Americana was carried over to the 15th Street side.

To improve the comfort of the outside dining and bring it up to code and ADA standards, the area was expanded by two feet and provided with glass panels to protect guests from the cool ocean breeze which often occurs on the 15th Street side. The same design was utilized for Jimmy O's sidewalk café. Additionally, Jimmy O's entire front will have all window doors opening onto the sidewalk café and will then be open for both lunch and dinner.

Some people have questioned the need for the structural enclosures instead of simply putting tables on the sidewalk. The answer is twofold. One, the sidewalk on 15th Street is sloped as much as 8 feet. Obviously, for comfort and stability the chairs and tables have to be on a flat surface, thus the need for the patio construction. Second, the ABC (Alcohol Beverage Control) requires the patio be enclosed so that no one can pass a glass of wine to someone on the pedestrian pathway. However, to maintain a very open appearance, the enclosures are glass panels and landscape plantings.

Others often have fears of anything new, just as with the L'Auberge hotel which I built 20 years ago. The L'Auberge is now enjoyed by both residents and visitors alike and is a major contributor to both the social life and the economic stability of Del Mar.

The areas will be landscaped and the current unattractive bush-like trees will be replaced with lovely jacaranda canopy trees so as not to obstruct the wonderful ocean views that all guests can enjoy while dining or enjoying a glass of wine with friends.

Upon completion, this sidewalk café will offer a delightful casual dining option for all residents and visitors alike to enjoy.

James M. Watkins

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