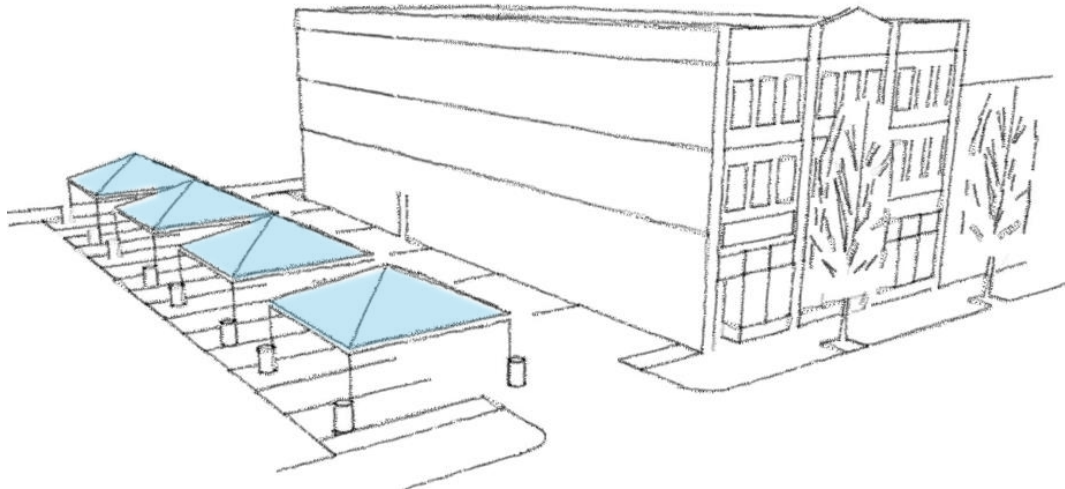


Cautiously Reopening: Guidance on Tents for Dining

The Department of Buildings is committed to enhancing safety and quality of life for residents and visitors of the City of Chicago through permitting, inspections, trade licensing, and enforcement of the Chicago Construction Codes. For businesses seeking to use tents for outdoor dining this fall and winter, the Department offers the following guidance:

Tents covering up to 400 square feet

A building permit is **not required** to install a tent covering up to 400 square feet and up to 15 feet tall. Even when a permit is not required, tents must meet code requirements, such as using fire-retardant fabric and being anchored or weighted to resist wind. Multiple tents are considered together if they are within 12 feet of each other.



A building permit is not required for the tents shown here because each 20' x 20' tent (400 square feet) is no taller than 15 feet and is separated from other tents by at least 12 feet. The tents are weighted to resist wind forces.

Tents covering 401 to 600 square feet

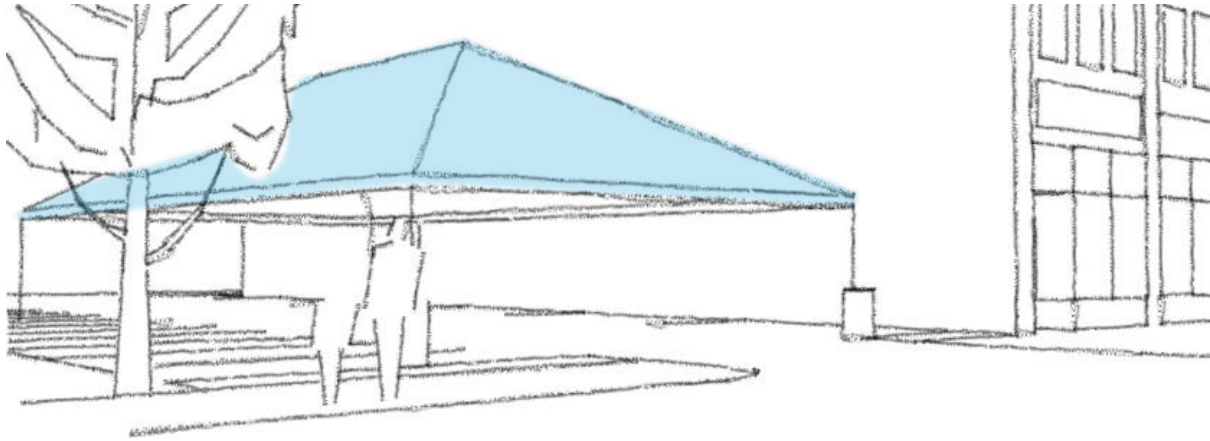
The easy permit process may be used for a tent covering between 401 and 600 square feet. An easy permit is usually issued within a few days. The easy permit application must include basic drawings showing the location of the tent relative to buildings and lot lines, the dimensions of the tent (length, width, height), exit locations, and anchorage. These drawings may be prepared by any responsible person; an architect or engineer is **not required**. If the tent will be installed on a public sidewalk or street, a copy of the permit to use the sidewalk (sidewalk cafe permit) must be included with the easy permit application.



An easy permit is required for this group of five 10' x 10' tents (500 square feet) installed for a sidewalk cafe. A copy of the sidewalk cafe permit must be attached to the easy permit application.

Tents covering more than 600 square feet or more than 15 feet high

A standard building permit is required for a tent that covers more than 600 square feet or is more than 15 feet high. (The area of tents that are within 12 feet of each other are added together). A standard building permit application **requires drawings prepared by a licensed architect or engineer**. The application review process for this type of permit may take several weeks. The application processing time may be reduced if you work with an architect who has experience permitting tents and is enrolled in the Department of Buildings self-certification program.



This large tent requires a standard building permit based on plans prepared by a licensed architect or engineer.

Tent installers

When a permit is required, tent installers must be licensed by the City of Chicago as General Contractors (any class). This ensures the installer has adequate insurance and that they will install the tent in accordance with code requirements.

Electrical work

A licensed electrical contractor must obtain a separate electrical permit for any electrical work (electric heat, lighting, or other electrical wiring) in connection with a tent, whether the tent requires a permit or not. This can be obtained online. Electrical wiring must comply with the temporary wiring provisions (Article 590) of the Chicago Electrical Code.



Electrical lighting or other wiring requires an electrical permit and must be installed by a licensed electrical contractor.

Heating and cooking devices

To protect against fire, tents used for dining cannot also be used for cooking. Propane (LP gas) can not be used inside of or within 10 feet of any tent or temporary structure. Natural gas heat cannot be used inside a tent. Electrical heating devices are allowed inside tents, but required clearances must be maintained from combustible materials. Any heating equipment should be disconnected and stored overnight and when not in use.

Duration

Normally, temporary structure permits are valid for up to 60 days. ***In order to assist with economic recovery, all temporary structure permits issued or renewed between June 1, 2020 and June 1, 2021 will be valid for 180 days.***

Operational guidelines

For the latest industry guidelines for phased reopening, please visit chicago.gov/reopening.