

A Guide for Great #YEGWinterPatios

Winter Patios

Winter patios are not summer patios that are open in winter! They are an inviting, cozy way to enjoy our cooler months and the earlier darkness. Successful winter patios are equipped for the snow and cooler temperatures with appropriate furniture, heaters and accessories. Menus should offer warm, hearty options to keep your patrons cozy from the inside out.

Use the following tips to encourage your patrons to spend more time on your patio and ensure they have a winter experience they will remember with warm hearts!



This sidewalk patio offers moveable chairs around a fire table as well as picnic tables under the awning, which hides overhead electric heaters. The flexible design of the patio space and furniture allows the venue to adjust its patio seasonally. The fire tables and chairs are removed and replaced by picnic tables for the summer patio season.

The Next Act

Photo credit: City of Edmonton and SnowSeekers

Your Patio & City Requirements

This guide provides winter-specific tips and ideas for year-round patios. Patios must follow all City of Edmonton guidelines and may require permits.

Some patio installations (e.g. heaters, perimeter barriers, overhead structures/shelters) will require approval from Development Services and may require a development permit, safety code review, building/gas/electrical permits, and/or an encroachment agreement.

Patios within public spaces such as roads and/or sidewalks will require a patio licence of occupation and must comply with the City's patio guidelines.

Audio-visual equipment must be operated in compliance with [Community Standards Bylaw 14600](#) and must not interfere with traffic operations.

City Resources to Help You

Patios on Private Property

City web page: [Permits, Development and Construction](#)

City guide: [Fire Pits](#)

Information on planning a patio on private property:

[Development Services](#)

Patios on Public Space

City web page: [Patios on Public Space](#)

City guide: [Patio Program Guide](#)

Information on planning on a sidewalk and/or roadway:

[Vibrant Streets - Parks and Road Services](#)

Design Tips

Sunshine

Staying warm in winter is key. Sunshine is a winter patio's best friend.

- Design your winter patio to get as much direct sun as possible. In Edmonton, the best winter patios are located on the sunny south or west sides of buildings.
- If your patio is mostly shaded, explore opportunities to reflect sunshine onto the space. Building walls and large landscaping elements on your own property (or your neighbour's!) can reflect heat from the sun and/or offer protection from a cold wind.
- Use lightweight furniture that patrons can move into the sun or out of the wind.
- Patios that wrap around more than one side of a building offer a choice for patrons to follow the sun and adjust to weather conditions.

Shelter

Shelter from the elements, especially wind, will make your patio more comfortable.

- Awnings can be an attractive part of your storefront and protect patrons from snow, rain, and windy downdrafts. Ensure the awning is built for all seasons, including winter, and has a CAN/ULC S109 rating.
- Edmonton's winter winds come predominantly from the northwest and west. South-facing patios are usually protected from the wind by the building. In other locations, windscreens and evergreens can help reduce wind to keep your patrons more comfortable.
- Try to provide protection from the wind while still allowing passersby to see into your patio. A visible, open patio acts as an invitation to potential patrons.
- PVC shelters offer a fully protected patio experience. They can be heated and lit for nighttime use to provide a more intimate, hybrid indoor-outdoor experience. These structures require a development permit and are not suitable for all locations.
- Creative coverings that can be retracted or moved depending on the weather might be appropriate depending on your patio's design. These include retractable shade sails, wind barriers, patio coverings and large/modular umbrellas. These features enable patios to adapt to inclement weather changes.



Located on public right-of-way in parking spots outside the brewery, this patio welcomes customers with propane-fueled fire tables, heated chairs and bright blankets. The lightweight furniture allows patrons to arrange seating in comfortable spots. The patio has removable wind screens and is south-facing, so takes advantage of the afternoon sun. String lights brighten evening events.

Omen Brewing

Photo credit: Isla Tanaka



The dome shelter offers protection from the elements while also providing an outdoor experience. The blankets and chair cushions add warmth and colour. The domes are lit with LED RGB lights for nighttime dining.

Café Bloom at the Muttart

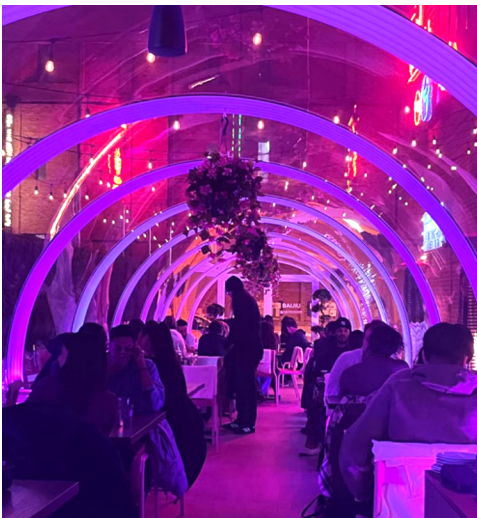
Photo credit: Isla Tanaka



This patio on private property is large enough for a fire pit. Soft seating and blankets add comfort and warmth. The firewood, wooden beams and landscaping provide natural elements to the space. The evening is illuminated with warm string lights. Smaller coloured lights, the building's siding and the stair railing provide touches of colour. The venue also sets aside an area to collect snow over the winter to make a snow slide for a winter festival.

Café Bicyclette

Photo credit: City of Edmonton and SnowSeekers



This enclosed rooftop patio offers a hybrid indoor-outdoor patio experience. The string lights add to the ambiance and the LED RGB lights offer options for changing the colour for different events.

Baijiu

Photo credit: Baijiu

Snow Storage and Removal

Snow can be beautiful on your patio but you need to plan for it.

- Clearing snow off paths, your patio and patio furniture can be labour-intensive. Allocate staff time for it.
- If your patio furniture is protected from the snow, you can open it quickly on nice winter days.
- Plan for snow removal and storage. Where will the snow go? Can you incorporate snow piles as a decorative element on your patio? Keep in mind that if you do leave some snow, it can start to melt on warmer days, then refreeze as a layer of ice.
- If you have a child-friendly patio, pile clean snow for children to play with. Have buckets, shovels and snow moulds nearby.

Light and Music

Light and music make your patio a bright point in the winter darkness.

- Creative lighting adds beauty and ambiance to your patio. Use string lights on umbrellas, planters and trees (check with the City first if they are City-owned trees). Candles, lanterns and pendant lamps create a cozy atmosphere.
- Coloured lights can help boost your brand. If you use white lights, choose warm yellow tones instead of cool blue ones. Changeable LED RGB lights are energy efficient, long lasting, and provide colour options.
- Snow reflects light very well, so take care not to over-light snowy spaces, especially in mixed-use and residential areas. Angle the lights down and avoid letting them shine at neighbouring windows.
- Laser light projectors look cool and are easy to put up, but watch where you point them. Keep them angled away from neighbouring windows and the skies (they can blind pilots flying overhead).
- Music lets people know that your patio is open and lively. Keep volumes below bylaw limits to keep your neighbours happy.



Amenities and Aesthetics

Amenities are what make your winter patio uniquely yours. Use your brand and location to choose the right kind of amenities and colours for your venue.

- Some materials are more comfortable than others in cold temperatures, such as wooden benches or straw bales instead of bare metal chairs. If metal furniture must be used, blankets and seat cushions can help keep your customers comfortable.
- Have blankets and seat cushions on chairs or in baskets so they are easy for customers to find and use. Offer seating that can be moved into the sun, under an awning or closer to a heat source.
- Vibrant colours make a space seem warmer. Blankets and cushions are a cost-effective way to add touches of colour.
- Spruce up your patio with evergreens and wooden accents. Research suggests that patrons will sit longer on a patio that has natural features.
- Wait staff can still follow your dress code while staying warm. Toques or scarves of similar colour or style will unify their look, especially if you already have a uniform. Leather or fingerless gloves will allow your staff to serve while staying warm and keeping a firm grip on glasses and trays. A medium-weight sweater or a vest will help them stay warm outside but not overheat inside.

Heating Elements

Heating adds to the comfort and ambiance of your patio, but there are ongoing fuel costs. Please note that rules differ depending on whether your patio is on private property or on street right-of-way.

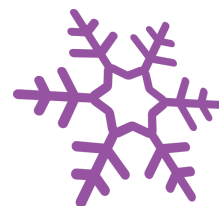
General Tips

- Consider patio design, initial and ongoing costs, safety and labour when choosing a heat source.
- Choose a ULC/CSA-certified heater and ensure any heater used inside an enclosed shelter is rated for indoor use and has adequate ventilation.
- Look for heaters that are lower to the ground to keep patrons warm, such as fire tables and fire bowls. Tall patio heaters are not as effective because heat rises.
- Lit fire pits, fire tables and heaters create an inviting atmosphere. To save on fuel and reduce air pollution, light them during peak hours and/or when patrons arrive.
- Electric and infrared heaters are best suited for enclosed structures. They do not produce carbon monoxide or particulate matter pollution, which can cause breathing



Located in the backyard of a heritage house, this patio is on private property. The yard is large enough for a shelter with picnic tables and heaters as well as an outdoor space with fire pits and chairs. The bright red chairs are colourful and lightweight so that patrons can move them easily. The landscaping provides natural visual elements. String lights offer warm lighting in the evening.

Little Brick Café and General Store
Photo credit: Little Brick Café



problems for some people. Electric and infrared heaters can also be operated with a timer and used in short bursts rather than for long periods.

- Overhead electric heaters are space-efficient and are easily turned on and off, but they can be more costly to install. They are also not as effective at keeping patrons warm as heaters that are lower to the ground. (Remember, heat rises!)
- Keep heaters an appropriate distance from any combustible items.
- Propane tanks must be locked in secure outdoor locations when not in use.
- Heated chairs, benches, blankets and seat cushions are other ways to keep customers warm.

Patios on Private Property

- Wood-burning stoves and fire pits are an alluring, classic heat source. Keep in mind that smoke can bother neighbours and firewood costs can add up.
- Have a locked, outdoor storage space for your fuel, whether propane tanks or firewood.
- Ensure your fire pit adheres to Community Standards Bylaw 14600.
- Having an appropriate-sized fire extinguisher available is recommended.

Patios on Public Space

- ULC/CSA-certified electric or propane patio heaters (with a max 20 lb tank) are permitted 3 m (10 ft) away from City tree branches. They must be operated per the manufacturer's directions.
- Heaters and propane tanks must be stored off the road right-of-way.
- Solid, gel or liquid fuel fire features are not permitted.

Food and Drink

Hot food and drinks will keep your patrons warm and encourage them to stay longer.

- Offer winter-friendly foods that will stay warm, like chili, stew, curry, soup, fondue, casseroles and hot desserts.
- Be creative with hot drinks. Some ideas include flavoured teas and coffees, hot ciders and mulled drinks, and a family-friendly hot chocolate station. Drink specials could include hot toddies, mulled wine, hot beer (yes, beer!) and other drinks complemented with liquor or liqueur.
- Preheat the dishes before serving to help the food stay warm longer.



The colourful mural brightens this patio year-round. The wooden picnic tables offer a relatively warm seating surface and a natural element. A hamburger is easy to eat outside and will stay warm while being eaten.

Edmonton Ski Club

Photo credit: City of Edmonton and SnowSeekers



Hot chocolate and hot mulled drinks are winter patio favourites. Appetizers like hot dips in a loaf stay warm and complement cold finger foods.

Tiramisu Bistro

Photo credit: City of Edmonton and SnowSeekers

