



City of Austin

Chris Riley, Council Member, Place 1

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Austin's First 'Street Patio' Installed

Austin, TX – In March 2012 the Austin City Council approved a pilot 'street patio' to be installed in front of Royal Blue Grocery at 609 Congress Avenue. 'Street patios' are an exciting urban design tool where street parking spaces are converted into café seating space. These kinds of spaces are popping up in many cities across the country as a way to activate a streetscape and make it a destination for people, instead of just a place to park cars. Council Member Chris Riley said, "We're thrilled that Royal Blue has successfully built and installed Austin's first 'street patio,' and we look forward to watching its performance and effect on Congress Avenue." The city plans to watch this pilot for approximately one year to inform a permanent program. A permanent program would allow more businesses to create their own street patios in other qualified parking spaces around town.

Parking is an important part of a vibrant central business district, as are interesting destinations that bring people downtown to eat, shop, and be entertained. Many parking spaces downtown sit empty every day; the problem most drivers encounter is finding those unoccupied spaces. Through revenue from parking meters the city is installing a comprehensive wayfinding system throughout the downtown over the next couple of years.

The two parking spaces at 609 Congress are estimated to have housed about five cars per day total. If this 'street patio' performs as successfully as the ones in other cities have, that space will be opened up to hundreds of people to use each day. Active, interesting streets are safer for all road users and are good for all of the businesses along them. For this reason, the Downtown Austin Alliance (DAA) identified improving the 'Pedestrian Experience' as one of the six most important steps to achieving the vision of Congress Avenue as a place for "walking, strolling, sitting, people watching, seeing, and being seen" in their 2010 Strategic Report, *Envisioning the Avenue*. George Scariano, co-owner of Royal Blue said, "We are happy to have worked with the DAA on this exciting new project. The public response to the patio has been phenomenal, from regular clientele to this past weekend's visitors. "We are thrilled to have the



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support and creativity of the Downtown Austin Alliance, local Urban Landscape Architecture firm dwg. and Civil Engineer Big Red Dog on this exciting new project.”

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