



Al Fresco on Front – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

General Questions

What is Al Fresco on Front?

Al Fresco on Front is a month-long transformation of Front Street into a pedestrian-first destination. Every weekend in August, the street becomes an open-air gathering place where people can shop, dine, stroll, and enjoy live entertainment, experience public art, and connect with their community in a safe, welcoming environment.

This partnership between the Downtown Issaquah Association (DIA) and the City of Issaquah is designed to create a more vibrant, walkable downtown experience while supporting local businesses. Front Street will become a pedestrian-friendly destination when vehicle traffic is rerouted from 8 a.m. Saturday through 10 p.m. Sunday each weekend in August. Programming hours vary.

Why is the City closing Front Street?

The community has asked for solutions that allow people—not cars—to become the focus of downtown. At the same time, cities around the world have found that pedestrian-friendly streets encourage people to spend more time exploring local businesses, dining outdoors, participating in community activities, and enjoying public spaces.

The goal is to see how a more walkable, playful Front Street benefits residents, visitors, and businesses, and see how long-term solutions may apply to downtown Issaquah.

Is this permanent?

No. Al Fresco on Front is a program operating only on weekends during August 2026. Community feedback and data collected throughout the month will help evaluate the program's success and future activations.

What makes this different from a typical street fair?

Unlike a one-day festival, Al Fresco on Front creates an immersive downtown experience every weekend. Visitors can, depending on the moment:

- Enjoy expanded outdoor dining
- Shop from local retailers
- Listen to live music
- Watch street performances
- Participate in family activities
- Relax in public gathering spaces
- Experience spontaneous entertainment throughout the day

Each weekend offers something a little different, encouraging repeat visits.

Is there an admission fee?

No. Al Fresco on Front is free to everyone.

What can visitors expect?

Guests can expect:

- A car-free Front Street
- Outdoor café seating
- Street performers
- Live music
- Interactive art
- Family-friendly games
- Local shopping
- Community gathering spaces
- Seasonal programming
- Plenty of opportunities to simply sit, relax, and enjoy downtown
- A schedule of events will be available on DIA's website
www.downtownissaquah.com

Will every weekend be the same?

No. While businesses and outdoor dining will be available each weekend, programming will vary. Different musicians, performers, artists, community groups, and activities will rotate throughout the month. Special events—including the August 8 ArtWalk & Music Stroll and storytelling performances—will be incorporated into the experience.

Is this family-friendly?

Absolutely. It's designed for all ages with activities that encourage families to spend time together outdoors.

Can I bring my dog?

Yes. Leashed dogs are welcome, and many downtown businesses already provide water bowls and pet-friendly spaces. Pickles Playland has its own activities planned for dogs, as well!

Can I ride my bicycle?

Bicycles are welcome. Riders should travel slowly and respectfully through crowded pedestrian areas.

What about my e-bike?

Same as bicycles; e-bikes are welcome when they follow safety rules. Motorcycles will not be allowed. Under Washington law, electric bicycles capable of producing more than 750 watts of power or traveling faster than 28 mph while powered by a motor are not classified as e-bikes and may instead be regulated as motor-driven cycles or motorcycles.

Will businesses still be open?

Yes. All downtown businesses remain open during Al Fresco on Front with their regular hours. The program is designed to make visiting businesses easier—not harder.

Can people with disabilities still access downtown?

Yes. Accessibility is a priority throughout Al Fresco on Front. Accessible parking and ADA access to businesses will remain available, and a designated passenger drop-off loop south of Dogwood will provide convenient access to the pedestrian zone.

Where should I park?

Ample parking will be available during the Front Street closure, thanks in part to [La-Z-Boy Home Furnishings and Decor](#) in Issaquah. Park in their lot, stop by the showroom to have your parking validated, and then enjoy a car-free Front Street. While you're at La-Z-Boy, browse their selection of recliners, sofas, mattresses, and stylish home décor.

Public parking also remains available throughout downtown, including nearby public lots and private lots and surrounding streets. The parking area behind Front Street businesses and near City Hall also will all be open. Visitors should plan for a short walk into the pedestrian zone.

What happens if it rains?

Al Fresco on Front will continue whenever conditions are safe. Programming may be adjusted. Many activities can move under tents or inside participating businesses.

Will emergency vehicles still have access?

Yes. Emergency access has been incorporated into the operational plan, and emergency responders will be able to reach any location if needed.

Is there a First Aid Station and Lost & Found?

Yes. For medical emergencies call 911. The Historic Shell Station at 232 Front Street N is the First Aid Station and Lost & Found. The Lost & Found may be reached at 425.391.1112

Business Questions**Why should businesses participate?**

Al Fresco on Front creates opportunities for businesses to engage customers beyond their storefront. Research consistently shows that people who walk tend to:

- Stay longer
- Visit more businesses
- Spend more money over time
- Return more frequently

How does this help local businesses?

The program encourages visitors to:

- Eat at local restaurants
- Browse local retailers
- Discover businesses they may have overlooked
- Spend an entire afternoon or evening downtown instead of making a quick stop

More foot traffic creates more opportunities for sales and customer relationships.

Can businesses expand outdoors?

Yes. Participating businesses may use approved public space for outdoor dining, merchandise displays, demonstrations, or customer experiences, subject to City guidelines.

What time will Front Street be closed?

Front Street will close: **Saturday:** 8:00 AM through **Sunday:** 10:00 PM every weekend in August.

I have a home-based business. Can I sell my wares during Al Fresco?

Home-based businesses are welcome to apply, but participation is not automatic. All vendors must be reviewed and approved by the Downtown Issaquah Association (DIA) to ensure they meet applicable permitting and licensing requirements, follow safe and professional pop-up business practices, and are a good fit for the event experience.

Why is Issaquah doing this?

Communities across North America are rethinking how downtown streets function. Rather than serving only as corridors for vehicles, many cities are discovering that temporary pedestrian spaces help:

- Strengthen local businesses
- Increase community gathering
- Improve public health
- Support arts and culture
- Build a stronger sense of place

Al Fresco on Front allows Issaquah to explore these possibilities.

How will success be measured?

The City and DIA will evaluate:

- Visitor attendance
- Pedestrian counts
- Business participation
- Community engagement
- Social media engagement
- Visitor feedback
- Volunteer participation
- Overall activity throughout downtown

Community surveys will also help shape future activation.

What is the vision behind Al Fresco on Front?

The vision is simple:

To transform Front Street into a place where people naturally gather.

Instead of driving through downtown, visitors are invited to slow down, linger, discover local businesses, enjoy live entertainment, meet neighbors, and experience Issaquah in a new way.

Why is this important?

Great downtowns aren't defined by traffic—they're defined by people.

Al Fresco on Front creates opportunities for community connection, supports local entrepreneurship, celebrates creativity, and showcases why Historic Downtown Issaquah is one of the region's most unique destinations.

What do organizers hope people will say after visiting?

"We came for lunch and stayed all afternoon."

"We discovered shops we'd never visited before."

"The street felt alive."

"We can't wait to come back next weekend."

What is the long-term goal?

Al Fresco on Front is about learning what is possible when public space is designed around people. The program will help inform future conversations about how Front Street can continue to support economic vitality, community gathering, and a vibrant downtown experience.