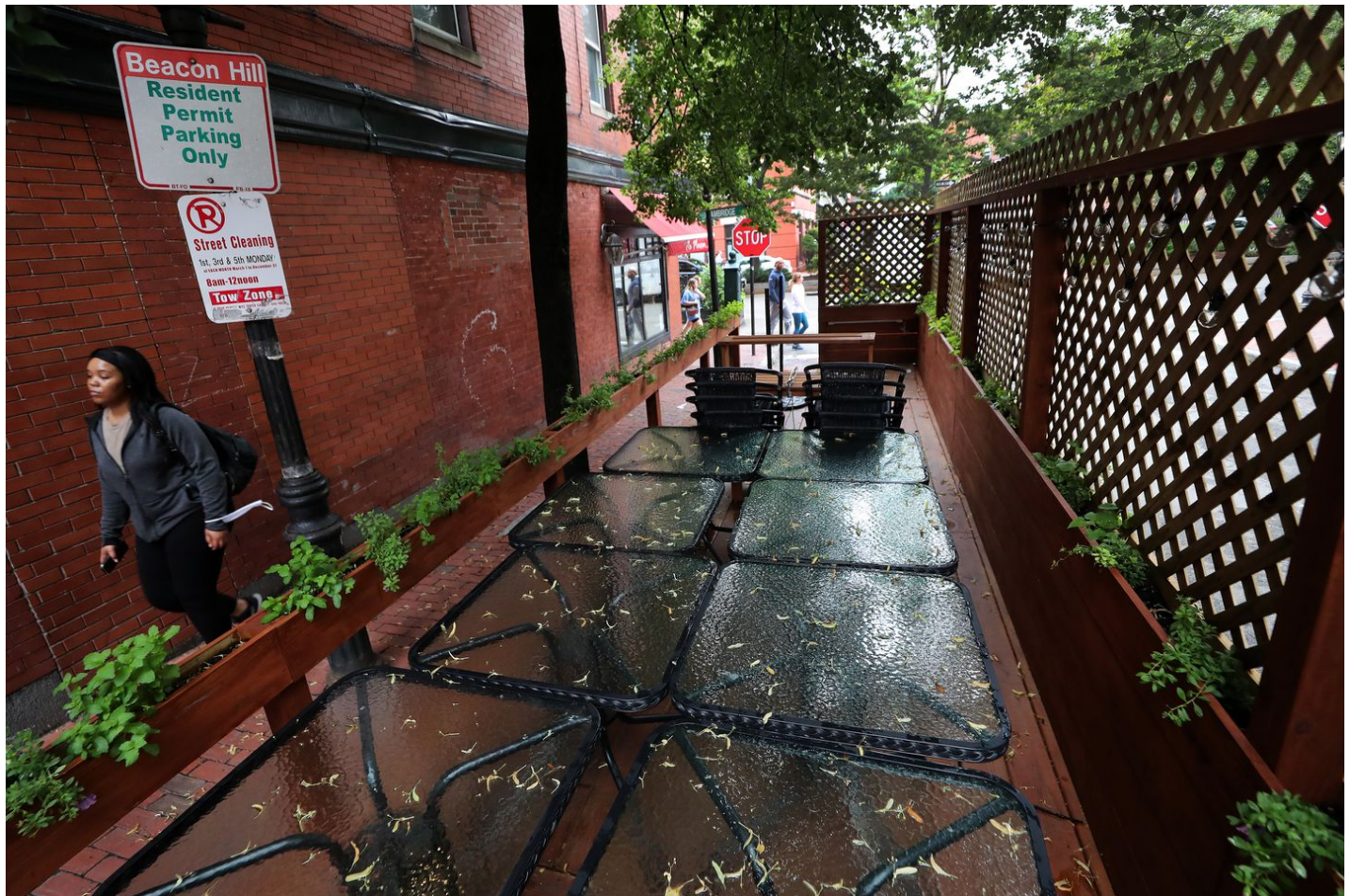


The rainy weather is washing away profits

Businesses that count on customers being outdoors are trying to work around summer's storms — just as they were starting to recover from the pandemic

By **Angela Yang** Globe Correspondent, Updated July 13, 2021, 12:30 p.m.



The weather was not conducive to dining outdoors at Beacon Hill's Ma Maison Monday evening. JIM DAVIS/GLOBE STAFF

With rainfall nearing a July record less than halfway through the month, Massachusetts businesses that rely on outdoor operations are scrambling to adapt to a weather pattern that threatens to dampen their economic forecast — just as they were starting to recover

from the pandemic.

In June, the emphasis was on keeping customers cool during a long stretch of scorching heat. This month, it has been the rain that's causing concern, even with a respite expected over the next couple of days. Business owners are keeping an eye on the meteorological charts much in the same way they tracked COVID-19 numbers last year. And many are learning to adapt on the fly.

At family-owned Ariana Restaurant in Brighton, outdoor dining became a lifeline when the pandemic put a stop to indoor seating. Like others in the food service industry, it invested in patio seating, which, of course, is vulnerable to the weather.

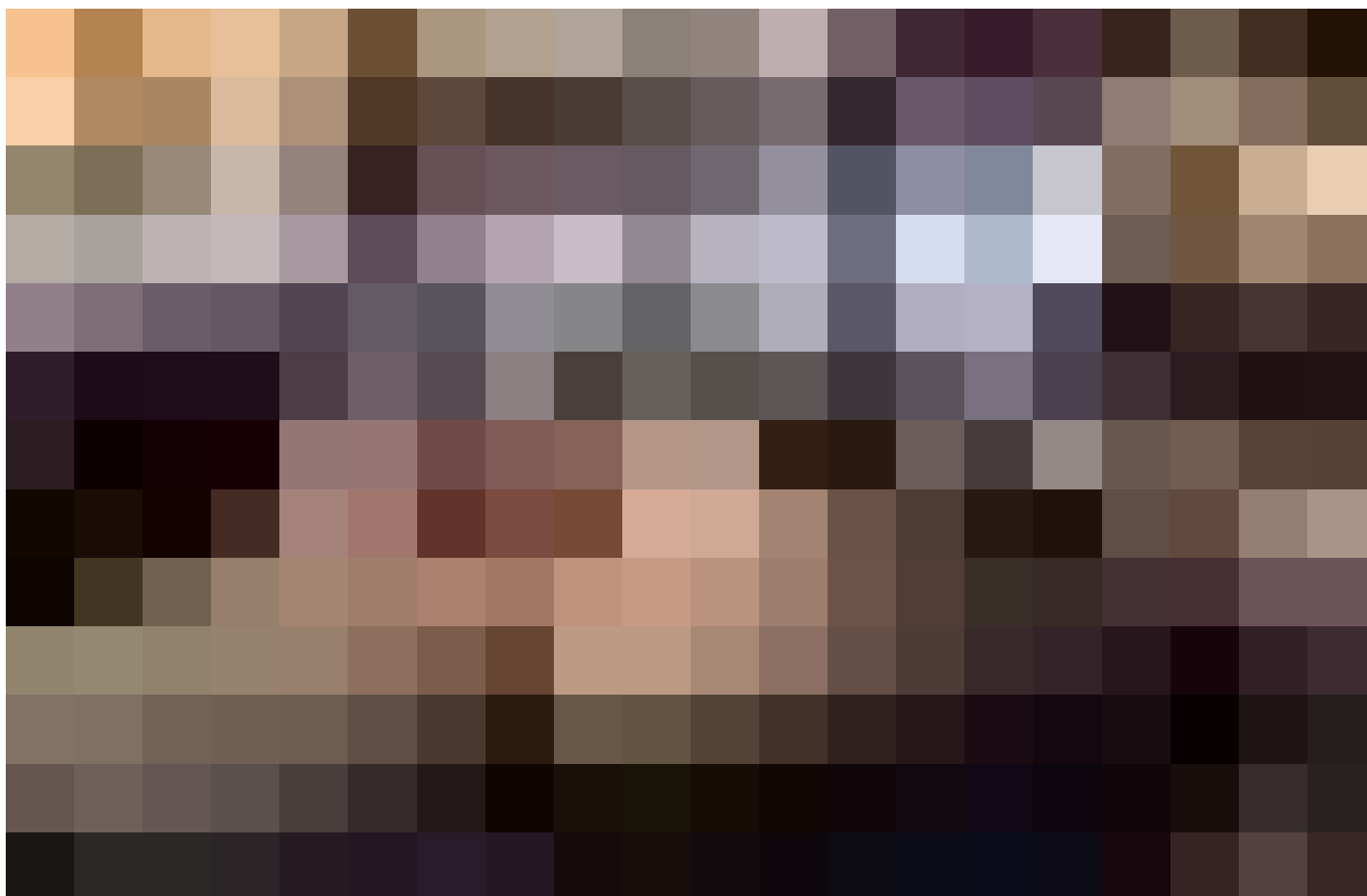
Co-owner Baheja Rostami said Ariana is looking to set up a canopy as soon as possible. "We've spent so much money on this seating," she said. "The best option for us was to kind of cover it."

Protection from the elements, however, won't solve everything. "Some people may not prefer to sit outside when it's really raining," Rostami said. "But, hopefully, we can use it a little bit."

The Beacon Hill bistro Ma Maison is confronting the challenging weather by moving patio tables indoors and returning to full capacity. Despite that, owner Sam Sosnitsky said her staff has had to turn customers away.

Outdoor dining is relatively new to Ma Maison — it was added during the pandemic — and has boosted business significantly during the warmer months, enabling the bistro to recover to pre-pandemic levels, if not higher.

"When we don't have that, we're just back to normal, which is the same as in the previous years when we did not have outdoor space," Sosnitsky said.



The scene inside on a rainy night at Ma Maison in Boston. JIM DAVIS/GLOBE STAFF

Mark Hourihan, co-owner of Paradise Family Golf in Middleton, doesn't have the option of moving everything indoors. On rainy days, revenue from Paradise's miniature golf course and ice cream stand are virtually "nonexistent," he said.

"Because the rain has kind of let up now, my crew is trying to clean it off and get it ready so that hopefully we'll get some traffic," Hourihan said Monday morning.

On days when the weather turns mild — as evidenced by this past weekend — customers still flock to the course.

But Paradise is not completely unprepared for inclement weather. With golf mats and simulators indoors or underneath canopies, customers can still participate in activities while staying dry.

“The things that we’ve put in place, that’s not an accident,” Hourihan said. “We try and protect ourselves from the bad weather days.”

Up and down the Massachusetts coast, whale-watch companies have also been affected by the weather during their prime season.

Newburyport Whale Watch canceled several trips due to rough seas caused by Tropical Storm Elsa.

And while whale-watching trips can go on as scheduled in the rain as long as the sea is relatively calm, it’s not most people’s idea of a fun time. The family-owned company rescheduled about 70 percent of reservations originally booked for Monday, according to Chris Charos, who helps manage the business.

“With the type of rain that we’ve had recently, it’s more than just a mist or a drizzle,” Charos said. “I can’t really say that I remember any rain like this, aside from a Mother’s Day event in 2007.”

Bob Avila, co-owner of Captain John Boats in Plymouth, said the recent deluges have been the “worst weather [he’s] seen in years.” And it’s costing him money. For example, a canceled trip Monday morning that would have carried 300 people — with tickets ranging from \$45 to \$65 apiece — meant a revenue loss of more than \$10,000.

The pain is felt directly by Captain John Boats’ 60-plus employees, only some of whom are salaried.

“We have a lot of high school students and we have a lot of college students that depend on their hourly rate,” Avila said. “And when we have to cancel, some people don’t get paid.”

Avila estimates his company has had to rebook 35 to 40 percent of reservations, while 30 percent have been canceled.

“The whole tourism industry is dependent on the weather. That’s it,” Avila said. “Say the

phone rings once a minute, which it normally does on a given day, and then all of a sudden, it slows down to almost nothing.”

Angela Yang can be reached at angela.yang@globe.com.

[Show comments](#)

©2021 Boston Globe Media Partners, LLC