

Planning guide
**resilient
retail**

Rethinking commercial
design for a
post-pandemic world

Montréal 



Background to the process

As Montréal was emerging from the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Bureau du design, part of the city's Service du développement économique, launched "COVIDesign," an applied, multidisciplinary research project. In the wake of the emergency measures adopted to assist retailers, which included production of a COVID adaptation guide for small businesses, co-ordination of the project was entrusted to Architecture Without Borders Québec, based on its experience assisting some 160 commercial establishments in adapting to health measures at the height of the pandemic.

A call for professionals was issued to form a working group and advisory panel comprising more than 20 hand-picked experts. This group of design and architecture researchers and professionals, marketing, retail business and sociology specialists, and ergonomics and universal design consultants examined planning and service design for retail stores, restaurants and groceries. The goal was to enhance resilience and mitigate the economic, social and environmental impacts of the pandemic.

Reference documents were compiled to inform the panel members' considerations and a survey of international practices was conducted. Business owners were consulted and specialists in a variety of industry segments were invited to share their thoughts on the challenges of doing retail business in a post-pandemic context.

That entire process resulted in the writing of this guide, a one-of-a-kind reference document produced by and for Montréal, UNESCO City of Design. It is based on the principles of the [*Montréal 2030 Agenda for Quality and Exemplarity in Design and Architecture*](#), a policy grounded in creativity, innovation and sustainability in design and architecture, in which successful design is defined above all as a process, a sustainable investment and the outcome of collaborative work between a good designer and an informed client.

Using this guide

Who is this guide for?

This guide is aimed primarily at retail business owners who want to design or refit their premises for the long term, applying sustainable solutions and quality spatial planning principles that go beyond the temporary adaptations carried out early in the pandemic. It is also useful for design and architecture professionals, as well as business and professional associations, who play frontline advisory roles.

Why is it useful?

In a pandemic or post-pandemic context, this guide helps identify the functional, safety, esthetic and digital improvements that contribute to projecting a consistent, positive image of a retail business while making it more attractive and engaging for both the people who shop there and those who work there.

The guide is thus a ready reference that complements the work of the professionals who may be hired to advise business owners on relaunching. It contains suggested ways forward for every step of the customer journey as well as staff movements, from buying and selling to eating, drinking and serving onsite or with the help of digital tools. At the end of the guide, you will find a handy checklist of items to ensure you don't forget anything.

When should it be used?

There are many factors that can influence the decision to redesign your business, its services or even its business model, and to win back customers in a pandemic context. As such, careful thinking is needed when the situation or the rules change and the needs of the business and its customers evolve.

These are precisely the circumstances in which it is strategic and worthwhile to use this guide and hire the services of design professionals to properly envision and craft the changes to be made and the business strategies to be implemented.

To prepare for the work to be done and obtain a permit, contact your borough as soon as possible. Inquire about the many assistance programs available from the city and other levels of government in collaboration with your service centre at PME MTL, the Ville de Montréal's support network for entrepreneurs.



BENEFITS FOR YOUR RETAIL BUSINESS

Have a specific goal in mind?
Read through the ones listed here and
jump straight to the section of the
guide that interests you most.



If you want to...

Sell more and promote your business online

→ **Digital presence**

Attract passersby to your business

→ **On the way in**

Reduce the inconvenience of waiting in line

→ **Waiting area**

Welcome customers in a warm and friendly manner

→ **Entrance and welcome**

Improve the layout of your retail space

→ **Shopping inside**

Make it easier for people to pay

→ **Payment**

Encourage repeat business

→ **On the way out**

Shrink your carbon footprint

Look for this icon



Improve staff wellness

Look for this icon



Adapt your business model

Look for this icon



Trends in society

This guide is based on data from a number of studies that have identified societal trends either brought to light or accentuated by the COVID-19 crisis. These trends are indicators of practices likely to influence the planning and design of retail businesses and their operations, as well as their customer relations.



Enthusiasm for buying local

Since the onset of the pandemic, many consumers have shifted their shopping behaviours toward buying local, especially when it makes more economic sense and is more enjoyable. Employing designers can help a business enhance its image as well as attract and retain customers by delivering a distinctive multisensory or digital experience. Service design focuses on the evolving needs and wants of both customers and staff, including comfort and safety.

Accessible retail premises

The effects of adaptations to public-health protocols have included wait lines, directed flows and foot traffic encumbered by various control elements making accessibility and legibility in retail spaces much more complicated for the elderly and for people with motor, auditory and visual challenges. It is vital that universal design standards be applied to all retail layouts, even temporary ones. Design and architecture professionals plan spaces that comply with those standards and promote a quality shopping experience for all customers. Their actions target both the interior and exterior of the premises, and are taken before, during and after work or during special events.

Green transition

The pandemic has compounded issues around transportation and delivery of goods and management of waste. To support the greening of Montréal's economy in a context of economic recovery, the city along with the federal and provincial governments are fast-tracking investments in clean technologies focused on the circular economy, transportation electrification and sustainable mobility. Merchants and designers are invited to work together to speed the transition to digital by retailers, grocery stores and restaurants, while redefining the virtual or physical experience of shopping, eating and drinking by reducing waste and promoting reuse and recycling, local procurement as well as decarbonized delivery methods.



Temporary adaptations including material for signage, protective barriers and physical distancing cues, disposable sanitation products, along with single-use packaging and devices, have generated huge quantities of waste since the start of the health crisis. Designers and merchants can be part of Montréal's green and social transition by putting forward well-thought-out, sustainable and environmentally responsible solutions that consumers will embrace.

Design objectives and criteria in the pandemic context

Design is first and foremost a human-centred process that hinges on good planning, conception and execution. Combining creativity, innovation and sustainability, it is the outcome of collaborative work between a knowledgeable designer and an informed client.

The design of your retail business should make it more attractive, welcoming and friendly, prompt action (trying, ordering, buying, consuming), build loyalty among existing customers and attract new ones, and foster feelings of pride among your staff. Raising the profile of your business will add to your district's vitality and to the quality of the local living environment.

To help ensure the success of your design project, assemble competent people to work in teams. Everyone must have the **experience, knowledge, abilities** and **expertise** required to see it to fruition. At every step, emphasize informed, participatory, transparent and inclusive decision making.

Good design today must meet the same criteria as before the pandemic, and continue to fulfil customers' needs while conveying your business's image and messaging. Particular attention must be paid to certain criteria, however, both to reduce the spread of the virus and respond to business challenges.

Key components of successful retail design

A culture of quality

Especially in crisis situations, forging connections with the community, sticking together, and adopting an attitude, behaviours, ethics and business practices that are responsible and equitable will boost goodwill with customers. The design of your retail premises should embody your values and convey your brand identity through your physical as well as your digital spaces.

Functionality



The design must meet the needs of your business, your customers and your staff in terms of **health, comfort, safety** and **accessibility**. Proper planning of the work, a well-thought-out concept and meticulous execution will promote sustainable solutions. The layout and furniture should be functional and **adaptable to changes** in conditions, needs and uses. These attributes will ensure improved agility and resilience without requiring additional investment in the event of change.

Savings, durability and diversity



Rethinking the design of your premises must be viewed as an **investment**. You want to add value to your premises, favour the use of sustainable equipment and materials, and in turn reduce maintenance costs. Incorporating environmental criteria such as

reduction, reuse, recycling and recovery into your retail space design or service design will set your business on a course toward a **circular-economy model** and a smaller carbon footprint. Emphasize **mixed uses** inside your space, diversify your offering and share services with other merchants. Reap the benefits of **shared** responsibilities and use of private and public spaces, according to the season and the occupancy opportunities permitted by the city and your borough.

A sense of place = the soul of the space

Your customers must identify with your business. You want your premises to generate the experience they're seeking and even lead to an emotional attachment and a sense of belonging. A **well-planned design** will maximize the use of the space and its capacity, while strengthening its **local character**, its specific features and its identity.

Multisensory experience and esthetics

Your store, restaurant or grocery must be attractive inside and out, and spark a strong emotional response. Creating a welcoming atmosphere is a must, especially when public-health restrictions are in play. A clean, orderly, well-maintained and attractive storefront is more likely to attract customers. That commitment to quality must continue to be apparent once the customer is inside, and throughout their visit. Your store design must help **stimulate all the senses** and contribute to influence positive perceptions of the space, your products and services, and relations with staff.

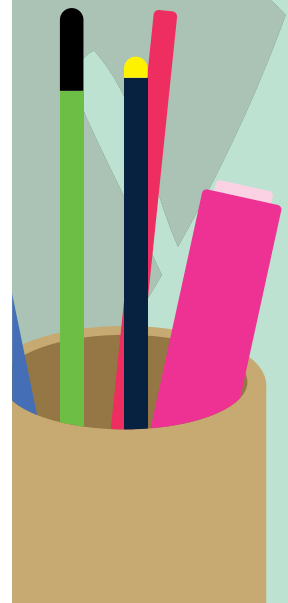
Merchants and designers are urged to work together to incorporate, smoothly and sustainably, the public-health measures that mitigate the risk of the virus spreading all while providing Montrealers with fresh, enjoyable experiences that inspire exploration and discovery.



1



The user's journey may begin on a screen, where they (re)discover shopping via digital platforms. Whether it results in an online purchase or an in-person visit, this step is the opportunity to build a positive relationship with consumers.

DIGITAL PRESENCE




Drive online purchases

by ensuring a strong digital presence

-  Boost online sales with a transactional site that reflects the identity of your store.
 - Deliver targeted ads and offers on social platforms, in newsletters and in mailings to business partners.
 - Show your solidarity and express your values and commitments on social platforms so as to strengthen ties with your community.
 - Share everyday life in your retail space by posting meaningful photos and messages.
-  Distribute publications that highlight the roles of employees and show the human face of your business.
 - Pass on posts from other retailers or suppliers.

Make efficiency gains using technology tools

- Use digital channels (website, newsletter, social platforms, mobile app) to tell customers how your services have changed, reassure them about the health measures you've implemented, and explain the ground rules for store visits and order pickups.
- Leverage digital tools to reduce the length of time customers need to spend inside the store: for certain services, recommend making an appointment or choosing a time slot online, send notifications when a product is available or an order is ready for pickup, and set up virtual wait lines.
-  Shift or reduce your opening hours to safeguard employee wellness while increasing services available through digital channels: e.g., move purchase advice, shopping and ordering online.
 - Leverage technology to optimize your logistics chain (e.g., real-time inventory, order processing system).



Be memorable

by creating a clear link between digital presence and physical surroundings

- Reflect the business's visual identity on your physical premises and in digital media. Use the same visual elements on the website, social platforms, signs, displays, packaging, etc.
- Use a consistent communications style: the tone specific to your store's identity and its values should be reflected in the language you use and the ideas you express, online as well as on physical media.



If you must close your premises to visitors, set up videoconference sales. Your staff onsite can offer purchase advice and a virtual tour of the store. To maximize the effectiveness of this service, offer it by appointment and specify a minimum purchase amount upon booking.





2

When someone approaches a business, they need to know that it's open, safe and welcoming before they step inside. By applying a few design and wayfinding principles, you can make sure your storefront captures people's attention and conveys that information in an instant.

ON THE WAY IN



Take the store outside

by enlivening the façade



- Set up a service counter on the sidewalk and a comfortable waiting area where customers can make purchases without having to enter.
- Make the interior visible so passersby can see the nature of your business; this also energizes the street.
- Refresh your window display often to attract customers.
- Make your business's exterior surfaces into spaces for communication, indicating the products and services available.
- Ensure a consistent graphical identity from the storefront to inside, taking into account the sign, window display, door and posters.
- Vary the scale of signage elements to guarantee the visibility of the storefront at different traffic speeds: pedestrians, cyclists, drivers, etc.

Draw people inside

using spatial and sensory continuity

- Create visual continuity between the store interior and exterior by using co-ordinated materials, colours and visuals across all surfaces: floor, ceiling, walls.
- Deliver a multisensory experience (fragrances, sounds, visuals, flavours) outside the store that makes people want to come inside.
- Install sandwich boards, where sidewalk width permits, to draw the attention of passersby.
- Make sure lighting is sufficient both outside and inside.
- Use low-power partial lighting when the store is closed to focus attention on the window display, encourage people to come back during opening hours, foster the safety of passersby, and enliven the street.
- Reassure customers with outside postings of the public-health rules applicable inside.



2

DIGITAL
PRESENCE

ON THE
WAY IN

WAITING
AREA

ENTRANCE
AND WELCOME

SHOPPING
INSIDE

PAYMENT

ON THE
WAY OUT



Visibility of activity and traffic inside • Well-lit, attractive window display • Visual continuity from inside to outside • Obstacle-free route • Consistent graphical identity from façade to interior • Street-side service counter accessible by all users • Comfortable wait and eating/drinking areas



3

Time spent waiting can represent an opportunity to inform or entertain customers and even make a sale. At the same time, offering alternatives like online ordering, pickup or delivery, appointment reservations and virtual tours helps reduce irritants


WAITING AREA



3


Reduce lineups

using a mix of physical and digital strategies

- Direct customers and delivery persons according to the reason for their visit: designate one section for browsing in the store and another for pickup of prepaid orders.
- Install a people counter that displays store capacity and sends notifications to customers during non-peak periods.
-  Use a combination of online and in-person services to reduce frequency and/or duration of in-store visits all while optimizing the value of purchases.
- Install a system for order pickup that doesn't require the customer to enter the store, such as a service counter in front of the building or outside lockers for order pickups

Turn waiting into an opportunity

for people to explore products and services

- Interact in person with customers waiting in line: offer tastings, samples, demonstrations, etc.
- Use display spaces in the waiting area to showcase your products and those of other retailers.
- Leverage novel technology tools like virtual fitting rooms to highlight products and services on offer.
-  Display a QR code in the front window that leads to a menu or transactional website as an alternative in high-traffic periods.
- Strengthen ties with the community by displaying announcements of social and cultural activities that align with your business's values.

Improve wait line conditions

to promote customer retention

- Free up space for the wait line inside and outside by eliminating any obstacle or clutter that could hinder the movement of people with reduced mobility or who are pushing strollers.
- Install sit-stand benches or other types of support in the waiting area so that people with reduced mobility, expectant mothers and seniors can rest while they move up the line.
- Make sure the waiting area is well lit.
- Add graphical elements or furniture to encourage physical distancing.
- Protect the waiting area from inclement weather and regulate its temperature with an awning, shelter or eco-friendly appliances, subject to the regulations applicable in your borough (e.g., electric heaters, misting machines, fans).

3

DIGITAL
PRESENCE

ON THE
WAY IN

WAITING
AREA

ENTRANCE
AND WELCOME

SHOPPING
INSIDE

PAYMENT

ON THE
WAY OUT



Clear, consistent signage/wayfinding • Separate entrance and exit • Level access • Automatic doors • Protected waiting area with seating/support • Lockers for order pickup • Virtual fitting rooms • Indoor activities visible from outside • Products showcased • Impacts of technology tools mitigated through use of plants

DIGITAL
PRESENCE

ON THE
WAY IN

WAITING
AREA

ENTRANCE
AND WELCOME

SHOPPING
INSIDE

PAYMENT

ON THE
WAY OUT



Clear, consistent signage/wayfinding • Sufficient lighting • Furniture functioning as sit-stand support and promoting physical distancing • Protected waiting area • Ordering and tasting counter • Products and services showcased • Adhesive-display QR code • Obstacle-free route



4+

ENTRANCE AND WELCOME

Regardless of whether there is a wait line, entry to the premises is a key moment in the welcome process, providing the opportunity to advise and direct customers in a friendly and safe manner. The handwashing station, notably, is now standard in public places.



4

Reinvent the entrance

to promote a sense of safety



Ideally, there should be a clear glass door both to allow customers to see inside and enable staff to control entry as needed.

- Install automatic doors to keep points of contact to the minimum.
- Incorporate a handwashing station that coordinates with the interior design and features sustainable, easy-to-clean surface coatings.
- Ensure that the handwashing station is visible and is accessible by all visitors, locating it just past the entrance.
- Allow space to accommodate functional elements: a hook, touchless soap dispenser, garbage bin, hand dryer, storage bin for cleaning products, etc.
- Ensure the handwashing station is visible by staff, to promote frequent maintenance.

Emphasize human interaction

for an optimum welcome process



- Set up the entrance area to favour a human touch and eye contact as soon as a customer approaches or enters.
- Train staff to provide a warm and friendly welcome.
- Politely remind customers of the public-health requirements in case they forget, and help them find their way to the products that interest them or to their table.
- Remember that mask-wearing and individual abilities can hinder effective communication.
- Be patient and, if necessary, ask customers if they've found what they are looking for.

Inform people of the procedures

using uniform signage

- Customers must be informed of the public-health requirements as soon as they enter, by means of signage that coordinates with the business's visual identity. It will be friendlier and better integrated as a result.
- Clearly display the locations of accessories that have already been disinfected or are awaiting disinfection; e.g., trays, self-serve tools, serving utensils for bulk products, etc.
- Favour use of a dynamic digital display to communicate information that may vary over time.

4

DIGITAL
PRESENCE

ON THE
WAY IN

WAITING
AREA

ENTRANCE
AND WELCOME

SHOPPING
INSIDE

PAYMENT

ON THE
WAY OUT



Contactless, universally accessible handwashing station • Functional elements: hook, hand dryer, etc. • Unobstructed traffic area • Components visible to staff • Easy-to-clean materials • Products showcased



5

A retail shopping experience comprises a number of interactions, ranging from the customer's arrival to payment to exit. At each visit, they must be able to easily locate the product(s) or service(s) they are looking for, while feeling welcome and safe. It's also essential to involve staff in the decisions about the space layout to ensure they contribute to and benefit from quality surroundings as they perform their daily tasks.

SHOPPING INSIDE



Delimit spaces

according to use and function

- Clearly identify, starting at the entrance and continuing throughout the customer journey, areas and functions allowing patrons to get to the products/services quickly and easily they are looking for, and to order, take out, pay (with service or self-serve), pick up an order, try out or return an item, use the washroom, etc.
- Prefer eye-level signage as well as symbols and colours that are easily locatable and understandable by all customers.
- If necessary, add partitions—removable, freestanding, foldaway or sliding on rails—to create more private areas, smaller welcome areas, or areas reserved for families, promotions, tasting, newly arrived products, etc.

Free up spaces

to ensure smooth traffic flow

- Make sure there are no dead ends and that customers can walk around the aisles.
- Prefer wide, two-way aisles to avoid awkward face-to-face meetings and people having to step around each other. Arrows indicating one-way aisles have proven to be restrictive and counterintuitive.
- Build product alcoves into the walls to gain traffic space.
- Store products up high to reduce the number of rows of shelving and ensure traffic aisles are roomy enough.
- Avoid any obstacles on the floor that could be a hindrance or a danger for people with reduced mobility or visual impairment.




Choose flexibility

to adapt to the context

- Choose modular furniture, on casters or sliders, to enable multiple uses and quick, easy reconfigurations.
- Allow for different space-planning scenarios to suit peak and off-peak periods or times; free up space to handle increased traffic or footfall and, during off-peak periods, give the impression that the entire space is occupied, e.g., by partitioning or spreading out moveable furniture.
- Run promotions at key times of the year or during off-peak hours.
- Regulate traffic over the course of the day and year through special offers combined with refreshed or adapted layouts.
- Anticipate specific layout requirements for busy periods such as the Holidays (e.g., in-store order pickup, dining room intake, increased grocery supply needs).

Share services

to optimize resources

-  Design a display and set up a space to sell your branded products at another retailer's location; retailers that are deemed essential or are better positioned can offer space for local entrepreneurs to sell their wares on a temporary, permanent or rotational basis, for a rental fee or commission. Use elements of the business's visual and brand identity to create a strong, consistent presence that will get noticed.
-  Diversify the retail operations grouped in a single space; e.g., have a florist and jeweller, or a coffee roaster and delicatessen, share premises.
-  Fit up and temporarily occupy vacant spaces to revitalize the street while encouraging shared occupancy for various retail purposes.

Ensure proper ventilation

for improved air quality

The Institut national de Santé publique du Québec (INSPQ) has stated that "It is generally accepted that proper ventilation of indoor environments is an effective measure for managing indoor air contaminants."¹ Natural or mechanical air supply is therefore a vital factor to consider in the design of the retail space.

With respect to mechanical ventilation, the *Regulation Respecting Occupational Health and Safety* stipulates: "Mechanical ventilation systems shall be inspected and adjusted at least once a year with the filters being maintained or replaced as the need arises."²

Choose the right materials

for easier cleaning and maintenance

Although there were no documented cases of SARS-CoV-2 contamination through surface contact in 2020,³ daily cleaning of surfaces continues to be recommended. Ease of cleaning and fast drying times should be criteria considered when choosing materials for interior or exterior work.

1 - INSPQ, COVID-19: *Transmission modes and measures to prevent and control risk, including the role of ventilation*, August 2021. https://www.lavalensante.com/fileadmin/internet/ciass_laval/COVID_19/Personnes_agees/Tout_type_de_ressources/2992-environnement-interieur-qr-covid19.pdf

2. Government of Québec, *Regulation Respecting Occupational Health and Safety*, D. 885-2001, a. 104. <http://legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/fr/showversion/cr/S-2.1,%20r.%2013?code=se:104&pointInTime=20161108>

3. INSPQ, *Transmission du SRAS-CoV-2 : constats et proposition de terminologie*, December 2020. <https://www.inspq.qc.ca/sites/default/files/publications/3099-transmission-sras-cov-2-constats-terminologie-covid19.pdf>

5

DIGITAL
PRESENCE

ON THE
WAY IN

WAITING
AREA

ENTRANCE
AND WELCOME

SHOPPING
INSIDE

PAYMENT

ON THE
WAY OUT



Clear, consistent signage/wayfinding • Unobstructed traffic area allowing for different configurations depending on peak/off-peak hours and periods • Products showcased • Modular, wheeled and multiple-use furniture encouraging physical distancing • Welcome spaces featuring locally crafted products and local retailers



6

PAYMENT


Checkout is a decisive moment for ensuring a user-friendly, high-quality shopping experience. Digital tools are valuable assets for speeding up the payment process and enabling staff to focus on human interaction. Touchless payment technology has the benefit of minimizing handling, while the combination of digital services and human interaction offers new ways of selling products.



6


Increase opportunities

through smart design

- Make the checkout area work for you as a place to offer and sell well-chosen, well-displayed products.
-  Set up prepayment of orders and provide a route for people to pick up their items and exit without having to go to the cash.
- Use overhead signage to identify self-service and with-service checkout areas and make them easier to find.

Optimize payment transactions

using digital tools

- Adopt touchless payment.
-  Make it possible to pay in aisles or other areas away from the checkout area by providing staff with wireless terminals.
- Plan to install self-service checkout technology to relieve staff of transaction tasks so they can focus on service and human contact.
- In big-box and high-traffic stores, think about using RFID (radio frequency identification) tags that allow multiple items to be registered simultaneously at checkout, reduce the incidence of theft, track inventory in real time, provide information on each product, etc.
- Equip the checkout or service counter with a microphone system to make conversation easier, especially if the environment is noisy, mask-wearing is enforced and/or there are glass/plastic barriers separating staff and customers.

Enhance the experience

through a personalized approach

- Rethink the space from a more experiential and healthier perspective, leveraging design and technology to ensure vibrant retail premises.
- Create an environment that fosters interaction with customers in ways that personalize the individual retail experience.
- Mitigate the impacts of technology tools by adding natural elements like plants.
- State the qualities of the space: explain how the overall design of the retail space helps deliver a distinctive experience and drive customer satisfaction.
- Support and guide customers in the use of technology tools that make the retail experience more efficient and geared toward more personalized service and products.

6

DIGITAL
PRESENCE

ON THE
WAY IN

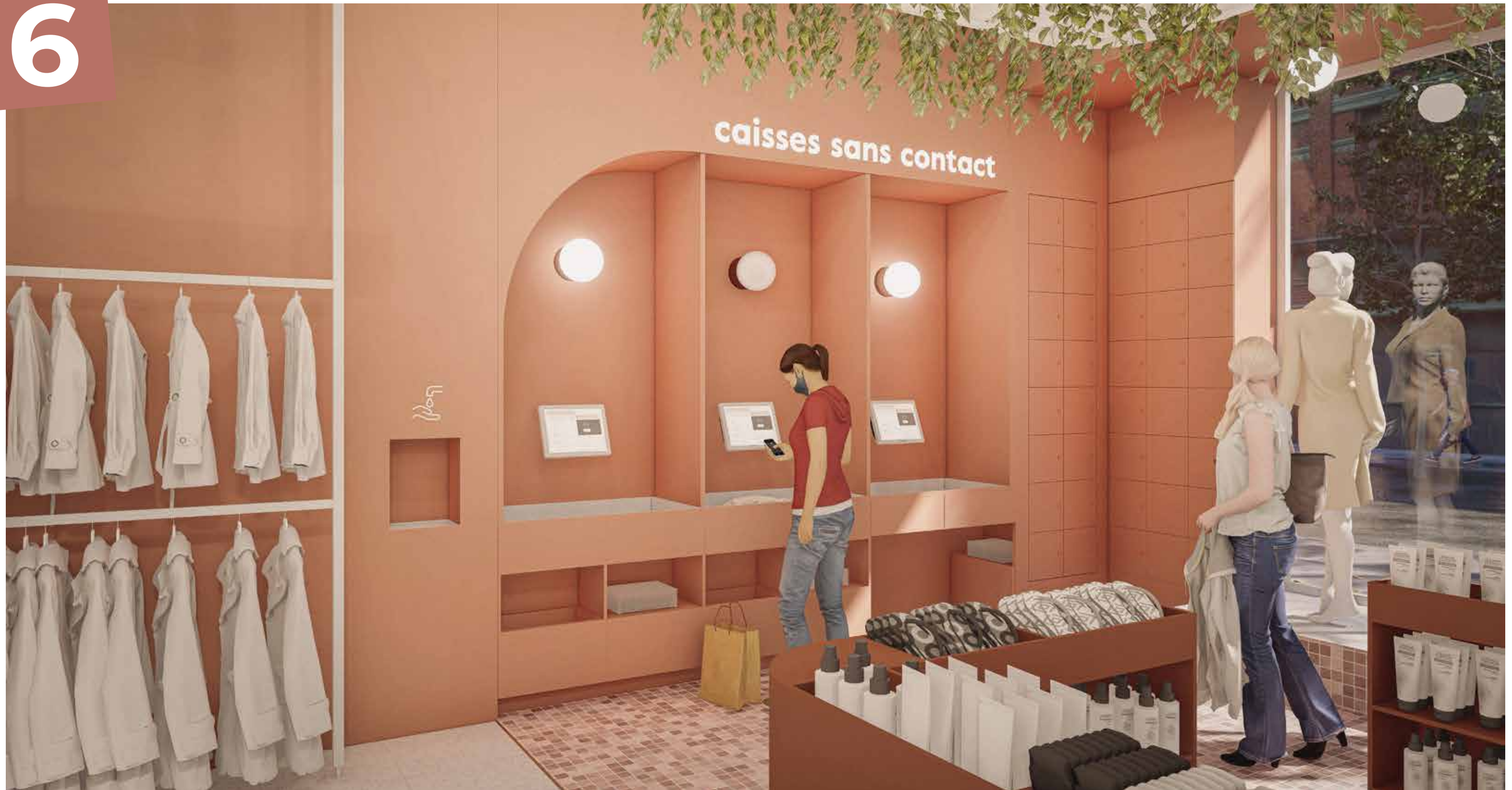
WAITING
AREA

ENTRANCE
AND WELCOME

SHOPPING
INSIDE

PAYMENT

ON THE
WAY OUT



Clear, consistent signage/wayfinding • Universal design standards applied • Unobstructed traffic area • Product displays directing customers to the checkout area • Touchless self-serve payment terminals • Furniture encouraging physical distancing • Impacts of technology tools mitigated through use of plants • Reminders to follow health measures



7

The customer's exit from the store provides an opportunity to reinforce your positive relationship and motivate them to return. The elements accompanying the exit are part of the shopping experience and deserve particular attention.

ON THE WAY OUT



Ensure smooth traffic flow

by laying out a clear path

- Manage traffic so that customers entering and exiting don't cross paths. If the layout of the premises permits, keep the entrance and exit doors separate.
- Consider having an exit to the alley side of the store to improve flow and eliminate cross-traffic areas.
- Clearly designate the checkout waiting area. This area, which ideally should be visible from the entrance, can be delimited using suspended signage or product displays.
- Install a handwashing station at the exit for use at customers' discretion.
- Keep emergency exits clear at all times.




Use smart signage and wayfinding

all the way to the end of the shopping experience

- Use clear, concise messaging to guide customers after checkout. Emphasizing the visual quality of signage and using friendly statements helps wrap up the purchase experience on a positive note.
- Include your business's visual identity on packaging. The product or meal packaging is a part of your brand that the customer takes with them. It helps promote your retail business throughout its life cycle, from the time the customer leaves until they consume the product, and potentially when they reuse the packaging.

Reduce your carbon footprint

in harmony with your brand identity

-  Set up deposit-return or bulk-sales systems to reduce reliance on packaging. This kind of initiative tends to build loyalty among consumers who care about environmental issues.
-  Limit packaging to the minimum. When packaging is unavoidable, prefer reusable, compostable or recyclable materials.
-  Invest in reusable materials for décor and signage elements. For example, good-quality frames, digital display screens and chalkboards provide ways of easily refreshing content while minimizing losses.

Suggested layout Restaurant

DIGITAL
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AND WELCOME

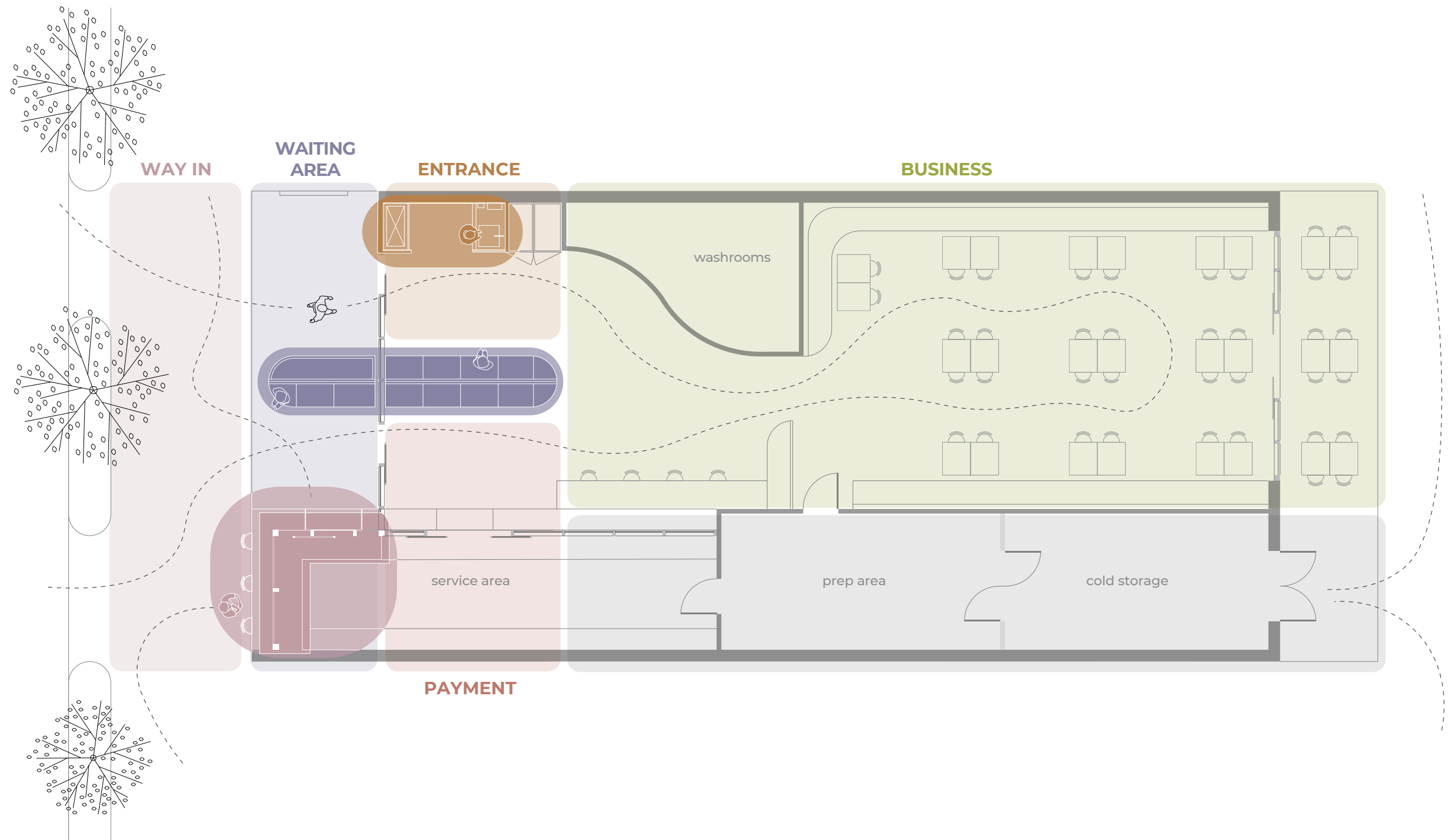
SHOPPING
INSIDE

PAYMENT

ON THE
WAY OUT

This plan is for a resilient space design that promotes maintenance and diversification of retail operations in a context of public-health measures.

- Enlivened experience through shifting of dynamic activities to the front of the premises.
- Flexible, versatile threshold conducive to a variety of functions (waiting, entrance, health check, ordering, purchase of tasting of products, checkout, exit, eating/drinking).
- Health station that promotes the handwashing ritual and requires the customer to proceed to the interior of the space.
- Fluid customer and staff routes organized into distinct zones.
- Layout and furniture that promote intuitive distancing.
- Dining room set up in the rear of the space; can be modulated in response to needs and public-health protocols.



Suggested layout

Retail business

DIGITAL PRESENCE

ON THE WAY IN

WAITING AREA

ENTRANCE AND WELCOME

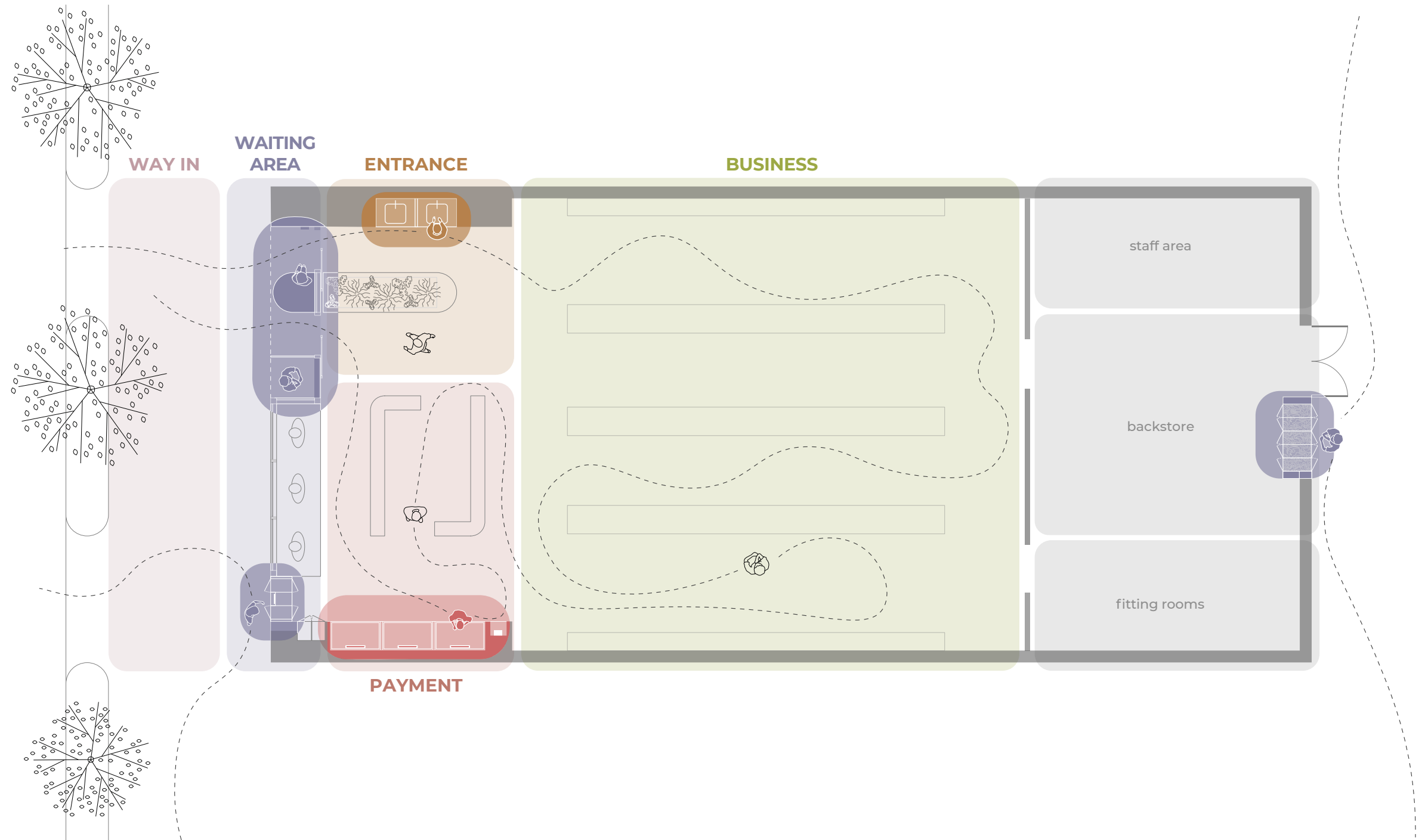
SHOPPING INSIDE

PAYMENT

ON THE WAY OUT

This plan shows a space design in line with new shopping trends and contactless technologies.

- Interactive storefront and window display including services accessible outside (lockers, virtual fitting rooms).
- Concept partway between local brick-and-mortar retailer and online store that builds ties between the brand and customers.
- Minimalist display of a variety of products in a single size, supported by a backstore system (optimizes capacity of the space).
- Waiting lounge and premium experience before fitting.
- Well-ventilated, contactless fitting rooms located near the storage area.
- Integrated locker system both street-side and alley-side for pickup and delivery.



Suggested layout Grocery

DIGITAL
PRESENCE

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AND WELCOME

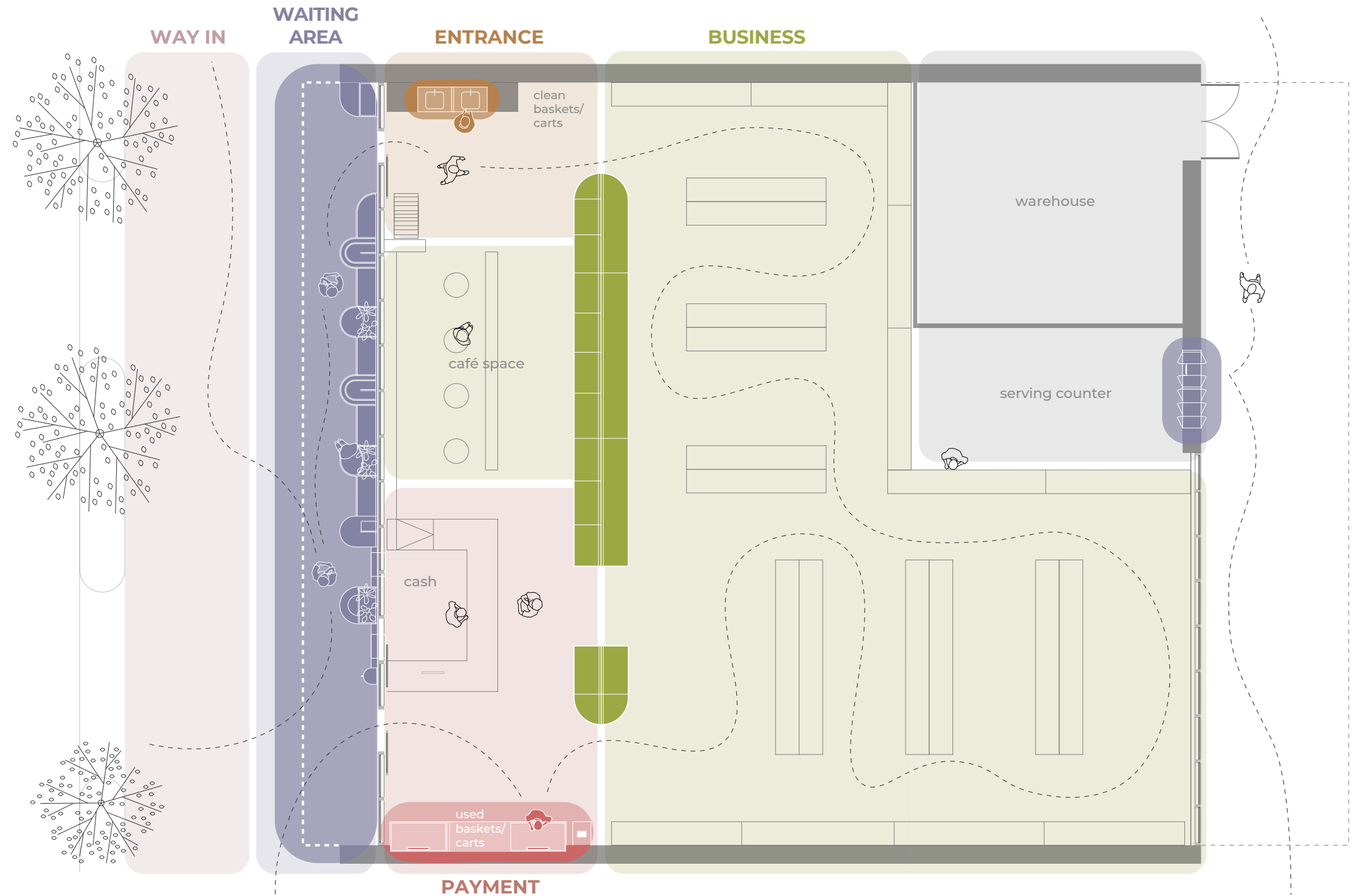
SHOPPING
INSIDE

PAYMENT

ON THE
WAY OUT

This plan features a space design that induces a natural, fluid traffic pattern by means of flexible furnishings from entrance to checkout.

- Distinct entrance and exit.
- Exterior layout ensuring a comfortable, multisensory waiting experience no matter what the season.
- Furniture induces traffic flow, prompts physical distancing, separates areas and business functions, allows for shelving or showcasing of products, allows customers to sit and set down a beverage.
- Used baskets/carts are returned to a dedicated area; disinfectant products are in built-in storage and do not cause clutter on the floor.



Checklist

Digital presence

- ❑ Drive online purchases by ensuring a strong digital presence.
- ❑ Make efficiency gains using technology tools.
- ❑ Be memorable by creating a clear link between digital presence and physical surroundings.

On the way in

- ❑ Take the store outside by enlivening the façade.
- ❑ Draw people inside using spatial and sensory continuity.

Waiting area

- ❑ Reduce lineups using a mix of physical and digital strategies.
- ❑ Turn waiting into an opportunity for people to explore products and services.
- ❑ Improve wait line conditions to promote customer retention.

Entrance and welcome

- ❑ Reinvent the entrance to promote a sense of safety.
- ❑ Emphasize human interaction for an optimum welcome process.
- ❑ Inform people of the procedures using uniform signage.

Shopping inside

- ❑ Delimit spaces according to use and function.
- ❑ Free up spaces to ensure smooth traffic flow.
- ❑ Choose flexibility to adapt to the context.
- ❑ Share services to optimize resources.
- ❑ Ensure proper ventilation for improved air quality.
- ❑ Choose the right materials for easier cleaning and maintenance.

Payment

- ❑ Increase opportunities through smart design.
- ❑ Optimize payment transactions using digital tools.
- ❑ Enhance the experience through a personalized approach.

On the way out

- ❑ Ensure smooth traffic flow by laying out a clear path.
- ❑ Use smart signage and wayfinding all the way to the end of the shopping experience.
- ❑ Reduce your carbon footprint in harmony with your brand identity.

For other space planning ideas for small retail spaces, see the [Guide d'adaptation anti-covid pour les petits commerces](#), a document developed in the summer of 2020 compiling concrete solutions devised by a dozen Montreal merchants early in the health crisis.

Resources

The Bureau du design and the retail support team at Montréal's Service du développement économique, in collaboration with the PME MTL network, can help you find resources and means to succeed in business in the city.

Retail space design

The [Directory of Montréal Designers](#), published by the Bureau du design, is a practical tool to search for and find a designer. It showcases achievements and distinctions by Montréal-based design and architecture firms selected by independent juries as part of public competitions, awards competitions and grant programs in Québec and around the world.

The [Design Montréal map](#) locates and illustrates buildings and businesses by local designers and architects that are a source of pride in Montréal and contribute to its reputation as a UNESCO City of Design. Both these reference tools can be viewed on the [designmontreal.com](#) website.

Professional and financial support

[PME MTL](#) supports commercial entrepreneurs in the development and financing of their business projects, whether to set up a new brick-and-mortar store, develop an online business platform, or create jobs in the area. Most of the services offered by PME MTL are free.

Montréal provides support to merchants adapted to their realities. A series of tools and measures is available from the city or through partner organizations. Visit [this page at montreal.ca](#) to learn more about the support provided to merchants.

The Québec Retail Council, a resource centre for Montréal retailers, can provide data to help guide their strategic decision-making. Services include training sessions and webinars to assist retailers in making or optimizing their digital transition. Visit [cqcd.org](#).

Going digital

[EnLiigne](#) is an app that lets customers line up virtually for a shopping destination using their phone.

[Cercle Achetons plus ici](#) offers local merchants professional coaching and savings to help them optimize their digital strategy (e-commerce and online marketing, Web presence, contactless payment, appointments, delivery).

Delivery services

[CHK PLZ](#) is a provider of online ordering, contactless payment and delivery services for Montréal restaurants.

[Envoi Montréal](#) offers decarbonized delivery services subsidized by the city of Montréal.

[LocketGo](#) is a Montréal-based start-up that operates a network of lockers enabling curbside pickup of orders using unique access codes.

[Restoloco](#) is an affordable local online order and delivery platform available to restaurants in multiple Québec cities.

[Xpedigo](#) is a last-mile delivery service.

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