

Street Vending & Artists Bylaw Review

March 2026

Municipal Licensing and Standards



Overview

Overview of MLS' Street Vending & Artists Bylaw review report tracking to the City's Economic and Community Development Committee (ECDC) on April 9, 2026:

- Purpose & Context
- Recommendations
- Implementation
- Next Steps



Context

Purpose

- In 2025, MLS reviewed the City's street vending and artist bylaws, with goals to enhance **opportunities** for vendors and artists, **reduce regulatory burden**, and **clarify** rules
- The report responds to three outstanding directives
- The last comprehensive review was completed in 2014

Context

- Heard from over **1,800 people** through surveys, focus groups and public sessions, targeting residents, vendors, buskers, artists, BIAs, industry associations, and community groups.
- Aligns with the Action Plan for Toronto's Economy and MLS' Business Licensing and Permit Action Plan
- Consulted Transportation Services, TPH, Parks & Rec, Toronto Parking Authority, Environment Climate and Forestry and Economic Development and Culture



What we heard from Businesses and BIAs

In the survey, 58% of respondents lived in a BIA and 63 respondents (4%) were businesses

- **83%** of residents strongly agreed or agreed that **street and sidewalk vending provides consumers with more options.**
- One of the most frequent comments made by residents was a **desire to see more non-food vendors in the city.**
- Among businesses, **most were positive or neutral** towards street vending, provided minimum distance requirements were maintained by food trucks and sidewalk vendors

During consultation with BIAs, MLS heard a mix of feedback, including:

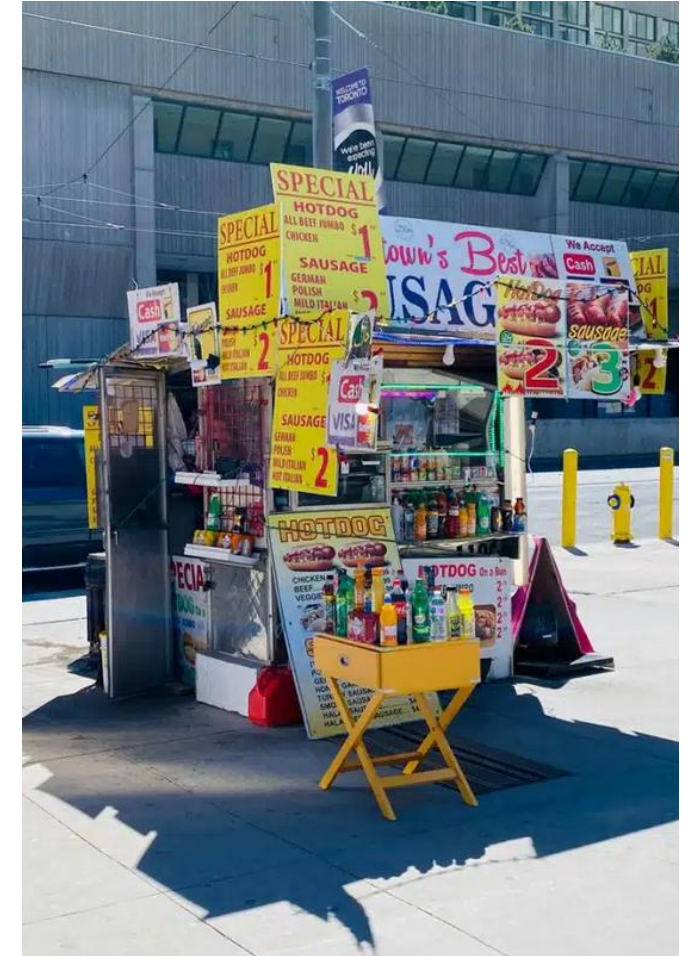
- Current street vending rules (e.g. sidewalk food vendors must be 25 metres from an eating establishment) should be maintained
- Food trucks and buskers can add variety and diversity to a neighbourhood
- Street vendors *not* invited by a BIA can disrupt BIA events
- Some areas are not suitable for vending
- More enforcement of illegal vending is required in certain areas
- Amplified music should be regulated by location and buskers should be required to display photo cards / permits

BIA Engagement:

- Survey
- TABIA Meeting
- Public Consultation (open to all)
- Focus group
- Meeting with SAFE group (includes BIA)
- Emails from several BIAs on specific concerns

Overview of Recommendations

- **Improve vendor opportunities; enhance City vibrancy and consumer options**
 - Maintain distance requirements from businesses
 - Lift the moratorium on sidewalk vending downtown
 - Allow non-food vending within existing permit framework
 - Extend the time limit for food truck mobile vending from 5 to 12 hours
 - Introduce a new permit for traveling vendors
 - Align busking with the Noise Bylaw, allow amplification, and require display of permit
- **Modernize licensing, reduce burden and simplify rules**
 - Lower permit fees by 30%
 - Remove expiry date from legacy Curb Lane Vending Permits
 - Consolidate, harmonize and streamline regulations (e.g. insurance requirements)



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Key Recommendations: Street & Sidewalk Vending

Recommendation	Rationale
End moratorium on new sidewalk vendors downtown (Wards, 10, 11, 13)	The number of sidewalk vending permits in the city has dropped from 134 in 2002 , to 45 in 2025 . Would allow new vendors to open downtown and enhance public realm vibrancy, under certain conditions
Allow non-food vending on the public right-of-way (City-wide), with conditions	Allowing the sale of non-food goods (such as t-shirts or flowers) provides new opportunities for small and emerging businesses
Extend the amount of time a mobile vendor can operate on a street from 5 hours to 12 hours	Vendors said the current limit is unprofitable. Increasing to 12 hours allows for a lunch/dinner service and promotes business sustainability
Remove expiry from Curb Lane Vending Legacy Permits	Curb Lane Vending legacy permits expire on December 31, 2026. Would allow the 15 current operators to continue under legacy rules.
Establish new Short Stop Vending Permit for travelling vendors in the Right of Way (replaces Hawker/Pedlar Licence)	Builds on current Ice Cream Vending Permit model to allow the sale of all goods (food and non-food) for up to 30 minutes per location. Also allows operation from non-motorized vehicles or on foot.

General Vendor Conditions:

- All food vendors need a Toronto Public Health check
- Vendors cannot be within 50m of a BIA event (or in the BIA event) and food vendors cannot be within 25m of an eating establishment; non-food sidewalk vendors cannot be within 25m of a similar business
- Short Stop Vending with a motorized vehicle not permitted on major roads

Key Recommendation: Buskers and Artists

Recommendation	Rationale
<p>Allow buskers to use amplifiers, with the following conditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sound levels must align with Noise Bylaw• Only permitted between noon – 8 p.m.• Maintain 50m from another musical busker• All buskers to display permit & photo card	<p>Allows performers to enhance their performance and provides closer alignment between busking regulations and the Noise Bylaw.</p> <p>Bylaw will contain restrictions to mitigate impact of noise, particularly at night and in high-complaint downtown areas</p> <p>Buskers must maintain 2.5m of passable space on sidewalks, which excludes them from performing on most residential streets.</p>

Busking Amplification Details

- 286 service requests, primarily about noise, for buskers in 2025 -1.6% of all Noise SRs received by MLS
- Vancouver, San Francisco and Downtown Montreal allows buskers to use amplification and have reported low numbers of issues
- TTC permits buskers to use amplification

Busker and Artist Permits - 2025	
Buskers	351
Sidewalk Artists	5
Portrait Artists	23

Processes for BIA Input on Vending Area

Sidewalk Vendor Notification Process

- Sidewalk vendors must apply for a designated space on the sidewalk
- If it meets health and safety conditions, MLS will notify all building owners within 25m of the proposed area, as well as the BIA and local Councillor
- If 25% or more of those notified object, the sidewalk space will not be granted.

Process for Establishing Restricted Zones

- Areas may also be designated as Restricted Zones by MLS, if identified by a BIA, Councillor, or City Staff due to issues concerning public nuisance, safety or traffic congestion
- A restricted zone could be for all day, or certain times of the day
- Restricted Zones can be appealed at Community Council

Additional rules to mitigate crowding and cleanliness issues:

- Vendors and buskers must maintain 2.5m of passable space, cannot hinder pedestrian passage, cannot block critical infrastructure (e.g. standpipes, entrances, transit shelters), must be 25m from an eating establishment (if they are a food vendor) and from schools.
- Must ensure the area around their vending location is clean and free of litter

Recommendations: Fee Review

Lower most vending permit fees by 30%

- Right-sizes permit fees to increase opportunities, reduce burden and better reflect costs in comparator municipalities
 - Currently, street and sidewalk vending permit fees in **Toronto** range from \$690 to \$6,600 annually (excluding taxes, insurance and vendor costs), among the **highest** in North America
 - **New York** charges \$250-\$500 (USD) for a two-year permit, while **Vancouver** charges \$1,100-\$1,600 a year. **Seattle** has waived all vending permit fees
- Further reduce fees for vendors who only sell whole fruits and vegetables, as they provide a vital service

Recommendations: Burden Reduction & Customer Service

Reduce regulatory burden and clarify language to make rules easier to follow and enforce

- Simplify regulations within the Street Vending and Licensing Bylaws
- Delete requirements that duplicate TPH regulations
- Delete the Hawker / Pedlar licence categories due to redundancy with other licence types and introduction of new permit (Short Stop Vending)
- Develop a plain-language application and operating guide to assist applicants and operators to know the rules

Modernize and update licensing and permitting requirements

- Permanently adopt non-motorized mobile vending trailer pilot city-wide
- Remove regulations that are outdated (e.g., vendors must wear “light coloured clothing”)
- Prevent transferability of sidewalk vending permits to restrict the private sale of permits
- Update and harmonize insurance requirements

Implementation

Spring/Summer 2026 – quick items to enhance the 2026 vending season

- Lift moratorium and allow sidewalk vendor applications in Wards 10, 11, 13
- Expand mobile vending time limit from 5 to 12 hours
- Remove expiry for Curb Lane Vending legacy permits

March 1, 2027 – Remainder of changes in effect

- Adopt new Chapter 740, amendments to Chapter 545, Licensing, and fee changes
- Begin 12-month transition of Hawkers / Pedlars to other licence and permit types

Implementation will take a phased, education first-approach to enforcing the new rules, and adopt learnings from recent bylaw changes that involved transitions of licence classes.

Ongoing Work & Future Review

- **Environmental Considerations**

- Survey respondents noted that generator noise and fumes from vendors was undesirable
- MLS to work with Environment, Climate and Forestry on possible electrification options for trucks, including on-street power sources through Toronto Hydro

- **Designated spaces for Vendors**

- Mapping analysis with Transportation Services to quantify spaces available for vending in Toronto, and further work with transportation to assess feasibility of additional vending zones
- MLS is working with Toronto Parking Authority to communicate to vendors how they can apply to vend on GreenP surface parking lots, for an additional fee to vendors

Next Steps

Committee & Council:

- Agenda Published – March 31
- ECDC – April 9
- City Council – April 22-24

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