

**Review of Toronto's Street Vending & Artists By-laws – Attachment 4  
Consultation Report from Barnes Management Group**

# Consultation Overview and Feedback:

November 2025

Facilitation and Report  
by Barnes Management Group  
on behalf of the City of Toronto:  
Municipal Licensing and Services



## Table of Contents

<b>1 Engagement Approach</b>	4
1.1 Participation Overview	4
1.1.2 Promotion	4
1.2 Engagement Overview	5
1.2.1 Engagement Themes	5
<b>2 Survey Results and Analysis</b>	6
2.1 Survey Overview	6
2.2 Demographic Information about respondents	7
2.3 Street or Sidewalk Vendors	7
2.4. Buskers and Sidewalk Artists	12
2.5 Restaurants and other Businesses	15
2.6 General Public	17
2.7 All Respondents	23
<b>3 Street Outreach, Focus Groups &amp; Meetings</b>	24
3.1 Overview	24
3.2 Interviews and Street Outreach	24
3.3 Meetings and Focus Groups	25
<b>4.0 Public Consultations</b>	29
Overview	29
Consultant's note	33

## Executive Summary

- Toronto's street vending and artists network consists of sidewalk sales, sales on streets, and often even includes sales from private property accessible to the public. It consists of food trucks, ice cream vendors, hot dog carts, non-food vendors, portrait artists, musicians and others, who animate public spaces, run small businesses, and strengthen neighbourhood identity.
- Street vendors and artists need licences and/or permits to conduct business in the City, regulated through Chapter 545, Licensing, Chapter 740, Street Vending, Chapter 743, Streets and Sidewalks and its predecessor Chapter 313, Streets and Sidewalks, and Chapter 441, Fees and Charges. The City's by-laws are intended to keep the public safe and protect consumers. The City conducts by-law reviews to ensure that the regulations are still satisfying the overall intent of the by-law. That review includes community engagement.
- Barnes Management Group Inc. (BMG) was selected as the third-party contractor to provide community engagement services for street vendors, restaurants, businesses, relevant business organizations, and the public in 2025. The consultation feedback will inform a City staff report which will include recommendations to update the street vending bylaws. Toronto City Council will decide whether to adopt, amend or reject these recommendations.
- This report outlines a high-level aggregate of information collected through various community engagement activities carried from June to September 2025. Community Engagement is outlined as three categories: Surveys, Stakeholder Engagement, and Public Consultations.
- Several written submissions were received from participants who were unable to attend events. These were forwarded via the project email address and reviewed by the engagement facilitators. These items are included in the project archive for further reference.
- This report has been formatted for AODA compliance. Plain Language is emphasized throughout.

# 1. Engagement Approach

As part of the street vending by-law review, the City of Toronto held public and stakeholder consultations. Barnes Management Group Inc. (BMG) was contracted to provide engagement services for the Municipal Licensing and Standards division as a neutral and independent consultant to inform the Division’s staff report. BMG was responsible for convening meetings, public consultations as well as gathering, analysing, and reporting on public feedback. The Project Lead from BMG was David Buwalda and was supported by Dino DiMarco.

## 1.1 Participation Overview

Overall, engagement activities included the participation of over 1,600 people. Engagement activities targeted permitted and/or licensed vendors, buskers and artists, as well as BIAs, institutions, industry representatives, and community groups.

<b>Engagement Activity</b>	<b>Stakeholders</b>	<b>Date</b>
Meetings with interested parties	9 unique interviews	June-Sept
Street Outreach	Distributed survey postcards in person to 38 vendors/buskers and 50+ customers/residents.	July and August
Focus Groups	88 participants over 8 sessions	July and August
Public Consultations	2 sessions: 61 In-person and 28 Online participants	September 10 & 22, 2025
Surveys	1,626 Completed Surveys	July 14 – September 30, 2025

### Promotion

Promotional content and communication materials were promoted widely using a variety of communication channels including:

- A dedicated webpage;
- Social media advertisements;
- Postcards handed out in-person;
- Monthly newsletter to Councillors; and

- Invites to BIAs;
- Invites to licence and permit holders.

Participation in the focus groups were by invitation only while the public town halls were open to all interested parties.

## 1.2 Engagement Overview

Engagement activities generated a large volume of responses and commentary from many perspectives. The summaries here are intended to describe the key themes, attitudes, opinions and suggestions shared during the engagement process. An archive for this project contains resources related to the verbatim notes from all of the engagement activities. It is available as a reference for MLS staff.

### Engagement Themes

The following table outlines themes that appeared most frequently across engagement categories. This summary was conducted by aggregating all of the frequently stated themes (including summaries, examples and descriptions) that are included in the different sections of this report, then synthesizing them according to the most frequent themes. This overview is intended as a very high-level summary of themes that recur in the large volume of qualitative responses collected.

<b>Survey (Residents, Businesses, BIAs, Vendors, Artists)</b>	<b>Meetings &amp; Focus Groups (BIAs, Vendors, Artists)</b>
More locations, to operate in parks and public squares and in suburbs	More locations, including designated spaces, and to operate in parks
Clear, up-to-date and easy to find information on rules and how to apply (reduce red tape)	Clear, up-to-date and easy to find information on rules and how to apply (reduce red tape)
Lower fees	Lower fees
Vending makes spaces more vibrant and enjoyable	Make enforcement more consistent and clear, especially

The City should take action against unlicensed vendors/artists operating on public property
Increase variety or diversity of vending types (food, non-food)
Overcrowding is caused by too few prime locations and the moratorium
Artists make public spaces valuable and enjoyable

The City should take action against unlicensed vendors/artists operating on public property
Increase or lift the 5-hour vending limit to make business sustainable
Rules should prevent food trucks from locating too close to BIA-run events
Allow buskers to use amplification

## 2. Survey Results and Analysis

### 2.1 Survey Overview

An online survey was made available on the City of Toronto’s webpage from Monday, July 14 to Tuesday, September 20, 2025. The purpose of this survey was to provide another option for collecting feedback from individuals unable to attend a focus group or public meeting. It was designed to learn from respondents the attitudes, challenges, concerns and suggestions on a variety of aspects related to Toronto’s Street Vending By-Laws.

This report includes high-level summaries of survey responses organized according to the following responder types that responders self-identified at the outset of the survey:

- Mobile Vendors
- Buskers, Caricature/Portrait Artists, and Sidewalk Artists
- Restaurants and Other Businesses
- General Public
- All Responders

Some additional notes on the survey summary:

- Demographic questions in this survey were asked of all respondents and were not collected specific to responder type.

- This summary follows the order of questions provided to respondents on the survey, except where noted.
- Questions that were open to comments generated a large volume of responses. The comments are summarized in this report according to themes containing similar phrases, sentiments, and examples, and are listed in descending order.

## 2.2 Demographic Information about respondents

- 2,300 surveys were initiated, of which 72% were completed, for a total of 1,626 surveys. This aggregate focuses solely on the completed survey responses.

Key Demographic Information
94% of respondents live in Toronto. 4% of respondents commute to Toronto for work. 1% visited Toronto.*
72% of respondents were between the ages of 25 and 54.**
74% of respondents categorized themselves as Employed in full-time, part-time or casual work, and 9% as Retired.
58% of respondents live or work in a BIA.
81% (n=1,312) of respondents are resident, visitor or commuter to Toronto. 8% (n=128) are Street or sidewalk Vendors 7% (n=123) are Busker or Street Performer 4% (n=63) are Eating Establishments, Events Operator or Other Business

\*Number may not add up to 100% due to rounding

\*\*N=1,600. Not all 1,626 survey participants provided their age.

Percentages in each of the respondent section below are based on the number of respondents in that specific respondent category. As an example, all percentages in the street or sidewalk vendor section have a denominator of n=128 (the total number of street or side walk vendors respondents), unless specified otherwise.

## 2.3 Street or Sidewalk Vendors

- This category includes: Former Food or Non-Food Vendor in Toronto (Licensed or Unlicensed) Current Food or Non-Food Vendor in Toronto (Licensed or Unlicensed) Hawker/Pedlar (Mobile sales people who travel on foot and sell a variety of goods door-to-door) and Portrait Artists
- There were a total of 128 responses in this category.

Consultation Overview & Feedback: City of Toronto Street Vending & Artists Review

- The majority of respondents identified as Food Vendors selling prepared foods from a truck or trailer operating on private property and public streets and/or in private events.
- Additional respondents include: mobile catering businesses operating in public spaces, ice cream trucks, non-food vendors, and caricature/portrait artists.
- Caricature/Portrait Artists are also regulated by Chapter 740, Street Vending and their feedback is included in this section.

The following statements summarize survey responses related to questions about the licensing and bylaws related to vending in Toronto:

- 62% of respondents stated they have a valid license and/or permit.
- Of those licensed, 26% agree that the licensing/permitting process very or somewhat easy. 40% found it somewhat or very difficult. 16% were neutral.
- 57% of vendor respondents rate themselves as very or mostly aware of street vending bylaws in Toronto.
- 55% of vendor respondents disagree or strongly disagree with the statement “Current vending rules are fair and effective”, while 23% were neutral.
- 54% gave their opinion that the current rules support fair access for new vendors, including those from diverse backgrounds or income levels not very well or not at all.

86% of vendors agreed that street vendors contribute a great deal to the vibrancy of public spaces and that there should be more vending in Toronto.

The following tables indicate vendors’ experience, preference and attitude to vending locations in Toronto.

What percentage (%) of your operations typically occur in each location type?

	0-24%	25-49%	50-74%	75-100%
Streets or Sidewalks (excl. Special events) (n=79)	30%	6%	22%	42%
Parks (n=50)	62%	14%	14%	10%
Private Property (n=54)	46%	6%	20%	28%

Special Events (n=69)	55%	12%	20%	13%
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Do you have a preference for where you'd like to operate most often?

Events	12%
Public Space	80%
Private Property	9%

\*Number may not add up to 100% due to rounding

Is there sufficient space or opportunity to vend in your preferred location type?

- Yes 49%
- No 51%

How important are the following factors in affecting your preferred vending location?

	Access to electrical hookup	Proximity to commissary kitchen (i.e. offsite commercial kitchen)	Being the only (or one of few) street vendors in the area	Proximity to a restaurant or eating establishment	Parking availability
Very Important	25%	16%	25%	14%	45%
Somewhat important	20%	13%	22%	18%	15%
Somewhat unimportant	8%	8%	13%	15%	5%
Not important at all	21%	32%	14%	23%	19%
Neutral / No impact	18%	16%	22%	20%	10%
Not Applicable / Unsure	9%	15%	5%	10%	6%

\*Number may not add up to 100% due to rounding

The survey requested comments on the challenges, problems and barriers that exist for vendors operating in Toronto in three separate questions. The following table summarizes the 8 most frequently cited themes within the responses based on comments with similar phrases, sentiments, and examples.

What challenges, problems or barriers exist?

Theme	Frequent Responses
Limited Locations Available	Prime spots already used; new permits are not being issued for downtown; hard to find spaces to operate; unclear that vendors cannot operate in parks; want larger space to set up and operate in
Concerns over Time Limits	5-hour limit too short, makes business difficult and does not factor set up and take down time; others say the 5-hour limit too long
High Costs	Annual fees and capital costs are high; costs are a deterrent for first-time businesses and low-income individuals; seasonal or out of town vendors disadvantaged
Lack of Designated or Available Parking Spots	Lack of space near desired locations; Green P limitations; ice cream trucks limited
Difficulties with Understanding Bylaws	Rules are confusing; difficult to find information online in one place; unclear how rules combine to determine where and how people can operate, creating gray areas; there is “red tape”
Difficulties with Enforcing Bylaws	Officers show bias; illegal vendors are given warnings while licensed ones are given tickets; Inconsistency happens often
No Applicable Category	Occupation does not fall under a licence/permit type
Concerns over Grandfathered Permits	Grandfathered permits hold prime locations; grandfathered permits have no options for legacy

How do you stay informed about bylaws related to vending (as applicable to your situation)

- The City of Toronto website was the top channel for information regarding vending By-Laws for vendors. Other channels include talking with other vendors, interaction with by-law officers, and written communication from the City of Toronto.

Where do you operate most often?

- The majority of respondents identified as Food Vendors selling prepared foods from a truck or trailer, operating on private property and public streets or primarily in private events.

Do you employ any environmental or social sustainability practices in your business?

	Percentage of positive responses
Zero Waste	41%
Employ/owned by diverse employees (e.g. 2SLGBTQ+, people with disabilities, Indigenous people, racialized women, etc.)	33%
Have a social mission	27%
Donate certain percentage of sales to charities	24%
Battery-powered equipment	18%
Zero emissions	13%
Hybrid power systems (solar and battery, etc.)	10%
None of the above	26%

Note: Respondents could select multiple categories

What kind of equipment do you use in your vending operation?

Food truck	41%
Generator	32%
Tables / chairs	26%
Propane	23%
Trailer	22%
Sidewalk stand	21%
Pushcart	16%
Electric hookup	16%

Solar-powered equipment	5%
Cargo bike	5%
Other	11%

Note: Respondents could select multiple categories

Do you think there should be more vending in Toronto?

- Yes 84%
- No 16%

Where in Toronto would you like to see more vending permitted?

Themes	Examples
Parks (Highest Frequency)	Trinity Bellwoods, High Park, Christie Pits, Riverdale Park, Withrow Park, Stanley Park, etc.
Downtown Streets and Sidewalks	Parks and festivals, Residential areas, Financial District, and Suburban areas esp. Scarborough, Etobicoke, East and North York
Citywide	Tourists places, Public squares and parks (ie. Access to places like Nathan Phillips square or harbourfront at affordable rates for small businesses)

## 2.4. Buskers and Sidewalk Artists

### Overview

- The responders in this section selected the vendor type: Busker or Street Performer. (a: Licensed or unlicensed busker or street performer Former Busker or Street Performer)
- 123 respondents completed the survey according to this vendor type.
- 67% identified themselves as musicians/vocalists.
- 33% identified as either a:
  - Circus artist, Circle show, Fire performance, Variety act, Hula hooper
  - Costumed performer
  - Juggler, Stilt performer, Stand-up comedian, Circus comedy
  - Portrait Artist, Caricaturist

- Face painter, Balloon twister, Balloon artist
  - Busker
  - DJ
  - Dancer
  - Puppeteer
  - Mime
  - Magician
  - Musician and Vendor
  - Standup Poet
  - Sidewalk Mural Artist
  - Impersonator
- Approx. 26% of Buskers are active on city streets or sidewalks 50 or more days a year, 33% busk between 10 and 49 days a year, and the final 41% vary their schedule from year to year or busk fewer than 10 days.

The following statements summarize responses to questions related to regulations for buskers and sidewalk artists in Toronto:

- 56% of Toronto’s buskers/sidewalk artists stated they have a valid permit while 37% said they do not. The most common reasons for not having a valid permit were due to busking so few times in a year that it was not worth getting a permit, cost of the permit, and retirement.
- 75% responded that it was very or somewhat easy to understand and complete the permit process. 25% indicated the process was somewhat difficult or were neutral.
- 45% were in disagreement with the statement “current vending bylaws are fair and effective”, while 23% were neutral.
- 73% rated themselves as mostly or very aware of rules that apply to buskers/performers.
- 15% of responders currently sell items while busking; 48% indicated that they don't currently but would like to; and 37% indicated they don't, and do not want to.
- 85% indicate that they learn or hear about vending/busking related information from the City of Toronto website or word-of-mouth. A small minority receive information through group chat on social media or interaction with city employees and bylaw officers.

The following tables summarize some of the challenges, experiences, and desired locations for buskers and performers in Toronto:

What are your biggest challenges with busking/street performing?

Getting a permit	5%
Finding space	24%
Noise restrictions	20%
Safety	7%
Permit cost	3%
Enforcement concerns	12%
Other (Weather, 'cashless' society, private-public spaces, competition, insurance costs, etc.)	28%

\*Number may not add up to 100% due to rounding

Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experience as a busker/street performer in Toronto?

Frequent Responses:

- Acoustic and vocal performers can't compete with street noise and other noise
- few suitable locations for performing, especially for circle shows
- Different treatment for permit holders versus non-permit holders
- Concerns for safety of performers
- Overcrowding at popular spots like Bremner Boulevard
- Toronto's busking scene isn't growing

Where in Toronto would you like to see more busking permitted?

Theme	Description and Examples
Parks (Highest Frequency)	Most frequently requested location. Strong desire to busk in and around parks city-wide. Trinity Bellwoods, Centre Island, Barbara Hall, Downsview, Roundhouse, High Park
Citywide Access	Respondents asked for citywide access
Downtown	Union Station, Ferry Terminal, Harbourfront, Queen's Quay, CN Tower,

Core	Dundas Square, Stadium areas.
Subway/TTC stations	Strong interest in expanded access to TTC spaces, especially due to weather protection and foot traffic.
Areas with Pedestrians	Yonge & Dundas, Yonge & Bloor, Queen West, Bloor & Eglinton, etc.

2.5 Restaurants and other Businesses

Overview:

- This responder type included: Eating Establishment, Events Operator or Other Business
- Number of responses: 63
- This category was included to research bricks and mortar business operators’ experience of vendors and buskers near their place of work and/or in Toronto in general.

The following table indicates the perceived negative impact for restaurants and other businesses of a mobile vendor locating within 25 metres of their business premises.

Responders also provided comments to explain their perceptions frequently citing: vendors/buskers add ‘vibrancy’ to city streets; demand for more diversity vendor food offerings; and concern for buskers obstructing sidewalks.

Note: This question did not differentiate between permitted and non-permitted busker/vendors and responses may be skewed.

What type of eating establishment do you operate?

- The responders identified themselves according to the following subcategories:
  - 59% Eating establishment (Dine-in, Take-out, Cafe, Bar)
  - 14% Retail goods or services store
  - 27% Other (Catering, BIA, bottle shops)

If one of the below vendors are – or were to be – located 25 metres or less from the entrance to your business, what impact would it have, if any?

	Small or large positive	Neutral or no impact	Small or large negative impact	Don’t know / Unsure
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	impact			
Street Vendors selling prepared food (e.g. sandwiches, plates, fries, etc.)	35%	16%	43%	6%
Food trucks operating primarily on private property	33%	29%	33%	5%
Ice cream vendors	41%	27%	27%	5%
Street vendors selling fruits or vegetables	41%	35%	21%	3%
Street vendors selling non-food items (e.g. crafts, flowers, etc.)	51%	32%	14%	3%
Buskers (i.e. people playing music)	67%	19%	13%	2%
Street performers (e.g. magicians, dancers, mimes, etc)	57%	29%	10%	5%
Sidewalk artists (e.g. painters, portrait artists)	62%	25%	10%	3%
Mobile vendors in Parks (e.g. carts, bikes, trucks)	52%	30%	16%	2%
Mobile vendors during special events only	43%	29%	24%	5%

\*Number may not add up to 100% due to rounding

The following tables summarize attitudes and experience related to mobile food vending from a business operations perspective. Busking was not included.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Agree or Strongly Agree	Disagree or strongly disagree	Neutral
Street vendors contribute positively to the overall character of the neighborhood	63%	16%	17%
Food trucks or street vendors make the area feel more vibrant and lively	67%	14%	16%

Vendors create congestion or crowding near my business	37%	35%	25%
Vendors compete with other local businesses	56%	22%	21%
Vending is a viable expansion option for my business	40%	33%	21%

Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experience with food trucks, vendors, or street performers in your area?

Frequent Responses:

- Support for food trucks and performers for adding vibrancy to public spaces.
- Concern for mobile food vendors becoming permanent in their area
- Concerns about unlicensed vendors and inconsistent bylaw enforcement
- Calls for organizing the spacing of mobile vendors

2.6 General Public

Overview

- This responder type included Residents, Visitors or Commuters to Toronto.
- There were 1,312 completed responses for this type.
- The questions summarized here are selected for relevance to behaviours, attitudes and opinions of the general public to mobile food vendors and buskers.
- The top 3 locations where the general public purchase from vendors are:
  - Events/Festivals (72%)
  - Public Sidewalks (43%)
  - Food Truck Specific Venues (e.g. Parking lots) (39%)

The following table summarizes the publics' perception, experience and priorities related to food vending and busking/performing in Toronto. These responses provide perspective on what the general public value in food vending and what they would like to see more or less of.

How often do you purchase from a street or sidewalk vendor?

- 71% purchase from a street vendor rarely or only a few times a year. Less than 29% purchase something a few times a month or more.

Thinking about your experience(s) seeing or using a street or sidewalk vendor in Toronto. What is your perception of the following, on average?

	Always or often	Sometimes	Never, rarely, or never noticed
Vendor's cart / truck / equipment is clean and tidy	72%	18%	9%
Area around the vendor is clean and tidy	64%	25%	12%
Vendor seems hygienic	73%	17%	10%
Vendor / vendor's operations are noisy	14%	29%	58%

\*Number may not add up to 100% due to rounding

How important are the following to you when it comes to food vendors?

	Very important	Somewhat important	Neutral	Not important at all
Vendor uses sustainable products of packaging (n=1,187)	27%	38%	22%	11%
Vendor uses electricity instead of a generator (n=1,193)	24%	29%	31%	15%
Food is made in sanitary conditions (n=1,309)	86%	11%	1%	0%
There are a wide variety of types of vendors across Toronto (n=1,291)	66%	22%	8%	3%
Vendors are diverse (e.g. women-owned) (n=1,235)	37%	28%	19%	15%

\*Number may not add up to 100% due to rounding

Note: Not all survey respondents from the general public rated each of the statements.

In deciding whether to get food from an eating establishment or from a food truck or cart, what factors influence your decision?

Price	57%
Food Quality	53%
Food Type	46%
Access to unique food options not available in traditional restaurants	32%

Time	28%
To support independent and/or local business	25%
Food Variety	19%
Supporting small/independent business ventures	18%

Are there other types of vending businesses you wish to see more of in Toronto (food or non-food)?

Frequent Responses:

- More diverse ethnic/cultural food options
- More Coffee and beverage vendors
- More non-food vendors incl. Buskers
- Healthier food options
- More affordable pricing
- Seating areas near vendor
- Year-round options
- Night-Markets

What experiences of food vending, non-food vending, and/or busking in other cities have you had that may provide a good example for the City of Toronto and its vendors?

Themes	Examples
Infrastructure & Support:	Designated areas for vendors Public washrooms available Seating areas (picnic tables, chairs) Garbage/recycling/compost bins Electrical hookups (eliminates noisy generators) Pedestrianized streets Clean, well-maintained spaces
Good regulation:	Less restrictive bylaws Lower licensing fees Easier permits More locations allowed Minimal regulations (while maintaining safety) Support from government
Variety & Accessibility	Multiple types of cuisine available Vendors on multiple streets/locations Year-round availability (not just festivals)

	Predictable locations/schedules Small-scale operations (carts, not just trucks) Mix of food and non-food vendors
Specific Successful Models:	Park Kiosks (European style): Night Markets (Asian style): Food Truck Pods/Corrals/Outdoor Food Courts Street Cart Culture (NYC style): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small, mobile carts</li> <li>• Specific locations on sidewalks</li> <li>• Quick, affordable food</li> </ul>

Think about street vendors, buskers and performers in Toronto, excluding special events for vendors (e.g. Do West Fest, Taste of Lawrence, etc). Rate how well you agree with the following statements:

	Agree or Strongly Agree	Neutral	Disagree or Strongly Disagree
Street or sidewalk vendors contribute positively to the overall character of the neighborhood	80%	10%	9%
Street or sidewalk vendors create congestion or crowding	21%	25%	53%
Toronto's current street and sidewalk vendors represent the diversity of Toronto's population	33%	25%	38%
There are enough street or sidewalk vendors in Toronto	12%	18%	70%
I would like to see more vending in City Parks	76%	10%	13%
Street and sidewalk vending provides consumers with more options	83%	9%	8%
Buskers and performers contribute to the vibrancy of public spaces	82%	10%	8%
Buskers and performers are too noisy	14%	24%	62%
I would like to see more busking in City Parks	60%	22%	18%

\*Number may not add up to 100% due to rounding

What types of vendors or performers do you most enjoy or find valuable in public spaces?

Food vendors	87%
Musicians	76%
Handcrafted goods / merchandise vendors	53%
Dancers or theatrical performers	48%
Visual artists / painters	47%
Children’s entertainers	36%
Recreational equipment rental	28%
Portrait or caricature artists	27%
I do not enjoy performers in public spaces	5%
Other	3%

Note: Respondents could select multiple categories

Have you ever avoided an area because of street vending or busking?

- Yes 23%
- No 77%

Why or Why Not?

Frequent Responses:

- Vendors add character and vibrancy
- Feel areas with vendors are interesting and are drawn in.
- Vendors/buskers are not intrusive
- Worry about Sidewalk congestion
- Frustration with excessive noise
- Concern for garbage accumulation

Where in Toronto would you like to see more vending or busking?

Parks (Most Frequent Responses)	Trinity Bellwoods Park High Park Christie Pits
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	Riverdale Park Withrow Park Toronto Islands/Centre Island Stanley Park Garrison Common/Commons Corktown Common
City-wide	Vending/busking broadly permitted across Toronto without geographic restrictions
Downtown Public Squares	Nathan Phillips Square (frequent) Sankofa Square/Yonge-Dundas Square (frequent) Mel Lastman Square College Park Queen's Park
Busy and Wide Sidewalk areas	Financial District

Do you have a concern related to buskers, food and non-food vendors in Toronto that you have not expressed?

- Yes 14%
- No 86%

Of those concerned (14%), the most common concerns were obstructing pedestrians and other traffic, music being too loud, air pollution from generators, noise pollution, concern about legitimacy of merchandise, and non-compliance by-laws.

What is a change the City of Toronto could make to its vending/busking By-Laws and overall strategy that would improve the street vending or busking experience for everyone?

Frequent Responses:

- Replace amplification ban with decibel limits
- Make permits more affordable
- Make application process easier
- Streamline licensing
- “Stop overregulating”

What experiences of food vending, non-food vending, and/or busking in other cities have you had that may provide a good example for the City of Toronto and its vendors?

Cities to Consider	NYC, Bangkok, Mexico City, Lisbon, Singapore, Seoul.
Variety	More selection
Night Markets and Outdoor Food Courts	Taiwan, e.g structured “hawker” stands
Improved Infrastructure	Install washrooms, seating, shade, and waste bins to support vendors and customers.
Less Regulation	Reduce regulations and fees to increase opportunity
Flexibility	Allow flexibility for fixed or scheduled locations, seen in cities like LA and NYC.

## 2.7 All Respondents

### Overview

- In total, there were 1,626 completed surveys.
- This category consisted of a single question. These comments provide a strong reference by which to measure themes from the stakeholder specific survey responses against.
- The comments are summarized below according to the top 5 most frequent responses containing similar concepts, sentiments, and phrases.

What is a change the City of Toronto could make to its vending/busking By-Laws and overall strategy that would improve the street vending or busking experience for everyone?

Top Themes (by frequency of responses)	Examples/Description
1. Reduce Fees and ‘Red Tape’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lower permit costs</li> <li>● Make it less expensive for small businesses</li> <li>● Make application process easier and streamline licensing</li> </ul>
2. Allow Amplification/Relax Noise Rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Permit modest amplification for buskers</li> <li>● Allow battery-powered amplifiers</li> </ul>

3. More Locations/Expand Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Allow vending in parks</li> <li>● Open up more spaces across the city</li> <li>● Increase designated spots</li> <li>● Less restrictive location/parking rules</li> </ul>
4. Increase Variety/Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Diverse vendors reflecting Toronto's multiculturalism</li> <li>● Different types of food trucks and carts</li> </ul>
5. Extend Operating Hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Request more than 5 hours for vending</li> </ul>

### 3. Street Outreach, Focus Groups & Meetings

#### 3.1 Overview

BMG developed a stakeholder list in collaboration with staff. The engagement was designed to provide unique focus groups for the large stakeholder groups in this list. At an early stage, stakeholder interviews and street outreach were facilitated by BMG to gain environmental awareness prior to designing and hosting Focus Group sessions. The focus groups were held both virtually and in-person.

- There were 89 focus group participants over 9 sessions
- All permitted vendors, buskers and portrait artists were invited to participate.
- TABIA in Toronto was approached to invite BIA members from across the city.
- 9 Focus Group sessions occurred with the following stakeholder groups:
  - Mobile Vendors x 3
  - Buskers x 2
  - Portrait Artists x1
  - BIAs x2

#### 3.2 Interviews and Street Outreach

- Interviews were conducted to gain contextual information prior to stakeholder engagement

- interviews were facilitated by BMG and occurred online. They included:
  - MLS By-Law Enforcement
  - University of Toronto Security and Food Services
  - Buskerfest organizer
  - Food Truck Association of Canada
  - Harbourfront Centre related Buskers
  - Food Truck operators/owners
  - Parks People: Not for Profit advocates for City Parks Nationwide
  
- Street Outreach was conducted by BMG and included:
  - On site brief conversations with ~40 vendors.
  - Distribution of Survey Postcards to vendors, buskers, general public and at high volume public desks such as Tourism Ontario.

### 3.3 Meetings and Focus Groups

BMG designed focus group engagement activities to correspond with the key groups identified in the Survey with the additional unique focus groups for R55 Permit Holders and for Portrait Artists. This was done to ensure that focus group participants had an opportunity to provide feedback on their specific experience. Each focus group session followed a similar format whether held virtually (Zoom) or in-Person.

- The responses for each of the 4 questions asked in each focus group session are summarized in this section.

Question 1: What benefit(s) does the current City of Toronto system for permits and licences offer?

Stakeholder Group	Summarized Comments
Vendors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Significant rise in tickets and summons, often for minor or unclear infractions.</li> <li>● Bylaw officers do not explain violations during inspections.</li> <li>● Vendors report conflicting guidance from different officers and departments. Vendors feel targeted and harassed.</li> <li>● Cross-departmental inconsistency (e.g. bylaw vs. parking enforcement)</li> </ul>
R55 Vendors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Vendors rely on rumours to understand bylaw changes.</li> <li>● Licences and permits are viewed as offering no real benefit, merely a contractual obligation with the city.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vendors feel they once served the city with pride, but now the city does not reciprocate that respect or value.</li> </ul>
Buskers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many buskers see the licensing system as bureaucratic and offering no real benefits, despite years of compliance.</li> <li>• Paperwork is inconvenient (e.g., photo requirements)</li> <li>• The Zero amplification rule is seen as outdated and unfair.</li> <li>• Transition from in-person to online applications is seen as a positive change.</li> <li>• Fees are fair for some, but prohibitive given the short season for busking for others.</li> </ul>
BIAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vendors report negative financial impacts of high fees and competition at festivals and events.</li> <li>• BIA representatives appreciate food trucks for adding variety and diversity.</li> <li>• “Trucks that come and go” are seen as less favorable, possibly due to creating unfair competition or disrupting customer loyalty.</li> </ul>
Portrait Artists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Price is very reasonable for permits, sidewalk vending permit</li> <li>• Bylaw officers talking to artists builds trust</li> <li>• Illegal portrait artists are not a problem.</li> <li>• Want designated spaces</li> </ul>

Question 2: What can we learn from other cities that you or people you know have operated in?

Stakeholder Group	Summarized Comments
Vendors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New York City: Vendor licensing works better.</li> <li>• China and Europe: Vendors don't face the same bureaucratic barriers.</li> <li>• Food trucks are being blocked at every turn.</li> <li>• Many trucks are confused and uncertain about what to do.</li> <li>• Other cities have opened parks to food trucks.</li> <li>• Some cities have one license to cover several cities in a region.</li> <li>• Monthly license, not seasonal or annual.</li> <li>• Many cities use rented, not owned, trucks.</li> <li>• Centralized, updated info.</li> </ul>
R55 Vendors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• St. John's NFLD has permanent spots with hydro.</li> <li>• Approaches from other cities that simplify processes and reduce unnecessary competition or confusion are to be regarded.</li> </ul>

Buskers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other cities have more designated spaces with time limits</li> <li>• In Mississauga the buskers are classified as Arts. That provides a different view to how licensing and permits work.</li> <li>• Designated, Shared Busker zones e.g. Brunswick and Bloor.</li> <li>• Montreal: 75db amplification. Can be different db at different places.</li> </ul>
BIAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NYC has trucks all over but TO hasn't got space for this. Cities like Portland use parking lots for food trucks.</li> </ul>
Portrait Artists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Montreal has higher price, but it's worth it since they're putting in more effort, have protected areas, lots of space for artists</li> </ul>

Question 3: What recommendations do you have, to improve the permit and licensing system for vendors?

Stakeholder Group	Summarized Comments
Vendors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clearer rules and expectations for all vendors, written in plain language.</li> <li>• Update outdated requirements (e.g., commissary kitchen addresses). Provide accessible information on how to apply, renew, and comply with permit conditions.</li> <li>• Establish a direct, responsive line of communication between vendors and City staff (especially MLS).</li> <li>• Ensure vendors receive timely updates about changes to rules, policies, or enforcement practices.</li> <li>• Regular consultations and engagement sessions to hear vendor concerns.</li> <li>• Simplify application and renewal processes (e.g., online options)</li> </ul>
R55 Vendors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce seasonal or 6-month permits to accommodate vendors who operate part-time or during warmer months.</li> <li>• Allow online applications and renewals</li> <li>• Modernize the system to reflect how small businesses actually function in a digital era</li> <li>• Ensure all by-law changes are communicated promptly, inclusively.</li> </ul>
Buskers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enforcement should focus on evenings, especially after 6 PM, when unlicensed vendors are more active.</li> <li>• Increase designated spaces for buskers across the city.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Licensing helps buskers feel recognized and respected, distinguishing them from unlicensed performers or panhandlers.</li> </ul>
BIA's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Designated busking locations in parks are welcomed</li> <li>● Suggest exploring location-based and weather-responsive permitting models (as used in other cities).</li> <li>● Amplified music should be regulated by location, with sensitivity to Weather conditions, which can amplify sound travel.</li> </ul>
Portrait Artists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Need more spots for artists in tourist areas; suggest designated zones</li> <li>● Need more inspections for permits due to illegal vending</li> <li>● Flower sellers are main issue for illegal vending</li> <li>● Prefer not to set up nearby Other vendors (food, musicians)</li> </ul>

Question 4: What other questions should the team leading the by-law review be asking and investigating?

Stakeholder Group	Summarized Comments
Vendors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● They should know: How does our business actually work?</li> <li>● Why are some enforcement actions so sudden or unexplained?</li> <li>● What is being done about organized illegal vendors?</li> <li>● Why are delivery drivers and construction vehicles allowed to block vending areas?</li> <li>● How many trucks should be allowed in key areas like St. George?</li> <li>● How are broader trends affecting vendors?</li> <li>● Why is communication with MLS so difficult?</li> <li>● Why do some businesses (e.g., Purolator) get special treatment?</li> </ul>
R55 Vendors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Long hours, staffing challenges, and complexity need to be recognized</li> <li>● The city can better understand the realities of vendor operations.</li> <li>● Enforcement should be based on education and dialogue, not automatic ticketing or summons.</li> <li>● Officers need better training and a clear understanding of both the rules and how vendors operate.</li> <li>● How do we ensure by-law actions are confidential?</li> </ul>
Buskers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Why should I get a license?</li> <li>● How can we better ALL know the rules?</li> </ul>

BIAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How do we address or mitigate issues related to vending. What is the balance between the community and the city?</li> <li>● What to do about a small, loud, minority?</li> <li>● How can reporting be quicker, and respond to reports?</li> <li>● What is too much or too little at a certain spot/intersection? Concentration?</li> <li>● What is the process with monitoring?</li> </ul>
Portrait Artists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Request updating naming to: 'Portrait and Caricature Artists'</li> </ul>

#### 4. Public Consultations

##### Overview

- Two public meetings were held to engage members of the public, businesses, licensed and unlicensed vendors and artists, one virtual and one in-person. All vendors and artists registered with the City were invited. The events were also advertised widely on social media, and registration links were open to anyone, available on the Toronto.ca website. Attendees were organized by type and asked specific questions to hone in on general feedback or to clarify ambiguous areas or gaps. 61 people attended the in-person meeting. There were 20 participants in the online event.
- The following summaries are based on the key themes, frequently described on the two posters/table mats that participants collaborated on.
- The questions and approach to the public consultations were based on potential policy and regulation changes derived from stakeholder engagement. Those proposals were:
  - More locations or designated spaces/zones for buskers and vendors.
  - More education for by-law officers
  - Opportunities in public parks and squares
  - Increased enforcement of illegal vendors/performers
  - Develop a guide on how to apply, find a space, etc.
  - Lower fees
  - Busking: Allow amplification
  - Portrait Artists: Update name to 'Portrait and Caricature Artists'

##### Poster One

After a presentation describing the current context of the by-laws and the topics we'd heard so far (through prior focus groups), participants were asked to discuss 4 questions that would help define how the changes could be successful:

- Which of these topics will be a benefit for you?
- Which of these topics will be a benefit to the City of Toronto?
- What topics or issues are not on this list that should be considered?
- Pick Two of these issues you would like to offer more specific feedback on?

The Topics presented were as follows:

General (across all groups):

- More locations or designated spaces / zones
- More education for bylaw officers
- Opportunities in public parks and squares
- Increased enforcement of illegal vendors / performers
- Develop a guide on how to apply, how to find a space, etc.
- Lower fees

Busking: Allow amplification

Portrait Artists: Update name to 'Portrait & Caricature artists'

The most frequent responses in the 81 participants in public consultations are briefly summarized below.

Question	Summarized Comments
Which of these topics will be a benefit for you?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Buskers want more space (e.g., dance)</li> <li>● Allow amplification in specific areas, such as parks</li> <li>● Consider a new category for installation art</li> <li>● Stop charging food trucks parking fees in addition to permits</li> </ul>
Which of these topics will be a benefit to the City of Toronto?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lower fees and longer operating times</li> <li>● Lift moratorium on sidewalk vending and different food types</li> <li>● Remove 30m restrictions (distance from restaurants)</li> <li>● Increase time limits for pay and display vendors</li> <li>● Replace amplification bylaw with fair decibel limit</li> <li>● Relax bylaws for truck vendors</li> </ul>

What topics or issues are not on this list that should be considered?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Diversity in food options, especially in moratorium areas</li> <li>● Address harassment complaints</li> <li>● No limits on vending time or number of food trucks per block</li> <li>● No pay-and-display parking for food trucks</li> <li>● Performers of color fined more often (equity issues)</li> <li>● Recommend more officer education and uniform understanding of rules</li> </ul>
Pick Two of these issues you would like to offer more specific feedback on?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lifting the Moratorium</li> <li>● More Locations &amp; Designated Spaces</li> <li>● Diversify Vendor Concepts and Offerings</li> <li>● R55 Permits Renewal (Write in Topic)</li> <li>● Increase Time Limits for Pay-and-Display Vendors</li> </ul>

### Poster Two

For the second poster, participants were asked to choose topics discussed on poster one and answer further questions. The most frequent topics and responses are summarized below.

Topics	Question One: What needs to be included for this to work out well for the city, residents and licencees?	Question Two: What issues or problems could arise as a result of implementing this topic?
More Locations and Designated Spaces	<p>Bring back maps of available streets for food trucks to reduce scouting time</p> <p>Every community hub or park should have designated spots</p> <p>Shouldn't pay for parking on top of permit fees</p> <p>RFP bid process for all squares and parks</p> <p>Designated pads (6x6 ft) with small wall/backdrop for projection; Similar to bus shelter</p>	<p>Need to understand culture and history of each neighborhood Some areas don't need more vendors (e.g., Kensington Market already saturated)</p> <p>Blanket decibel limits may not work everywhere</p> <p>Need strike system for those not using common sense</p> <p>Who gets the spot when? (scheduling conflicts)</p> <p>Could increase animosity and unhealthy competition</p>

	concept	
New regulations	<p>At least 8 hours operation time plus pre-opening time to make vending viable.</p> <p>Allow more than 3 vendors each block to operate.</p> <p>Allow family to pass on legacy permits</p>	<p>“Nothing would go wrong as long as we have enough spaces including public parks and squares.”</p>
Enforcement	<p>Enforce illegal vendors in our legal vending areas.</p> <p>More education rather than ticketing. More education for enforcement officers.</p>	<p>None. Illegal vendors give buskers/vendors a bad name.</p>
Lift Moratorium	<p>Partnerships with public and private property owners to offer locations.</p>	<p>“If diversification is not considered, there will be similar products competing for the same traffic.”</p>
Better Fine Structure	<p>Clearly defined penalties (not up to \$5000)</p>	<p>Mis-alignment between Parking Enforcement, Police, and Mobile Vending rules</p>

## Consultant's note

The City of Toronto's street vending and artists by-law review generated substantial community engagement, with over 1,600 participants contributing through surveys, focus groups, stakeholder meetings, and public consultations between June and September 2025. This engagement process captured diverse perspectives from permitted vendors, buskers, portrait artists, business improvement areas, restaurants, and the general public. All stakeholder sessions and public consultations were highly-participative with opportunity to discuss and generate ideas broadly.

Several themes emerged consistently across all engagement categories:

- **Expand locations and opportunities:** There is overwhelming support for permitting vending and busking in parks, public squares, and underserved suburban areas, with specific calls to lift the moratorium on new permits downtown.
- **Reduce barriers to entry:** Participants repeatedly called for lower fees, simplified application processes, and clearer, more accessible information about regulations to support small businesses and diverse entrepreneurs.
- **Modernize regulations:** Key requests include allowing amplification for buskers (with reasonable decibel limits), extending the 5-hour vending limit to make operations financially viable, and updating outdated requirements.
- **Improve enforcement consistency:** Both vendors and the public expressed concerns about unlicensed operators and inconsistent by-law enforcement, requesting clearer rules and more equitable application of regulations. More education for enforcement officers was often cited.
- **Value of street culture:** Across all stakeholder groups, there was strong recognition that street vendors, buskers, and artists contribute significantly to Toronto's vibrancy, neighborhood character, and public space activation.

## Moving Forward

This consultation feedback provides Municipal Licensing and Standards with a robust foundation for developing by-law amendments that balance public safety, fair business practices, and the cultural vitality that street vending and performance bring to Toronto. The engagement archive contains detailed verbatim feedback that will serve as an important reference as staff develop recommendations for City Council's consideration.