

## **Review of Toronto’s Street Vending & Artists By-laws – Attachment 5 Recommendations for Bylaw Harmonization, Burden Reduction and Administrative Updates**

*Context: Business Licence and Permit Applications Action Plan*

The street vending and artist bylaw review aligns with the Business Licence and Permit Applications Action Plan: Chapter 545, Licensing ([2025.EC22.7](#)), which establishes a roadmap for modernizing business licensing and permitting in the City. The Action Plan aims to lower regulatory burden, enhance navigation of the licensing system, and support local businesses and entrepreneurs. To advance these objectives, MLS is guided by the following five broad actions:

1. Simplify MLS’ business licence and permit application and renewal requirements
2. Transform the technology that enables Municipal Licensing and Standards’ business licence and permit administration and enforcement
3. Optimize interdivisional reviews, issuance, and enforcement of business licences and Permits
4. Modernize the City of Toronto’s business licensing regulations
5. Broaden access to and streamline direct supports and information on Municipal Licensing and Standards’ business licence and permit services.

These goals informed recommendations in this report including administrative and process improvements to enhance service delivery, regulatory clarity, and enforceability.

### *Recommendations*

#### a) Standardize and Harmonize Distance and Location Requirements in Chapter 740, Street Vending

Staff recommend standardizing the distance requirement for both sidewalk and mobile vendors from schools and establishments similar to what the vendor is selling, to 25 metres, and removing distance requirements from places of worship.

Currently, distance requirements vary across vendor types. For example, sidewalk food vendors must operate at least 25 metres from an eating establishment, while food trucks must maintain a distance of 30 metres. Similar inconsistencies exist for non-food vendors and for required distances from schools.

The objective of this amendment is to simplify and harmonize the by-law, making the rules easier to understand, apply, and enforce, while ensuring consistency across all forms of street vending.

Staff also recommend standardizing the passable sidewalk space requirement for buskers and sidewalk artists to 2.5 metres of passable space to align with distancing requirements for vendors and portrait artists.

#### b) Simplify Public Health Requirements

In consultation with Toronto Public Health, staff recommend simplifying Motorized Refreshment Vehicle requirements in Chapter 545 and replacing them with simpler rules, including:

- Vehicle must be clean, sanitary and in good working order
- Vendors must display their most recent and up-to-date DineSafe pass in a location visible to consumers and enforcement officers
- No significant structural or food safety-related changes can be made to the vehicle or units within the vehicle once approval is received from Toronto Public Health
- The area around a vehicle must be kept neat and tidy.

Several outdated or overly prescriptive provisions are proposed for deletion, including requirements for MLS notification of food sources, approval of condiment containers, and specifications for food handling and wrapping. These matters are more appropriately addressed by Toronto Public Health.

These changes also modernize the by-law and help ensure it remains relevant and adaptable as Toronto Public Health updates its requirements in response to new public health standards, technologies, and industry practices.

MLS by-law enforcement officers will continue to verify that critical health and safety standards are being met and may lay charges where appropriate or refer matters to Toronto Public Health.

#### c) Consolidate and Simplify Requirements for Refreshment Vehicles in Chapter 545, Licensing

As part of the review of the Refreshment Vehicle provisions in Chapter 545, Licensing, staff identified several areas where existing regulations and requirements that were overly prescriptive or burdensome and could be simplified or deleted, for example, a requirement that all vehicles denote the business address of the owner, and a requirement that all employees of refreshment vehicles wear “light-coloured clothing”. This report recommends amendments to Chapter 545, Licensing to amend or repeal many such clauses and simplify the rules for refreshment vehicles.

Staff also recommend consolidating the requirements for motorized refreshment vehicles within Chapter 545 so that provisions for ice cream trucks are incorporated under the same framework as other motorized refreshment vehicles, with additional rules applied only where necessary. This change eliminates repetition in the by-law and

ensures that ice cream trucks are subject to the same general standards as other vendors, while maintaining specific conditions relevant to their operations.

d) Increase the number of objections required to refuse a sidewalk vending designated permit application

Currently, when an application for a sidewalk vending permit is made, the bylaw contains provisions requiring notification to nearby building owners and businesses within 25 metres of the proposed location, the local Business Improvement Area, and the local Councillor. These parties have the opportunity to object, and under the current regulations, a single objection requires MLS to deny the application. Staff recommend aligning the objection process for designated sidewalk vending spaces in Chapter 740 to more closely align with the process used under Chapter 742 for Sidewalk and Curb Lane Cafés permits located on residential roads. Under this application, an application would only be denied if more than 25 per cent of notified parties submit written objections within the 14-day notice period. If 25 per cent or fewer parties object, the application would be approved, subject to meeting all other bylaw requirements.

Establishing a 25 per cent objection threshold ensures that refusals are based on a meaningful level of concern from nearby businesses and impacted parties, while preserving opportunities for local input and appeal. Aligning with CafeTO also improves consistency across City programs and provides greater predictability for applicants and affected businesses.

Currently Chapter 740 contains provisions that allows a vendor to appeal a denial of a sidewalk permit application to Community Council. There are no recommended changes to this process.

e) Limit transferability of sidewalk vending permits

Staff recommend allowing sidewalk vendors to incorporate, but restricting the transfer of permits, in alignment with the current provision for curbside vendors (740-20.1), which states, “all corporate entities holding a R55 Curb Lane Vending Permit are required to provide current information to the Executive Director on corporate shareholders, directors, and officers and where any changes to the controlling shareholders, directors, or officers take place, the Executive Director will revoke the Sidewalk Vending Permit”.

The objective of this recommendation is to prevent the sale of vending spaces in Toronto between people; keep the public right-of-way at a fair price for vendors; restrict corporations from having access to all the spaces in Toronto for perpetuity; provide opportunities to small businesses; and create fairness in the system.

The rationale for recommending limiting the transferability of permits is because, through jurisdictional scans and conversations with other municipalities, some cited problems with vendors re-selling their permits to other vendors for thousands of dollars,

creating a secondary market. Some cities, for example Vancouver, include provisions in their bylaw that specifically restrict a secondary market from being created.

#### f) Extending Non-Motorized Trailer Mobile Vending City-Wide

In March 2025, City Council [adopted recommendations to allow a pilot for non-motorized trailers to vend on streets](#), under the same conditions as a Mobile Food Vending Permit, in Ward 11 only.

Staff recommend adopting the pilot permanently and permitting the operation of non-motorized trailers citywide. Although no applications have been received to date, extending this allowance presents minimal risk and aligns with the City's goal of expanding opportunities for vendors.

This proposed change establishes a clear pathway within the by-law to accommodate non-motorized trailer vending in the future, should interest in this business model increase.

#### g) Removing the expiry on Legacy R55 Curb Lane Permits

##### *Overview and Current Regulations*

When the City adopted Chapter 740, Street Vending in 2014, those who already held a food truck permit were "grand-parented" under the old permitting regime, with their permit set to expire at the end of 2020. In 2018, this expiry was extended to December 31, 2026. There are currently 15 active R55 Curb Lane Vending permits in Toronto.

Three vendor focus groups were held, including one dedicated to R55 Curb Lane vendors. During these consultations, R55 permit holders consistently requested that their permit category be made a permanent legacy permit type. Some also expressed interest in transferring permits to family members due to the long-term, generational nature of their businesses. However, given the potential for permit resale and the existence of a newer mobile food vending permit, staff recommend maintaining the status quo and keeping R55 permits non-transferable.

Staff recommend removing the expiry on curb lane vending permits and allowing current permit holders to renew on an ongoing basis, provided they remain compliant with applicable by-laws and continue operating their businesses. Removing the expiry would allow these legacy curb lane vendors to continue operating under the same rules they have followed for many years.

This recommendation aims to provide stability and continuity for a small number of long-standing businesses. Many R55 permit holders have operated for decades and wish to continue their operations. These permits would remain non-transferable and valid only while the business owner continues to operate.

#### h) Consolidating buskers and sidewalk artist regulations into Chapter 740, Street Vending

Regulations for buskers and sidewalk artists are currently contained in the pre-amalgamation Former City of Toronto Chapter 313, Streets and Sidewalks, creating a lack of clarity for buskers and artists about how to follow the rules and whether they apply to areas of the City outside of the pre-amalgamation boundaries of Toronto.

Staff recommend consolidating regulations for buskers and sidewalk artists under Chapter 740, Street Vending and repealing the associated provisions in the Former City of Toronto [Chapter 313, Streets and Sidewalks](#). This will:

1. Clarify rules to operate across Toronto, as Chapter 313, Streets and Sidewalks predates amalgamation and causes uncertainty about the ability for buskers and sidewalk artists to perform in locations outside of the former City of Toronto.
2. Enable progressive enforcement, as this update allows for enforcement officers to issue tickets as a method of gaining compliance (rather than the current practice of requiring a summons to court for busker-related offences).

Staff also recommend amending the definition of a busker, “a musician or performer,” to include “who performs for a voluntary donation” and adding a definition of a caricature/portrait artist to be “an individual that makes and sells on-site caricatures or portraits” to increase clarity about the activities that are captured under these permit class regulations. Finally, staff recommend adding a new requirement for buskers to display their permit, in a similar fashion to buskers with TTC permits, in order for interested by passers-by and bylaw enforcement officers to more quickly identify permitted buskers, without interrupting them.

#### i) Amend Chapter 950, Traffic and Parking, and Chapter 743, Streets and Sidewalks, Use of, to align with proposed bylaw Chapter 740, Street Vending

Staff recommend amendments to Chapters 743, Streets and Sidewalks, Use of, and Chapter 950, Traffic and Parking, to align these by-laws with Chapter 740, Street Vending and clarify what rules permit holders under Chapter 740 are required to follow or are exempt from, under Chapter 743, and Chapter 950.

Amendments to Chapter 743 codifies the current practice that vendors holding a valid Chapter 740 to temporarily occupy the street do not require a separate road occupation permit under Chapter 743. street vending permits authorize this activity.

Amendments to Chapter 950 clarify that while standard stopping and parking restrictions continue to apply, mobile vending are exempt from the three-hour parking limit where longer parking (for the purpose of vending) is authorized under Chapter 740. Vendors continue to be required to pay for on-street parking, where required.