

## **Refreshing Food and Beverage Offerings in Park and Recreation Spaces**

**Date:** April 2, 2026

**To:** Economic and Community Development Committee

**From:** General Manager, Parks and Recreation

**Wards:** All

### **SUMMARY**

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In response to City Council direction ([2025.MM29.8](#)), this report outlines near-term actions to increase food and beverage options in parks, where appropriate, including an assessment of existing physical structures and operating models. The report also establishes a clear pathway toward a comprehensive four-year food and beverage strategy to be brought forward for Council consideration in 2027.

Toronto's parks are among the City's most valued public spaces, but food and beverage services remain limited, inconsistent, and developed on a site-by-site basis. A more coordinated, city-wide approach is needed to improve access, modernize infrastructure, and reduce barriers for small businesses and community organizations. To that end, this report:

- Describes the current state of mobile vending, concessions, and restaurant services in parks, including key benefits and challenges;
- Recommends launching a **City-coordinated mobile vending program** with a phased rollout across selected parks starting June 25, 2026, supported by clear rules, consistent oversight, and engagement with local Councillors and communities;
- Recommends a **simplified concession application process**, improving access for non-profits and small operators, while maintaining competitive processes at high-demand sites; and
- Establishes four guiding principles and a roadmap for the development of a **four-year food and beverage strategy** to be presented to Council in 2027 to guide long-term decisions on investment, infrastructure, operating models, and service standards.

Implementation of the proposed actions will include targeted engagement with Ward Councillors, Business Improvement Areas, community stakeholders, and prospective

operators, with ongoing monitoring and evaluation to assess program performance and inform future refinements. This report was prepared in consultation with Municipal Licensing and Standards (MLS), Toronto Public Health (TPH), Solid Waste Management Services (SWMS), Purchasing and Materials Management Division (PMMD), and other internal City Divisions, as appropriate.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The General Manager, Parks and Recreation recommends that:

1. City Council approve the park mobile vending program as described in Section 2 of this report and direct the General Manager, Parks and Recreation to implement the program, based on the park selection criteria in Section 2.2 and in consultation with the Ward Councillor.
2. City Council authorize the General Manager, Parks and Recreation in consultation with the Ward Councillor, to execute licence agreements for food concessions with interested community-based non-profit groups for a term of up to five years, on terms and conditions satisfactory to the General Manager, Parks and Recreation, and in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor, provided that the community based non-profit group pays the negotiated market licence fees, and provides recreation benefits in adjacent spaces as outlined in Section 3.2 of this report, as determined by the General Manager, Parks and Recreation.
3. City Council authorize the General Manager, Parks and Recreation to execute licence agreements with concession operators selected through a concession program application process to be established by the General Manager, Parks and Recreation as outlined in Section 3.3 of this report for an initial term of three to five years, including an option to renew for up to five additional years at the discretion of the General Manager, Parks and Recreation, all on terms and conditions satisfactory to the General Manager, Parks and Recreation and in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor.
4. City Council direct the General Manager, Parks and Recreation, to report back to City Council in 2027 with an update on the park mobile vending program and the four-year food and beverage strategy as described in Section 4 of this report.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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Parks and Recreation (PR) currently administers a range of food and beverage services across the parks and recreation system, including mobile vending, concessions, and full-service restaurant operations in select locations. Existing operators work under licence or lease agreements and contribute to the City through a combination of fixed rent, base licence fees, and revenue-sharing arrangements, depending on the operating model and location. Over the last three years, historical revenue from food and beverage agreements has ranged from \$1.1 million to \$1.2 million annually.

*Table 1.1: Historical Food and Beverage Revenue by Category*

	2022	2023	2024	% of Total
Restaurants	\$1,029,000	\$1,059,000	\$1,086,000	95%
Concessions	\$33,000	\$33,000	\$33,000	3%
Mobile Vending	\$21,000	\$22,000	\$23,000	2%
Total	\$1,083,000	\$1,114,000	\$1,142,000	100%

The recommendations in this report are expected to have no material net operating budget impact in the short term. The proposed new staged City-Coordinated Park Mobile Vending Program is anticipated to generate modest revenue in the first year based on the projected level of vendor participants. Incremental revenues generated through mobile vending permits and concession licences will be used to offset program administration, marketing, and oversight costs.

*Table 1.2: Projected Vendor Participation and Revenue Projections*

	Low	Target	High
Program Participants	25	50	75
Projected Revenue	\$70,300	\$140,600	\$211,000

Any future operating or capital impacts associated with expanded food and beverage services will be brought forward for Council consideration through the four-year food and beverage strategy and the City’s annual budget process.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the information as presented in the Financial Impact Section.

**DECISION HISTORY**

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At its meeting on April 23 and 24, 2025, City Council adopted [MM29.8](#) entitled "Time for Outdated Park Rules to Touch Grass" requesting the General Manager, Parks and Recreation, to review, amongst other things, options to provide more food and beverage offerings in parks, where appropriate, including an assessment of physical structures and operating models.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2025.MM29.8>

At its meeting on June 11, 12, 13, 2013, City Council adopted [GM22.13](#) entitled "Additional Strategies to Support Community-Based Non-Profit Groups to Operate Food Concessions in Parks, Forestry and Recreation Facilities" authorizing the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation to enter into new agreements with any interested community-based non-profit groups for a maximum period of five years,

provided that the community based non-profit group pays negotiated market rent and meet the service level requirements.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2013.GM22.13>

## COMMENTS

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### 1. FOOD AND BEVERAGE SERVICES IN PARKS – CURRENT STATE AND 2026 ACTIONS

The City has a long history of providing food and beverage options in City parks. This section describes food and beverage services currently operated across Toronto's parks and recreation system and outlines actions and improvements proposed for implementation in 2026.

#### 1.1 Mobile Vending

##### Current State

Mobile vending includes food trucks, carts, and seasonal vendors operating in select parks. Parks and Recreation (PR) currently issues permits directly to vendors at a limited number of locations, including Cherry Beach, Morningside Park, and Thomson Memorial Park. In other parks such as High Park, Centre Island, and Woodbine Beach, mobile vending is managed through large food and beverage licence agreements anchored by restaurants, where PR does not issue individual permits.

Under the current model:

- Vendors operate independently and are not assigned specific vending locations within a park.
- Operating hours, service levels, and oversight by the City vary by site based on the license type.
- Entry points for new vendors are limited and unclear
- Public awareness of permitted vending in parks is limited.

While mobile vending offers a flexible, low-cost service model, the absence of City-led coordination limits PR's ability to align vending with park use, equity objectives, and customer experience expectations. A City-Coordinated Park Mobile Vending Program is proposed to address this gap.

##### 2026 Action: City-Coordinated Park Mobile Vending Program

For the 2026 season, PR proposes the introduction of a City-Coordinated Park Mobile Vending Program starting on June 25, 2026. The program will allow mobile food vendors to apply for a permit to operate food trucks or food carts within designated park locations across the City. The program's goal is to expand the availability of food and beverage offerings in select park locations while ensuring that all vendors operate under a consistent and coordinated City-managed framework. Depending on park size and context, locations may function as multi-vendor hubs or single-vendor sites.

Full details on the proposed Park Mobile Vending Program can be found in Section 2 of this report.

## **1.2 Concessions**

### **Current State**

Concessions are snack-bar style operations located within recreation facilities or small park buildings. The City provides and maintains the physical space, while operators manage day-to-day operations. There are currently 30 concession locations across the system with 16 operated by commercial licensees, eight operated by community-based non-profits, and six that are currently vacant.

Historically, most concessions have been awarded through formal competitive procurement processes. While appropriate for larger or highly competitive opportunities, these processes are not well suited to smaller, seasonal concession operators, contributing to longer vacancy periods and limiting access for community-based organizations and smaller operators.

### **2026 Action: Simplified Concession Application Process**

To improve access and reduce barriers, PR proposes to implement a simplified concession application process for eligible locations beginning in 2026. The updated approach establishes two clear pathways:

- **Community-based non-profit concessions:** Where concessions primarily serve adjacent recreation amenities and support community programming, licences may be issued directly to eligible non-profit organizations without a competitive process.
- **Commercial concession locations:** In higher-traffic or commercially viable locations, concessions will be awarded through a simplified application process rather than a full Request for Proposal.

This approach is intended to activate vacant spaces more quickly, improve service consistency, and maintain appropriate oversight and accountability. High-demand sites will continue to be managed through competitive processes where warranted.

PR worked in consultation with Purchasing and Materials Management Division to refine procurement approaches for concession opportunities. These updates are intended to balance fair and transparent procurement practices with the need to address longstanding challenges in this sector, including lengthy processes, limited participation from small and community-based operators, and the underutilization of available concession spaces. The proposed application-based approach incorporates best practices and lessons learned from PMMD processes while introducing greater flexibility to improve access and activation. Details on the Simplified Concession Application Process can be found in Section 3 of this report.

## **1.3 Restaurants**

### **Current State**

Four full-service restaurants currently operate in select parks under long-term licence agreements. These arrangements are complex and best suited to high-traffic locations due to planning, servicing, and capital requirements. Operators manage day-to-day operations and fund most capital improvements, while the City retains ownership of the buildings.

### **2026 Approach: No Programmatic or Financial Model Changes**

No changes to restaurant operating models or financial arrangements are proposed through this report. Existing restaurant operations will continue under current licence and lease frameworks while staff advance the development of a comprehensive four-year food and beverage strategy in collaboration with other city divisions, such as Corporate Real Estate Management, Purchasing & Materials Management Division, Toronto Public Health, Municipal Licencing & Standards, Economic Development & Culture and other City divisions, where appropriate.

The forthcoming four-year strategy will assess opportunities to modernize offerings, improve alignment with visitor experience objectives, and inform future capital and operating decisions. This work will be coordinated with PR planning initiatives, including the Parkland Strategy and the PR Facilities Plan, to ensure alignment with long-term asset management and investment priorities.

Restaurant modernization, expansion, or changes to operating models will be considered through the four-year food and beverage strategy to be reported to Council in 2027.

#### *Required Contract Extensions in Toronto Island Park*

As part of this approach, short-term licence extensions of up to three years are required in Toronto Island Park to maintain uninterrupted service while staff complete the food and beverage strategy and undertake a future competitive procurement aligned with long-term service objectives. Food and beverage agreements at other park locations remain in effect and do not require extensions, as sufficient contract term remains for the strategy to be in place prior to their renewal.

This approach provides sufficient time for market analysis, consultation, and for qualified operators to plan, invest, and deliver high-quality service.

## **2: CITY-COORDINATED PARK MOBILE VENDING PROGRAM (2026)**

To address identified service gaps and strong public demand, staff recommends the implementation of a City-Coordinated Park Mobile Vending Program beginning June 25th, 2026. This program represents a near-term action designed to expand food and beverage access in parks using existing authorities, while informing longer-term planning through the forthcoming four-year food and beverage strategy.

The program will allow mobile food vendors to apply for a permit to operate food trucks or food carts within designated park locations across the City. The program's goal is to expand the availability of food and beverage offerings in select park locations while ensuring that all vendors operate under a consistent and coordinated City-managed framework. Depending on park size and context, locations may function as multi-vendor hubs in larger parks or single-vendor sites in smaller parks. Sale of alcohol and other non-food related items or services will not be included as part of the program.

## **2.1 Supporting Context: Jurisdictional Scan and Community Engagement**

To inform the design of the City-Coordinated Park Mobile Vending Program, staff first reviewed approaches used in other municipalities and considered recent public consultation findings, then proceeded to engage community stakeholders directly to gather input into program development and implementation.

### **a. Jurisdictional Scan and Existing Public Feedback:**

The review found that mobile vending programs commonly rely on clear permitting systems, designated locations, and seasonal or pilot-based allocations. Vendors are typically assessed on health and safety, operational capacity, and environmental practices, with most municipalities favouring designated locations rather than unrestricted roaming.

Public consultation conducted in 2025 by Municipal Licensing and Standards demonstrated strong support for expanded vending in parks, with 76 per cent of residents and visitors expressing support. This aligns with broader city-wide engagement through the Listening to Toronto framework, which identified lower overall satisfaction (58 per cent) with food and beverage availability in parks.

Overall, findings indicate that successful food and beverage programs balance safety, environmental considerations, operational consistency, and equitable vendor access, while remaining responsive to local park context. These findings informed the proposed program approach for 2026.

### **b. Community Engagement:**

To support implementation of the City-Coordinated Park Mobile Vending Program, staff conducted an initial phase of targeted engagement in areas identified as potential program locations. Stakeholders included local Councillors, Business Improvement Areas, Friends of Parks groups, and neighbourhood associations.

Engagement activities included one-on-one meetings, small group discussions, and broader stakeholder sessions, including coordination with the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas.

This engagement focused on introducing the proposed program model, gathering site-specific input, and identifying local economic, operational, environmental, and community considerations.

## What We Heard

Stakeholders generally supported expanding food and beverage services in parks, particularly in underserved areas, and identified opportunities to enhance visitor experience and animate park spaces. Key considerations included site suitability, clarity around governance and enforcement, opportunities for local businesses, potential economic impacts on surrounding areas, waste and maintenance expectations, and operational issues such as noise, emissions, and compatibility with existing park uses.

Overall, feedback reinforced that successful implementation would require a balanced, site-specific, and well-managed approach.

## How Feedback Has Informed the Program

Feedback received to date has informed refinements to park selection criteria, vendor placement, and operational requirements. The program design incorporates a more targeted approach that considers infrastructure, environmental sensitivity, surrounding uses, and existing food services.

Vendor responsibilities related to waste management, cleanliness, and site upkeep have been strengthened, supported by coordination with Parks Operations and Solid Waste Management. Clear roles, compliance standards, and enforcement processes have been established across PR, MLS, and Toronto Public Health. Measures have also been included to ensure compatibility with existing park uses, such as events and markets.

## 2.2 Proposed Park Mobile Vending Program

The program is proposed to be launched on June 25, 2026 and will:

- Use existing licensing, public health, and Parks By-law requirements
- Apply consistent park selection criteria to ensure vending is introduced only where appropriate
- Establish clear expectations for operating hours, waste management, and site cleanliness
- Improve transparency and access for vendors seeking to operate in parks

The program does not introduce new fees or regulatory requirements and will be implemented using existing compliance and enforcement mechanisms. It coordinates and expands the application of existing permissions to improve consistency, oversight, and customer experience.

### *a. Licensing, Public Health and By-law Requirements*

The proposed program builds on existing regulatory and operational frameworks. All participating vendors must hold the appropriate licences and comply with applicable public health, safety, and municipal by-laws. No new fees or regulations are introduced through this report; rather, the program coordinates and applies existing permissions in a more consistent and transparent way within parkland.

All vendors must hold a valid motorized or non-motorized refreshment vehicle owner licence issued by Municipal Licensing and Standards, including a DineSafe inspection from Toronto Public Health, and comply with requirements related to vehicle operation (Municipal Code Chapter 608) and waste management (Chapter 548). Additional details on vendor eligibility and onboarding are provided in Attachment 1.

#### *b. Park Selection Criteria*

Suitable park locations will continue to be developed using consistent park selection criteria that considers operational, environmental and market considerations. The intent is to ensure vending is introduced where it is appropriate, feasible, and compatible with the public and natural character of the park.

Selection criteria includes:

- availability of washrooms and waste receptacles;
- identified gaps in existing food and beverage services;
- access to suitable infrastructure (e.g., paved areas);
- compliance with park and vehicle regulations;
- overall business viability; and
- park size, usage patterns, environmental sensitivity, and compatibility with surrounding uses.

Staff have undertaken a preliminary assessment of initial park locations to be included in the program. Further review is underway for these sites including operational feasibility and community engagement before including them in the program. While initial implementation in 2026 will focus on a smaller number of operationally ready sites, additional locations may be introduced over time based on program performance, vendor interest, and community feedback.

#### *c. Operating Hours and Operational Considerations*

Beginning June 25, 2026, the program will operate primarily during daytime and early evening hours through early fall. It is intended to be flexible and scalable, allowing PR to test demand, site suitability, and operational considerations while improving the quality, consistency, and visibility of food options across the parks system.

#### *d. Improved communication and access for vendors*

To improve communication and access for vendors seeking to operate in parks, the program will have clear, publicly available program guidelines outlining eligibility criteria requirements, operating expectations, fees, and site conditions. The program will utilize a standardized application and selection process with consistent criteria, published advance notice of application timelines and a list of eligible park locations.

## **2.3 Implementation**

The City-Coordinated Park Mobile Vending Program will be implemented in stages for 2026 to test demand, site suitability, and operating costs. Findings will inform future decisions through the four-year food and beverage strategy.

Implementation will be led by PR in consultation with local Councillors and Business Improvement Areas, community stakeholders and divisional city partners, enabling a low-barrier approach that remains responsive to local context while maintaining a city-wide framework. If demand from vendors exceed the supply of approved vending locations, priority selection will be given to a) local businesses, b) Toronto businesses, and c) all other businesses.

### *Program Oversight and Fee Structure*

Program oversight will be shared across City divisions to ensure clear roles and accountability:

- Parks and Recreation (PR): Program administration, including vendor participation, site assignments, permits, and compliance with park-specific guidelines.
- Municipal Licensing and Standards (MLS): Enforcement of licensing regulations and Parks By-law requirements.
- Toronto Public Health and other applicable divisions: Enforcement of health and safety requirements.
- Solid Waste Management: Oversight of waste services and monitoring of program impacts on operations.

PR will monitor program activity and coordinate with MLS on compliance. Complaints received through 311 will be tracked and reviewed, with follow-up as appropriate. Non-compliance will be addressed through progressive enforcement, up to and including suspension or removal from the program.

Participating vendors will pay the applicable permit and program fee under Municipal Code Chapter 441 (Vending Class 2 in Outdoor Parkland). The program will use Council-approved seasonal fees of \$2,812.63, which support cost recovery for administration, communications, monitoring, and operations, and are comparable to other jurisdictions. First-year revenues are expected to be modest and will be used to support program delivery.

### *Evaluation*

PR will evaluate program outcomes throughout the 2026 season using both quantitative and qualitative measures, including:

- Customer experience and community feedback
- Vendor participation, number of active locations, and ward distribution
- Operational performance, including compliance, cleanliness, waste management, and complaints,
- Equity, including participation of local and diverse operators and range of offerings
- Financial performance, including cost recovery and administrative impacts

Monitoring will be led by PR in coordination with Municipal Licensing and Standards, Toronto Public Health, and Solid Waste Management, with issues addressed through established processes.

#### *Next Steps*

Pending Council direction, PR will undertake a second phase of engagement as part of program planning, working with local Councillors, BIAs, and community stakeholders to confirm park locations and refine site-specific operating details. Final site selection will be based on program criteria, operational feasibility, and stakeholder input. A communications plan will be developed in coordination with the City's Communications division to support public awareness and vendor participation.

The program will operate June 25, 2026 to approximately October 12, 2026 and be rolled out incrementally as locations are confirmed through community engagement. Findings from the 2026 season will inform program refinements and the development of the four-year Food and Beverage Strategy to be reported to Council in 2027.

### **3. SIMPLIFIED CONCESSION PROGRAM APPLICATION PROCESS (2026)**

Food concessions support recreation programming, enhance visitor experience, and help activate parks and facilities. Concessions across the City's parks and recreation system are operated by both commercial vendors and community-based non-profit organizations, many of which deliver broader community benefits.

Historically concession locations have been bundled together and allocated through formal competitive procurement processes that can create barriers for smaller, seasonal operators and community-based organization, contributing to vacancies and limiting local participation. To reduce barriers and ensure concessions better reflect local needs, PR is updating how concession spaces are allocated. The improvements focus on two pathways:

- Prioritizing community-based non-profits where appropriate.
- Introducing a simplified application process for commercially competitive locations.

This approach creates a more flexible, fair, and accessible system to support both not-for-profit and small businesses.

#### **3.1 Proposed Allocation Framework:**

PR will use a location-based approach to determine how each concession space is filled:

- Community-based non-profit locations: Concessions that primarily serve adjacent recreation amenities (such as sports fields, diamonds, or recreation facilities) and where a non-profit already delivers programming will be directly licensed to the community group, without a competitive process.

- Commercial locations: Concessions in arenas, stadiums, and certain parks (where demand and revenue potential are higher) will be filled through a simplified application process to ensure fairness and transparency.

Final allocation decisions will be made by the General Manager Parks and Recreation in consultation with the local Councillor, based on site conditions, demand, and alignment with community and operational goals.

### **3.2 Support for Not-for-Profit Community Groups**

While Council direction from 2013 (GM22.13) prioritized select concession sites for non-profits, it limited opportunities to expand this model. The proposed approach enables broader participation by increasing the amount of available concession locations prioritized for non-profit use. Non-profits will be prioritized where:

- The concession is adjacent to recreation amenities they program;
- No existing agreements restrict food services; and
- The site is not suited to a commercial process.

These concession locations have little commercial interest and primarily serve program users. Concession locations will be directly licensed to not-for-profit groups to support local programming and service delivery.

### **3.3 Simplified Concession Application for Commercial Locations**

To improve access and reduce barriers for small businesses, PR proposes to implement a simplified concession application process for eligible locations beginning in 2026.

PR worked in consultation with Purchasing and Materials Management Division to refine procurement approaches for concession opportunities. These updates are intended to balance fair and transparent procurement practices with the need to address longstanding challenges in this sector, including lengthy processes, limited participation from small and community-based operators, and the underutilization of available concession spaces.

Eligibility criteria include:

- Vacant or expiring concession locations;
- Sufficient visitation to support operations;
- No restrictions from existing agreements; and
- Not subject to other leases or licences.

The General Manager, Parks and Recreation will maintain and update the list of eligible locations. Concession agreements awarded through the simplified process will include:

- An initial term of three to five years, based on operator preference.
- A renewal option of up to five additional years.

Where sites are larger in scale, highly competitive, or present increased operational or financial complexity, PR will continue to utilize a full competitive procurement process such as an RFP to ensure appropriate market response and value.

### *Concessions Program Application Process*

Under current practice, vacant Concession opportunities that are not occupied by community non-profit organizations be marketed through a formal Request for Proposals (RFP) process. While this process support transparency and competition, it is extensive and can be administratively challenging for small businesses to participate in. The need to bundle multiple vacant concessions into a single RFP has, in some cases, contributed to prolonged vacancy at snack bar spaces.

To address these challenges, a new online application process is proposed. This process would allow interested vendors to apply on an ongoing basis by completing an online application form that confirms their qualifications and includes details of proposed food services, along with any required supporting documentation.

Parks and Recreation recommends that concession opportunities continue to be awarded through a structured selection process, requiring applicants to meet all mandatory requirements (e.g. health and safety requirements, food handling certification, licence to serve food, adherence to City policies and requirements and all applicable laws) before applications are evaluated.

This approach maintains the rigour of traditional RFP evaluations, including the assessment of technical and financial criteria through a clear, score-based system, while simplifying the process for applicants by aligning it more closely with existing permit application models.

### **Evaluation Criteria:**

#### **Technical Score**

- Qualifications and Experience
- Service provision
- Health and Safety and Food Safety Measures
- Professionalism, customer service and service standards
- Menu offerings - suitability to operation
- Healthy options, affordable choices, options for various dietary needs, considers diversity and/or celebrates local culture.
- Quality, innovation and creativity
- Investment in capital improvements, equipment, and refresh of space
- Sustainability, environmental consideration, and waste management

#### **Financial Score**

- Base Licence Fee to the City (to be no less than market-rate)

In addition to the above criteria, additional consideration will be given to non-profit organizations, local businesses where the owners are Toronto residents who live within the Ward or in the adjacent Ward, and for Social Procurement Program considerations.

Should there be two top-scored proposals resulting in the same score, the proposal with the higher technical score will be chosen. If the two technical scores are equal, then the proposal that was submitted first will be awarded the opportunity.

To ensure diversity of service in a local area, vendors will only be awarded one concession opportunity per ward, unless no other applicants qualify in that ward, in which case multiple licences may be awarded to the vendor in the same ward.

The evaluation criteria and process may be changed from time to time to ensure program improvements.

The application process will open twice a year for any available snack bar opportunities: once for the winter snack bar operation (October to April), and once for summer operation (May to September). After the submission deadline, any late applicants may be considered for any vacant opportunities remaining after concession opportunities have been awarded for the applications submitted on-time.

Submissions will be reviewed by at least two staff members to verify results and ensure fairness. Debrief meetings will be available for unsuccessful applicants upon request to assist applicants in their next application submission.

### **3.4 Concessions Program – Financial Considerations:**

PR oversees approximately 30 concession locations, operated by a mix of commercial and non-profit operators paying market-based licence fees. The updated approach is not expected to significantly increase short-term revenue but will:

- Reduce vacancy and improve activation rates;
- Enhance service consistency and customer experience; and
- Support non-profit participation where appropriate, while maintaining financial accountability.

Future changes to pricing, revenue-sharing, or capital requirements will be considered through the forthcoming four-year Food and Beverage Strategy.

## **SECTION 4: ROADMAP TO THE CITY'S FUTURE FOOD AND BEVERAGE STRATEGY (2027)**

Food and beverage services in Toronto's parks have evolved through site-specific agreements and historical practices, resulting in inconsistent service levels and limited system-wide coordination. While the near-term actions outlined in Sections 2 and 3 address immediate needs for the 2026 season, a longer-term framework is required to guide investment, operations, and partnership models across the parks system.

A four-year strategy will establish this framework. The timeline aligns with evaluation of 2026 program changes, upcoming contract expirations and the need to phase operational, infrastructure, and governance improvements. The strategy will be developed in stages, beginning with program evaluation and governance updates, followed by options analysis and future Council decisions.

Development will include engagement with the public, Business Improvement Areas, and existing and prospective vendors to identify priorities, understand service expectations, and inform future program and investment options. Engagement methods may include surveys, stakeholder interviews, workshops, and on-site outreach.

This work will also strengthen PR's operational capacity to manage modernized arrangements, support diverse service models, and deliver consistent, high-quality customer experiences. The strategy will be guided by four principles:

- Customer Experience: Improve facility quality, streamline approvals, and enhance service delivery.
- Accessibility and Choice: Expand diverse, inclusive, and culturally relevant food options.
- Revenue Generation: Optimize assets and explore sustainable revenue and partnership models.
- Best Practices: Apply lessons from leading jurisdictions, City divisions, and industry standards.

The strategy will provide a roadmap to modernize services, address long-standing gaps, and build on improvements introduced in 2026. It is also timely, as several major restaurant agreements will expire within the next five years, creating an opportunity to refresh and diversify offerings in line with public expectations.

## **CONCLUSION:**

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Toronto's parks are central to public life, and expectations for convenient, inclusive, and high-quality food and beverage services continue to grow. This report responds to Council direction in [2025.MM29.8](#) by outlining a phased approach to improving food and beverage services, with near-term actions for the 2026 season and a clear path for longer-term planning.

The proposed City-coordinated mobile vending program and updated concession allocation processes will address service gaps, reduce administrative barriers, and improve consistency and oversight, while remaining responsive to local context and market conditions. These initiatives will be implemented as short-term measures to test approaches and inform future expansion.

The report also establishes the development of a four-year Food and Beverage Strategy to guide future decisions on operating models, infrastructure, and governance. This strategy will be informed by 2026 program results, stakeholder input, and operational experience, and will be brought to Council in 2027.

Overall, these recommendations introduce a more coordinated and modern approach that enhances visitor experience, supports local economic activity, and maintains the public and natural character of parks. Staff will report back to Council in 2027 with strategy recommendations and an update on program performance.

## CONTACT

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## SIGNATURE

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Terry Ricketts  
General Manager, Parks and Recreation

## ATTACHMENTS

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### **Attachment 1: Vendor Selection Criteria and Onboarding:**

The City-Coordinated Park Mobile Vending Program will use a fair, transparent, and efficient onboarding process to support vendor participation.

### **Vendor Eligibility**

All participating vendors must:

- Hold a valid motorized or non-motorized Refreshment Vehicle Licence issued by Municipal Licensing and Standards (MLS)
- Meet all food health and safety requirements.
- Comply with Parks and Recreation program guidelines for operating within parkland, including site requirements, hours of operation, and environmental standards

### **Application and Selection Process**

The onboarding process will begin with broad outreach to all MLS-licensed food truck and cart operators. Vendors will submit an application identifying menu offerings, price ranges, and their top three preferred park locations. If demand exceeds available space, vendors will be selected by prioritizing a) local businesses, b) Toronto businesses, and c) all other businesses.

### **A streamlined five-step process will guide onboarding and implementation:**

Step 1 - Outreach:

- Parks and Recreation will contact all licensed food truck and cart operators and circulate program information through BIAs, the City website, and social media. Vendors without a current MLS licence must obtain one before applying.

#### Step 2 - Applications:

- Vendors submit an application including park preferences, menu details, and pricing.

#### Step 3 - Review and Selection:

- Staff review applications against approved vending locations and infrastructure. Eligible vendors are placed, and a waitlist is created if needed. Prioritized selection will be used if applications exceed capacity. Participating vendors will be provided with an advance package outlining the City's expectations and participate in a site visit prior to their first day on site.

#### Step 4 - Program Launch:

- The program will run from June 25, 2026 to October 12, 2026 and will be promoted through the City's communications plan.

#### Step 5 - Program Evaluation:

- Staff will collect public feedback via an online survey, conduct site visits, and engage vendors and community stakeholders. These findings will inform future improvements and the four-year food and beverage strategy.