

## **Review of Toronto’s Street Vending & Artists By-laws**

**Date:** March 24, 2026

**To:** Economic and Community Development Committee

**From:** Interim Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards

**Wards:** All

### **SUMMARY**

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In a city as large and vibrant as Toronto, investing in a strong local economy supports a high quality of life for residents. Street vendors and artists contribute to these efforts by adding to the vibrancy of the public realm, strengthening community relationships, and offering the public opportunities to conveniently access food, goods and art.

City of Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 545, Licensing, outlines licence requirements that certain businesses, including mobile vendors, need to meet to operate their business in Toronto. City of Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 740, Street Vending establishes rules for vendors operating on the public Right-of-Way for the purpose of selling refreshments, including food, drink and ice cream, as well as art made by portrait artists. Additionally, former City of Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 313, Streets and Sidewalks regulates the City’s buskers and sidewalk artists.

As directed by City Council, the City’s Municipal Licensing and Standards Division (MLS) undertook a review of the City’s street vending and artist by-laws in 2025, with the goals of:

- Improving opportunities for street vendors and artists by identifying ways to support entrepreneurship, cultural expression, and equitable access to public space, while enhancing City vibrancy and consumer options;
- Modernizing licensing requirements and processes to reflect evolving business models and reduce regulatory and financial burdens; and
- Updating and clarifying by-law language to improve consistency, comprehension, and enforceability.

The review included public and industry consultation to identify options to enhance and update the regulatory framework and address the goals of the review.

Recommendations in this report include:

- Adopting a revised Chapter 740, Street Vending and Artists, that updates permit types and makes rules easier to understand for permit-holders;

- Lifting a moratorium on new sidewalk vending locations, originally established in 2002, and expanding opportunities for musical buskers by allowing them to sell original media and use amplification in their performances (under certain conditions);
- Establishing new regulations for travelling vendors, to clarify rules and increase opportunities;
- Increasing mobile vending daily limits from 5 to 12 hours; removing permit expiry for legacy curb-lane vendors; allowing more items to be sold under the current ice cream truck model and permitting the sale of non-food items to expand opportunities for mobile vendors; and,
- Reducing fees for most vending and artist permits to increase opportunities for vendors, right-sizing and harmonizing fees, and reflecting consultation feedback and jurisdictional research, while continuing to address the costs associated with administration, enforcement, and the management of public spaces.

The proposals have sought to mitigate any potential congestion impacts of an increase in vending activity through operating conditions on permits when operating in the right of way. In consultation with the Chief Congestion Officer, the recommendations in this report are not anticipated to have any significant immediate impacts on congestion, however, staff will monitor the implementation of the recommendations in this report to assess operational or congestion-related impacts that may arise from these changes.

As part of a monitoring plan, staff are proposing to report back on the implementation of the recommendations in this report, which would include an assessment of noise, congestion and/or operational issues, and propose any necessary further refinements or actions to address those issues.

This report was developed in consultation with Transportation Services, Toronto Public Health, Parks and Recreation, Environment, Climate and Forestry, Economic Development and Culture, and the Chief Congestion Officer.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The Interim Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards recommends that:

### **Interim Amendments to Chapter 740**

1. City Council amend City of Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 740, Street Vending by deleting section 740-11(the moratorium on new applications for Sidewalk Vending Permits for food vendors in Wards 10, 11 and 13).
2. City Council amend City of Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 740, Street Vending by deleting the phrase “five hours” in section 740-17A(6) and replacing it with the phrase “twelve hours” to permit Mobile Food Vending permit holders to operate for up to twelve hours on the same block within a 24 hour period.

3. City Council amend City of Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 740, Street Vending by deleting the phrases “, until January 1, 2027,” and “As at January 1, 2027, the R55 Curb Lane Vending Permits will, without notice, automatically be cancelled.” from section 740-20 to remove the expiry date on existing Curb Lane Vending Permit holders, and allow Curb Lane Vendors to continue operating under the term of their current R55 Curb Lane Vending permit.

### **Adoption of a New Chapter 740**

4. City Council adopt a new vending permit regime and amend City of Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 740, Street Vending and Artists, as follows:

- a. Delete Articles I, II, III, IV, V, VI and VII and add Articles 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 as set out in Attachment 1 to this report (March 24, 2026) from the Interim Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards.
- b. Rename Schedule D “Short Stop Vending Permit Locations”;
- c. Add a new Schedule E, “Artist Permit Restrictions” as set out in Attachment 1 to this report (March 24, 2026) from the Interim Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards;
- d. Rename Chapter 740 “Street Vending and Artists”

5. City Council delete section 313-44.1 from former City of Toronto Chapter 313, Streets and Sidewalks, which contains dated provisions relating to buskers and portrait artists.

### **Interim Amendments to Chapter 545, Licensing**

6. City Council remove the requirement for Pedlar Assistants to obtain a business licence, as mentioned in 545-226(A).

### **Adoption of New Articles in Chapter 545, Licensing**

7. City Council amend Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 545 to repeal Article IV Refreshments Sold from Vehicles, and replace it with provisions substantially in the form of draft Article IV Refreshment Vehicles, attached as Attachment 2 to this report (March 24, 2026) from the Interim Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards, to simplify and clarify licence conditions.

8. City Council amend Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 545, to add a new licence requirement for any owner or operator carrying on business as a Refreshment Vendor on Foot and a corresponding Article that contains the following requirements:

- a. Every owner or operator of a business selling refreshments for consumption by the public, traveling on foot without a vehicle, shall:
  - (1) At the time of application for a licence:
    - i. File with the Municipal Licensing and Standards Division a detailed scaled drawing of any equipment to be used in the sale of refreshments;

- ii. Produce a written report from the Medical Officer of Health confirming that the refreshments to be sold and any equipment to be used in the business are sanitary and suitable for purpose;
- (2) Ensure that containers or apparatuses from which the refreshments are sold are of a type approved by the Municipal Licensing and Standards Division;
- (3) Ensure that every person selling or handling refreshments is wearing clean clothes, is clean and neat in appearance, and has clean hands;
- (4) Ensure that any equipment used for dispensing refreshments is clean and sanitary;
- (5) At all times conspicuously display their refreshment vendor licence such that it is visible to members of the public;
- (6) Ensure that all parts, equipment, and processes used for the preparation, storage, or dispensing of refreshments meet the requirements of Ontario Regulation 493/17 and are approved by the Medical Officer of Health; and
- (7) Obtain liability insurance with respect to bodily injury and property damage in the amount of \$1,000,000, require that Municipal Licensing and Standards be notified of any change to the policy within 10 calendar days of such change, and require that a certificate of the policy be submitted to Municipal Licensing and Standards as a requirement of any licence application.

9. City Council delete Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 545, Article XVII Hawkers and Pedlars.

### Fee Amendments

10. City Council amend Chapter 441, Fees and Charges, Appendix C – Schedule 12, Municipal Licensing and Standards to lower certain street vending fees by amending the following fees so that they read as in the table below:

Ref	Service Fee	Description	Category	Fee Basis	Fee	Annual Adj.
428	Licence & Permit Issuance	Sidewalk Vending Permit: Major Arterial Road	Full Cost Recovery	Per application	<b>\$4,465.84</b>	Yes
429	Licence & Permit Issuance	Sidewalk Vending Permit: Minor Arterial Road	Full Cost Recovery	Per application	<b>\$2,429.07</b>	Yes
430	Licence & Permit Issuance	Mobile Vending Permit (12 Month)	Full Cost Recovery	Per application	<b>\$5,000.00</b>	Yes

Ref	Service Fee	Description	Category	Fee Basis	Fee	Annual Adj.
432	Licence & Permit Issuance	Mobile Vending Permit (6 Month)	Full Cost Recovery	Per application	<b>\$2,500.00</b>	Yes
433	Licence & Permit Issuance	Mobile Vending Permit (9 month)	Full Cost Recovery	Per application	<b>\$3,750.00</b>	Yes

11. City Council add new permitting and licensing fees to Chapter 441, Fees and Charges, Appendix C – Schedule 12, Municipal Licensing and Standards, as shown in the table below:

Ref	Service Fee	Description	Category	Fee Basis	Fee	Annual Adj.
518	Licence & Permit Issuance	Short Stop Vending Permit (12 Month)	Full Cost Recovery	Per application	\$512.66	Yes
519	Licence & Permit Issuance	Short Stop Vending Permit (9 Month)	Full Cost Recovery	Per application	\$387.50	Yes
520	Licence & Permit Issuance	Short Stop Vending Permit (6 Month)	Full Cost Recovery	Per application	\$258.33	Yes
521	Licence & Permit Issuance	Reduced fee: Short Stop Vending Permit – Motorized – Fruit and Vegetable Vendor	City Policy	Per application	\$25.63	Yes
522	Licence & Permit Issuance	Reduced fee: Mobile Vending Permit – Fruit and Vegetable Vendor	City Policy	Per application	\$250.00	Yes
523	Licence & Permit Issuance	Application Fee: Refreshment Vendor on Foot Licence	Full Cost Recovery	Per application	\$140.00	Yes
524	Licence & Permit Issuance	Renewal Fee: Refreshment Vendor on Foot Licence	Full Cost Recovery	Per application	\$65.00	Yes

Ref	Service Fee	Description	Category	Fee Basis	Fee	Annual Adj.
525	Licence & Permit Issuance	Artist Permit	Full Cost Recovery	Per application	\$47.58	Yes

12. City Council add new fees related to seizures to Chapter 441, Fees and Charges, Appendix C – Schedule 12, Municipal Licensing and Standards, as shown in the table below:

Ref	Service Fee	Description	Category	Fee Basis	Fee	Annual Adj.
526	Public Spaces	Chapter 740, Street Vending Permit – storage fee for portable equipment, small property, non-motorized refreshment vehicles, carts	Full Cost Recovery	Daily	\$25.08	Yes
527	Public Spaces	Chapter 740, Street Vending Permit – retrieval fee for portable equipment, small property, instruments	Full Cost Recovery	Per Retrieval	\$100.00	Yes
528	Public Spaces	Chapter 740, Street Vending Permit – retrieval fee for cart	Full Cost Recovery	Per Retrieval	\$200.00	Yes
529	Public Spaces	Chapter 740, Street Vending Permit – retrieval fee for motorized or non-motorized refreshment vehicle	Full Cost Recovery	Per Retrieval	Variable	Yes

13. City Council delete from Chapter 441, Fees and Charges, Appendix C – Schedule 12, Municipal Licensing and Standards, the following, as shown in the table below:

Ref	Service Fee	Description	Category	Fee Basis	Fee	Annual Adj.
337	Licence & Permit Issuance	Application fee: Pedlar Assistant licence	Full Cost Recovery	Per application	\$474.52	Yes
338	Licence & Permit Issuance	Renewal fee: Pedlar Assistant licence	Full Cost Recovery	Per application	\$351.16	Yes
339	Licence & Permit Issuance	Application fee: Hawker Pedlar on Foot licence	Full Cost Recovery	Per application	\$758.01	Yes
340	Licence & Permit Issuance	Renewal fee: Hawker Pedlar on Foot licence	Full Cost Recovery	Per application	\$370.08	Yes
393	Licence & Permit Issuance	Application fee: Hawker/Pedlar licence – with motor vehicle	Full Cost Recovery	Per application	\$1,407.83	Yes
394	Licence & Permit Issuance	Renewal fee: Hawker /Pedlar licence – with motor vehicle	Full Cost Recovery	Per application	\$955.92	Yes
395	Licence & Permit Issuance	Application fee: Hawker/Pedlar licence – with push cart	Full Cost Recovery	Per application	\$1,407.83	Yes
396	Licence & Permit Issuance	Renewal fee: Hawker / Pedlar licence – with push cart	Full Cost Recovery	Per application	\$955.92	Yes

14. City Council direct the Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards, to waive the application fee for existing Hawker/Pedlar licensees transitioning to a Motorized Refreshment Vehicle Licence, Non-Motorized Refreshment Vehicle Licence, or Refreshment Vendor on Foot Licence between March 1, 2027 and March 1, 2028, with applicants required to pay only the applicable renewal fee.

### **Other Directives**

15. City Council direct the Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards to work with the Executive Director, Environment, Climate and Forestry, to explore programs, options, incentives or other measures to reduce emissions generated by street vendors.

16. City Council direct the Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards in collaboration with the Chief Congestion Office and other relevant divisions to monitor the implementation of the proposals in this report and report back to the appropriate committee, as needed, with any proposed bylaw amendments or operational measures required to address noted noise, congestion or other impacts.

17. City Council amend Chapter 743, Streets and Sidewalks, Use of, to align with the provisions in Chapter 740, Street Vending, by adding the following subsection G to §743-18:

G. Notwithstanding §743-18A(1), a person with a valid permit issued pursuant to Chapter 740, Street Vending is exempted from the obligation to obtain a permit to temporarily occupy the street.

18. City Council amend Chapter 950, Traffic and Parking, to align with the provisions in Chapter 740, Street Vending by:

a. Deleting §950-400C and replacing it with the following:

C. Sales from Vehicles.

- (1) No person who sells, offers for sale or takes orders for goods, wares, merchandise, produce, refreshments, beverages or other food from a vehicle shall, for the purpose of carrying on business, stop the vehicle on any part of the highway without a valid permit issued under Chapter 740, Street Vending.
- (2) Nothing in this section shall be deemed to permit the stopping or parking of a vehicle where stopping or parking is prohibited.

b. Adding the following subsection (c) to §950-400D(5):

(c) Subsection D(5) does not apply to a vehicle with a valid permit issued under Chapter 740, Street Vending that permits parking for longer than three hours.

19. City Council amend Municipal Code Chapter 910, Parking Machines and Meters, by adding the phrase “, *unless otherwise authorized to park and vend for a longer time under a permit issued in accordance with Chapter 740, Street Vending*” to sections 910-6, 910-9.7 and 910-16.

### **Implementation Timing**

20. City Council direct that recommendations 17, 18 and 19, which align other city by-laws with Chapter 740, come into effect immediately on the date the by-law is adopted.

21. City Council direct that the following by-law amendments come into effect June 15, 2026:

- a. Recommendation 1 on repealing the sidewalk vending moratoriums in Wards 10, 11 and 13
- b. Recommendation 2 on permitting Mobile Food Vending Permit holders to operate up to twelve hours per block, within a 24 hour period

- c. Recommendation 3 on removing the expiry of R55 Curb Lane Vending Permits

22. City Council direct that Recommendation 10 on amending Chapter 441, Fees and Charges to lower permit fees for Sidewalk Vending Permits and Mobile Vending Permits come into effect January 1, 2027.

23. City Council direct that the following by-law amendments come into effect March 1, 2027:

- a. Recommendation 4 to repeal Chapter 740, Street Vending and adopt a new Chapter 740, Street Vending and Artists
- b. Recommendation 5 to repeal the busking and artist provisions in former City of Toronto Chapter 313, Streets and Sidewalks
- c. Recommendation 6 to remove the need for Pedlar Assistants to obtain a licence
- d. Recommendation 7 to repeal Chapter 545, Licensing, Article IV, Refreshments Sold from Vehicles and replace it with a new Article
- e. Recommendation 8 to add a new article to Chapter 545, Licensing for Refreshment Vendors on Foot
- f. Recommendations 11 and 12, on amending Chapter 441, Fees and Charges to make permit and licence fee additions, and add fees for retrieval of seized items
- g. Recommendation 14 to not charge Hawker / Pedlars an application fee if they get a different licence, between March 1 2027 to March 1 2028.

24. City Council direct that the following by-law amendments come into effect March 1, 2028:

- a. Recommendation 9 on deleting Chapter 545, Article XVII Hawkers and Pedlars
- b. Recommendation 13, on deleting Hawker/Pedlar fees from Chapter 441, Fees and Charges

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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The recommendations in this report include implementing new licence and permit fees and reducing some of some existing ones. Lowering permit fees will help reduce financial barriers for vendors, better align Toronto's user fees with those of comparable municipalities while continuing to recover costs, and harmonize fees across different business types. These changes will provide greater flexibility for vendors operating with tight margins and support first-time and seasonal vendors. Reduced fees may also encourage more street vendors and artists, including those operating without a licence and new entrants, to apply for a permit or licence, which could increase net revenues.

The recommendations in this report, including lifting the moratorium on sidewalk vending and creating new opportunities for short-stop vendors, are anticipated to increase the number of street vending and artist permits issued by the City.

MLS reviewed the new and revised fees to ensure they are based on a cost recovery model, align with the City's User Fee Policy, and appropriately reflect operating costs. The proposed fee reductions are projected to result in a \$75,000 to \$120,000 estimated annual decrease in revenue, assuming there is no change in the existing number of licences and permits each year. It is expected that lower fees and the proposed expanded licence and permit options will result in increased licence and permit volume, which will consequently offset the projected revenue decrease. Permit volumes would need to increase by approximately 20 additional mobile vendors, or a comparable combination of other licences or permit types, to offset the decrease. MLS will continue to monitor permit volumes and associated revenues and will address any issues through future operating budget submissions or Council reports.

As a result, no net change in revenues is anticipated from the recommendation to lower licence and permit fees. This report does not recommend any additional resources to implement the proposed bylaw amendments.

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

## **EQUITY IMPACT**

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Managing and regulating street vending allows for the fair use of public space across vendors in Toronto, and maintains the safety of Toronto's roads for residents and visitors. By supporting local entrepreneurs and artists, the City helps keep local dollars in communities and foster vibrant, livable places to live and do business. For instance, this report introduces a fee reduction for fruit and vegetable vendors as they play an important role in providing accessible and affordable produce to diverse communities across Toronto.

Municipal Licensing and Standards is simplifying or removing several licence application requirements to reduce barriers to obtaining a licence or permit. This also aligns with the Sidewalks to Skylines: An Action Plan for Toronto's Economy (2025-2035) which recognizes that while Toronto has experienced significant economic growth over the past few decades, opportunities and prosperity have not been shared equitably across neighbourhoods, sectors, and communities. It also aligns with Council direction to clarify the City's approach to inclusive economic development which aims to support expanded employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for Toronto residents. Reducing barriers to obtaining a licence or permit can support a more inclusive local economy by increasing lower-barrier opportunities to open a new business. The recommendations made in this report help lower costs, reduce barriers to entry, and expand opportunities for street vendors, local businesses, entrepreneurs and artists to launch their business and spread their creativity across the city.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

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On July 23 and 24, 2025, City Council adopted [EC22.7 - Business Licence and Permit Applications Action Plan: Chapter 545, Licensing \(2025 to 2029\)](#), directing staff to implement an action plan to improve the business licensing and permitting experience for applicants and licence holders and reduce burden for local business owners.

On March 26 and 27, 2025, City Council adopted [EC18.4 - Proposed Pilot for Non-Motorized Mobile Food Vendors in University-Rosedale](#) which enabled a pilot to allow non-motorized trailers to vend on streets, under the same conditions as a Mobile Food Vending Permit, in Ward 11.

On December 17 and 18, 2024, City Council adopted [EC17.2 - A Partnered Approach to Inclusive Economic Development](#) which outlined key guiding principles for inclusive economic development, such as creating conditions for communities and workers to build wealth and for wealth to remain and circulate in the local economy.

On November 13 and 14, 2024, City Council adopted [EC16.1 - Culture Connects: An Action Plan for Culture in Toronto \(2025-2035\)](#), which set a 10-year vision for Toronto as a city for culture and creativity. The plan includes objectives related to supporting artists and opportunities to experience culture.

On November 13 and 14, 2024, City Council adopted [EC16.2 - Sidewalks to Skylines: An Action Plan for Toronto's Economy \(2025-2035\)](#), which provides a roadmap for the City to enhance Toronto's economy with a focus on livability, inclusivity and prosperity. This plan includes objectives related to supporting small business and entrepreneurs.

On June 26, 27, 28 and 29, 2018, City Council adopted [LS26.2 - Extension for Stationary Food Trucks \(R55 Curb Lane Vending Permits\)](#) that extended the permit for R55 Vendors to the end of 2026, and also directed MLS to complete additional research on other outstanding issues relating to Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 740, Street Vending.

On May 24, 2018, City Council adopted [LS25.4 - Amendments to Chapter 740, Street Vending - Portrait Artists](#) to remove the moratorium on portrait artist permits, reduce their permit fees, exempt them from requiring insurance, and allow portrait artists to operate in more areas.

On May 5, 6 and 7, 2015, City Council adopted [LS3.1 - Chapter 740, Street Vending - One Year Review](#), and directed MLS to report with recommendations related to the environmental impact of food trucks and a cost recovery approach to licensing and enforcement for street vending permits;

On April 1, 2 and 3 2014, City Council adopted [LS27.1 - New Opportunities for Toronto's Street Food Vendors](#), which introduced Chapter 740, Street Vending, which sets the provisions for permitted food and non-food vending on Toronto's streets and sidewalks.

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## COMMENTS

## Purpose

The City of Toronto issues licenses and permits for a diverse range of street vendors and artists operating on city streets and sidewalks. Street vendors and artists play an important role in enhancing the Toronto's cultural vibrancy, creating new consumer options, and supporting the local economy.

The last comprehensive review of Toronto's street vending and artist by-laws was completed in 2014. Since that time, significant technological, procedural, and market changes have occurred, rendering sections of both Chapter 740, Street Vending and Chapter 545, Licensing outdated.

Throughout 2025, MLS undertook a review of the City's street vending and artist by-laws, with goals to improve opportunities for vendors, reduce regulatory and financial burdens, and improve enforcement and clarification of regulations. Staff also considered the City's goals to reduce red tape for businesses, strengthen main streets and increase opportunities to experience culture across Toronto, in alignment with a number of reports adopted by Council in 2024 and 2025, including [Sidewalks to Skylines: Action Plan for Toronto's Economy](#), MLS' [Business License and Permit Application Action Plan](#), the [City's approach to Inclusive Economic Development](#) and the [Culture Connects: An Action Plan for Culture in Toronto](#).

This report presents the findings of the review, including feedback received through public and stakeholder consultations, and outlines several recommendations to modernize the City's street vending and artist framework.

## Background

The City's street vending and artist regulations are found in various Municipal Code Chapters and form the City's Street Vending and Artist by-laws. Toronto Municipal Code, [Chapter 545, Licensing](#) ("Licensing Bylaw"), outlines licence requirements certain businesses, including mobile vendors, need to meet to operate their business in Toronto. Toronto Municipal Code, [Chapter 740, Street Vending](#) ("Street Vending Bylaw") establishes permit requirements and rules for vendors operating on the public Right-of-Way (i.e. streets or sidewalks) for the purpose of selling food and refreshments, non-food items, as well as art made by portrait artists. Additionally, former Toronto Municipal Code, [Chapter 313, Streets and Sidewalks](#) ("former Streets and Sidewalks By-law") sets out rules for the City's buskers and sidewalk artists.

### *Street Vending Regulatory Framework Overview*

Currently, individuals who wish to vend or perform are required to hold a licence and/or permit under the Street Vending and Artist by-laws. Licences allow vendors to operate their business in Toronto, while permits for vendors and artists provide permission for a business to operate on public streets or sidewalks.

The existing framework includes several categories of licences and permits. Currently, all street vendors (whether on public or private property) must hold one of the following licences in accordance with Chapter 545, Licensing:

- **Motorized refreshment vehicle licence** – a vehicle with a motor that is equipped to sell food or refreshments to customers (for example, a food truck)
- **Non-motorized refreshment vehicle licence** – a vehicle that is not motor-propelled that is equipped to sell food or refreshments to customers (for example, a hot dog cart)
- **Hawker/Pedlar licence** – a licence for a person who goes place to place to sell goods. A hawker/pedlar can use either a vehicle (motorized or non-motorized) or operate on foot (for example, a door-to-door salesperson). Chapter 545 does not specify what kind of goods a hawker/pedlar is permitted to sell.

If a vendor wishes to operate on the public Right-of-Way (city-owned land including roads, sidewalks, boulevards), in addition to their licence (where one is required), they must also obtain one of the following permits in accordance with Chapter 740, Street Vending:

- **Sidewalk vending permit** – allows vending from fixed, designated spaces on public sidewalks
- **Mobile food vending permit** – allows operation from food trucks (with a motorized refreshment vehicle licence) located in on-street parking locations;
- **Curb-lane vending permit** – a legacy permit category for food trucks to vend in exclusively designated spaces on certain streets; and
- **Ice cream vending permits** – allows trucks to sell ice cream for up to 30 minutes per block, on side and residential streets.

Buskers and artists do not need a licence to operate, but still require a **busking or sidewalk artist permit** (under Chapter 313), **or portrait artist permit** (under Chapter 740) to perform or vend in the public Right-of-Way.

Licence and permit holders must comply with applicable conditions of operation in the above vending by-laws and their permits and/or licences, which may include maintaining clear pedestrian access, avoiding certain obstructions, and observing minimum distances from schools and other locations. In addition to following the above vending by-laws, vendors must also adhere to traffic and parking regulations enforced by the Toronto Parking Authority, Toronto Police Service, Parking Enforcement, and Transportation Services.

A more detailed summary of the current Street Vending and Artist by-laws can be found in Attachment 3.

## **Public Consultations**

To support the review, a third-party vendor was retained to support the City in conducting public and stakeholder consultations. Engagement was designed to gather input from vendors, artists, businesses, residents, and other interested community members and included:

- A public survey, which was available online from July 14, 2025 to September 30, 2025, and received 1,626 complete responses from a broad range of participants, with focused questions for each participant group, including vendors, buskers, businesses, and members of the public.
- 9 focus group sessions were held to gather more detailed input on specific topics with a total of 89 attendees. Vendors, buskers, artists and BIA representatives were invited to attend dedicated sessions to discuss their experiences with existing regulations, challenges, and opportunities for improvement.
- Two public meetings were held to invite broader feedback from residents, businesses, and community stakeholders.

### *Consultation Findings*

The consultation findings and research highlighted several themes, including limited opportunities caused by moratoriums, location restrictions, and time limits; unclear rules that create challenges for both operators and enforcement; and strong public interest in greater variety, visibility, and artistic activity in public spaces.

Out of the 1,626 survey respondents, 128 (8%) were street or sidewalk vendors; 123 (8%) were buskers or street performers<sup>1</sup>; 63 (4%) were local businesses; and 1,312 responses (81%) were Toronto residents, visitors or commuters.

Response from vendors and buskers showed that:

- 80% of vendors say they prefer vending in public spaces.
- 55% of vendor respondents disagree or strongly disagree with the statement “Current vending rules are fair and effective”, while 23% were neutral. This response was largely due to not having enough opportunities to vend, either due to time or space constraints embedded in the bylaw.
- The biggest challenges for buskers were ‘finding space’ (24%) and ‘noise restrictions’ (20%).

Public response showed a largely positive sentiment to street vending and performing:

- 80% agreed or strongly agreed that street and sidewalk vending contribute positively to the overall character of the neighbourhood.
- 82% agreed or strongly agreed that buskers and performers contribute to the vibrancy of public spaces, while 10% were neutral and 8% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- 62% disagreed or strongly disagreed that buskers are too noisy, while 24% were neutral and 14% agreed or strongly agreed.

Overall, focus group and public consultation raised several themes. Vendors, buskers and portrait artists often mentioned:

- **Opportunity:** Focus groups and public consultations highlighted the desire for more opportunities (i.e. spaces and time) to vend in Toronto.

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<sup>1</sup> Respondents who identified as ‘Buskers or street performers’ were mostly musicians and vocalists. There were no respondents who identified as portrait artists in the survey.

- **Clarity:** A combination of inconsistent and unclear enforcement, coupled with communication and education gaps on processes, rules, and requirements causes vendors frustration.

Further detail on consultation feedback and how that feedback is addressed can be found in the relevant sections of this report, and additional details can be found in Attachment 4.

## **Recommendations**

Staff recommend by-law amendments to address goals identified in the review, issues raised during consultations, research, data analysis, and operational experience. Recommendations also align with the Business Licence and Permit Applications Action Plan: Chapter 545, Licensing, which aims to reduce regulatory burden. Recommendations are organized as follows:

1. Street and Sidewalk Vending
2. Buskers and Artists
3. Reviewing Street Vending and Artist Licensing and Permit Fees
4. By-law harmonization, Burden reduction & Administrative Updates

### **1. Street and Sidewalk Vending**

#### **a) Lift the Moratorium on Designated Sidewalk Vending Downtown**

Designated sidewalk vending refers to selling food, refreshments or other goods from a cart or workstation at a fixed, designated space on a public sidewalk. Examples of sidewalk vending in Toronto include food carts selling hot dogs and similar items. When applying for a permit to operate a food cart in Toronto, applicants must identify a proposed location and demonstrate compliance with all applicable by-law requirements through the application process. Once issued, the permit grants the holder exclusive rights to vend at the approved location.

In 2002, a moratorium was introduced to restrict sidewalk vending in the area represented by today's wards of Spadina-Fort York (Ward 10), University-Rosedale (Ward 11) and Toronto Centre (Ward 13). The moratorium was initially established by Council to manage the concentration of sidewalk vendors in the downtown area, which had the intended effect: in 2002, there were 134 unique sidewalk vendors operating in the downtown core. At the end of 2025, there were just 47 unique vendors, of which 30 are located within the geographic area containing the moratorium. Since 2002, increased restaurants, patios, and accessibility requirements have significantly reduced available sidewalk space downtown, creating natural limits on vending and lowering the risk of over-concentration.

#### ***Consultation and Research***

Survey respondents were generally favourable to increasing vending in the City. During focus groups and public consultations, participating vendors wanted to see the long-standing moratorium be lifted, to give vendors more opportunities to sell items

downtown. 70% of residents who responded to the survey disagreed with the statement “there are enough street or sidewalk vendors in Toronto”, while 83% agreed that street and sidewalk vending provides consumers with more options.

Some BIAs were concerned about business competition if there were too many vendors introduced into an area, and expressed support for maintaining the City’s vendor separation rules (requiring vendors to operate at least 25 metres from a licensed eating establishment or business selling similar non-food products).

### *Recommendation*

Staff recommend lifting the moratorium on new sidewalk vending in the downtown core, which would allow vendors to apply for new sidewalk vending locations downtown for the first time since 2002.

To balance needs for safety, accessibility, and to prevent sidewalk crowding, restrictions in Chapter 740 will continue to require a sidewalk vending location to:

- Be at least 25 metres from an eating establishment (for food vendors), an establishment selling a similar product (for non-food vendors) or another permitted sidewalk vendor;
- Be at least 25 metres from a school;
- Be able to maintain at least 2.5 metres of passable space in the public right-of-way for pedestrians;
- Not obstruct a building entrance or exit, building name or number, fire hose connection, or display window;
- Occupy no more than 2.32 square metres, unless specifically approved for an additional 1.16 square metres by the Executive Director of MLS.

### b) Allow Non-Food Vending within Chapter 740, Street Vending and Artists

When Council enacted Chapter 740 in 2014, it included a provision that directed MLS not to accept any applications for a sidewalk or mobile vending permit to vend goods, wares, merchandise or other non-food items.

Chapter 545, Licensing includes an article containing regulations for the licensing of Hawkers / Pedlars, defined as a “person who goes from place to place or to a particular place with goods, wares or merchandise for sale.” However, the Hawker / Pedlar licences do not permit vending on public property, which has created confusion among vendors about where they can vend.

### *Consultation and Research*

According to survey results, one of the most frequent comments made by survey respondents who were residents or visitors was a desire to see more non-food street vendors in the city. When business owners were asked about how non-food vendors would impact their business if located 25 metres or less from the entrance, 51% said it would have a positive impact, while 32% said it would either have a neutral or no impact.

Several North American cities issue permits or licences for non-food vending. Vancouver issues non-food stationary street permits for items such as crafts, jewelry, flowers, and other approved goods. New York City licenses vendors selling non-food goods or services in public spaces, with restrictions on where and when vending is permitted. Chicago’s mobile merchant licence allows the sale of goods from motor vehicles, such as box trucks or vans, subject to time-limited parking (up to four hours or the posted parking limit, whichever is less), while its peddler licence permits the sale of non-food merchandise from vehicles that continuously move from place to place.

*Recommendations:*

- Amend Chapter 740 to permit vendors to apply for permits to sell non-food products in certain locations on the public right of way – being mobile vending zones and certain streets permitted for “short-stop” vending.
- Add conditions of operation related to safety and accessibility.

The proposed amendment would provide non-food vendors with opportunities to operate under mobile, short-stop, or sidewalk vending permits, ensuring consistency across vendor types and providing increased opportunities for small and emerging businesses to operate.

c) Extending the time limit for Mobile Food Vending from 5 hours to 12 hours

Currently, a Mobile Food Vending Permit enables permit holders to vend for 5 hours in Mobile Vending Zones (largely on-street paid parking locations) per block, per 24-hour period. The time limit was originally introduced in Chapter 740 in 2014 with a 3-hour limit, and increased to 5 hours in 2015, with the rationale of maintaining this permit as a mobile option and allowing for competition in mobile vending zones.

*Consultation and Research*

In surveys and focus groups, vendors reported that the process of setting up and taking down equipment is time-consuming, and that a five-hour limit does not allow adequate time to generate sufficient daily revenue after accounting for these activities. Participants also indicated that relocating after five hours is often impractical, as suitable alternative spaces are difficult to find and the time spent relocating results in further revenue loss. High-traffic locations were described as critical to business sustainability within the current regulatory framework. This consultation suggests that the limited time period has affected sustainability of mobile food operations, particularly given increasing operating costs.

In comparable cities, there were variations in vending time limits for mobile food trucks. Cities such as Chicago and San Francisco set a vending time limit of four hours for mobile food trucks. Other cities such as New York City or San Francisco, do not have time limits but have other policies on vendor proximity and hours of operation that influence vending duration.

*Recommendation*

Staff recommend increasing the time limit for Mobile Vending in designated Mobile Vending Zones from five hours to twelve hours per 24-hour period, per block. This change would allow vendors to remain at an approved vending location for a longer, continuous period while continuing to comply with all other relevant regulations and permit conditions.

The objective of this recommendation is to improve the overall feasibility and sustainability of mobile food vending operations. Extending the time limit recognizes the significant time and effort required for vendors to transport, set up, and wind down their operations each day. A twelve-hour time limit would enable vendors to serve during two meal periods (for example, lunch and dinner), which may increase their ability to operate profitably.

To balance needs for safety, accessibility, fairness, and preventing overcrowding, other conditions of operation for mobile food vendors listed in Chapter 740, including restrictions on where they can operate and distances required from eating establishments and number of operators vending on a single block, will largely remain the same.

This report proposes amendments to Chapter 950, Traffic and Parking, to clarify that mobile vending permit holders can operate beyond the maximum parking time limits contained within Chapter 950. Vendors will continue to be subject to all other site-specific parking and traffic regulations, including paying for on-street parking, as required.

#### d) Clarifying rules for traveling vendors

Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 545, Licensing, regulates traveling vendors, through the 'Hawker / Pedlar' Licence category. MLS issues different three different licence types for the Hawker / Pedlars' category, depending on whether they are operating on foot, operating with a push cart, or using a motorized vehicle. This licence category has minimal definitions, conditions of operation, or restrictions associated with it, and stakeholder feedback has been that the rules are vague and unclear.

In addition to the Hawker / Pedlar licence class in Chapter 545, there is an existing permit class for travelling vendors under Chapter 740, Street Vending; Ice Cream Truck Vending. Ice Cream Truck Vendors are permitted under Chapter 740 to vend on certain listed residential streets, travelling from street to street, with a maximum permitted time of 30 minutes per block. Ice Cream Truck Vendors are limited by the bylaw to the sale of ice cream and other related frozen dessert products.

#### *Consultation and Research*

Through focus groups, staff heard concerns regarding 'short stop' vendors (that is, vendors who stop to make a sale for a short amount of time, then move along), including:

- BIAs in parts of the city with a lot of foot traffic and activity, such as Yonge-Dundas and Bremner Boulevard, expressed that many vendors – some with, and

some without permits – often set up displays or clutter streets and sidewalks by selling as sidewalk vendors, reducing people’s ability to enjoy the area.

- Other BIAs stated that vending was not an issue in their BIA, and a ‘few more vendors’ could even be welcome, as long as they followed by-laws.

Many North American cities regulate short-stop vending through permitting or licensing, including Mississauga, Vaughan, Markham, Brampton, Calgary, Vancouver, Portland, Chicago, and Los Angeles. Requirements vary but commonly include limits on vending duration (for example, Vancouver requires vendors to move if no customers are present after 60 minutes), restrictions by location or time of day, distance requirements from existing businesses, and permissions to vend on both sidewalks and streets. Several cities also allow short-stop vendors to sell non-food items in addition to food, such as Chicago, where street peddlers may sell both food and non-food goods, including fruits and vegetables.

### *Recommendations*

Staff recommend establishing a new permit type, ‘Short Stop Vending’, to establish new rules for travelling vendors operating on Toronto’s sidewalks and roads. This new permit type would, in most cases, offer a permit option for those who currently have Hawker / Pedlar licences and ice cream truck permits. It is recommended that the regulations for these new permit classes come into effect on March 1, 2027, with a 12 month transition period.

The proposed Short Stop Vending Permit includes options for motorized short stop vending, non-motorized short stop vending, and short stop vending on foot. Motorized vehicles would be allowed on roads, while carts and on foot vendors would be permitted on sidewalks. All short stop vendors are proposed to be subject to conditions of operation, including:

- Vending up to a maximum of 30 minutes per city block, per 24-hour period
- For motorized vendors only, vending is only permitted on side and residential streets, but not on major roads
- Vendors must leave at least 2.5 metres for pedestrian passage
- Vendors selling food must have an appropriate licence from Chapter 545, Licensing
- Maintain \$2,000,000 in liability insurance

The proposed conditions of operation for short stop vendors mirror some of those currently in place for ice cream truck vendors found in Chapter 740, Street Vending. The proposed permit class takes the ice cream truck vending model and expands it to allow the sale of all foods, refreshments and non-food goods (with exceptions for restricted goods, like tobacco or alcohol) from motorized vehicles, and also on the sidewalk, from non-motorized carts and on foot. It also adds additional conditions of operation to reflect this expanded permission.

In establishing these new permit permissions, staff also recommend several amendments to Chapter 545 Licensing:

- Delete the ‘Hawker / Pedlar with push cart’ and ‘Hawker / Pedlar with motorized vehicle’ licence classes, as they duplicate the refreshment vehicle’ licensing classes.
- Delete the requirement that ‘Hawker/ Pedlar Assistants’ (employees of short stop vendors) be separately licensed, to streamline operational requirements for short stop vendors. Currently, there is only one person in the City licensed as a Pedlar Assistant.
- Re-name ‘Hawker / Pedlar on foot’ licence class to ‘Refreshment Vendor on Foot’, licence class to address the out-dated language and sometimes stigmatized word ‘Pedlar’.
- Remove the requirement for travelling vendors with a motorized or non-motorized vehicle exclusively selling non-food items to obtain a licence.

There are around 142 existing licensed/permitted vendors that this change will affect. Staff will work with vendors over a 12 month period to transition their licences and/or permits, and minimize any disruption to their business. These recommendations may result in an overall increase in the number of short stop vendors, as it clarifies the rules and expands opportunities for the sale of goods by travelling vendors.

Consistent with brick-and-mortar retail businesses in Chapter 545, Licensing, vendors not selling food items will not need to apply for a licence, but would need to apply for a permit to vend on public property. Applicants would be required to describe the type of food or non-food they plan to vend, and would not be allowed to sell alcohol, vapour products, tobacco, rental cars, pawned goods, personal services, and second-hand goods.

## **2. Buskers and Artists**

Artists who perform for donations or create art for sale on a public sidewalk are required to obtain a permit as either a busker, a portrait artist or a sidewalk artist. A busker is musician or other performer who performs for voluntary donations. A portrait artist makes and sells portraits and a sidewalk artist creates chalk drawings for voluntary donations. Under the regulations of Chapter 313, buskers and sidewalk artists are explicitly prohibited from the use of any amplification as part of their performance. Additionally, buskers are also prohibited from selling items such as CDs or vinyl.

Buskers and sidewalk artists are the only groups of people in the City explicitly prohibited by city regulations from the use of any amplification. Through consultations, the prohibition on amplification, as well as the inability to sell music media related to their performance, were identified by buskers and artists as key concerns restricting opportunities in this sector. Further, jurisdictional research found that many other major cities, including Montreal, San Francisco and Vancouver, allow buskers to use amplification and sell original music media, and report low numbers of compliance issues.

### *Data, Consultation and Research*

Amplified sound remains one of the top three categories for noise complaints in the city; the number of complaints for buskers and sidewalk artists using amplification typically represents less than 2% of all amplified sound complaints yearly.<sup>2</sup>

Survey results show strong public support for musicians in public spaces, with 76 per cent of respondents valuing them and 62% disagreeing that buskers are too noisy. During consultations, buskers and sidewalk artists identified the ban on amplification as a barrier to obtaining a licence and noted that amplification is already used by some performers. In the online survey, 48% of buskers reported that they do not currently sell items while performing but would like to do so.

*Recommendation 1: Allowing buskers and sidewalk artists to use amplifiers, with conditions*

Staff recommend allowing buskers and sidewalk artists to use amplification, as long as the busker or artist has a permit through MLS. Conditions of operation will require buskers to adhere to decibel limits prescribed in the Chapter 591, Noise (the Noise Bylaw), and only perform with amplification between noon and 8:00 pm on any given day. During a performance, the busker or artist must maintain 50 metres from other sources of amplification, including other buskers and businesses using amplified sound.

The purpose of the proposed change is to increase opportunities for local musicians and artists and more closely align with other City rules that allow amplification, with conditions. Under the Noise Bylaw, amplified or instrument sound cannot exceed the decibel limits set out in the by-law.

Licensed artists report using amplification because audiences cannot hear them otherwise, even if standing a short distance away. Allowing artists to use amplification in a formalized way is intended to adequately balance City objectives including reducing overall noise disturbances late at night and in neighbouring properties while allowing performance with and without amplified sound in City streets. This recommendation also provides a pathway for compliance for those that rely on amplification for a performance while maintaining enforceable options for those not complying with the rules.

Members of the public will continue to be able to call 311 and request an investigation for buskers and sidewalk artists that are not in compliance with street vending or noise rules, including decibel limits. This report recommends a new requirement for buskers to publicly display their permit (similar to TTC buskers). Having these permits displayed would allow members of the public to easily identify the busker when submitting a complaint, and enhance compliance oversight by enforcement staff in tracking and speaking to the individual.

To mitigate the potential for noise-related concerns, staff will conduct proactive communication with buskers when noise related complaints are received about their

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<sup>2</sup> From January 1, 2019 – September 30, 2025, the City's Noise Enforcement Team received 51,832 complaints generally related to amplification. The Public Spaces team, which responds to complaints for buskers and sidewalk artists using amplification, received 825 over this time period (i.e. 1.6% of all complaints for amplified sound).

performance and would continue to enforce and educate the City's noise and street vending and artist bylaws, as appropriate. Given the historically low number of complaints received related to buskers, it is expected that staff will manage this recommendation using existing enforcement resources. Throughout 2026, staff will monitor this amendment, the number of artist permits issued, and number of complaints received, and report back with any necessary bylaw amendments or operational changes to address noted impacts.

### *Recommendation 2: Allowing musical buskers to sell original musical media*

In other cities, it is common for buskers to sell original musical artwork like CDs and vinyl records, as part of their performance. The City of Toronto does not currently allow this.

Staff recommend allowing buskers to sell original mixed media music, like CDs, vinyl records, and cassettes, without the need to obtain a separate vending permit. Buskers would be required to restrict their display area to 2.25 square metres. If their setup exceeds this space, they cannot sell music.

### **3. Reviewing Street Vending and Artist Licensing and Permit Fees**

City of Toronto licensing and permit fees are set at an amount to recover the costs of administering and enforcing the regulatory framework, while considering operating costs, public space management, and equity impacts. Fees are reviewed periodically and adjusted as needed to reflect changes in service delivery, regulatory requirements, and/or demand.

#### *Research*

In reviewing Toronto's street vending fees, staff found that Toronto's fees are higher than most jurisdictions in Canada, and higher than many jurisdictions in comparable US cities. Jurisdictional scans of other cities showed different models and pricing for street vendors:

- In Vancouver, only designated-space (i.e. fixed) street vending is allowed, with vendors paying between \$1,100 to \$1,600 to vend annually.
- In New York, fees were much lower and permits are issued for two years, ranging between \$349 (US \$250) and \$691 (US \$500), with concession for veterans and some variation in price by borough.
- In Seattle, fees have recently been completely waived. Prior to the waiver, fees ranged between \$2,788 (US \$2,000) for sidewalk vending and \$5,577 (US \$4,000) for on-street vending annually.

In relation to fees for fruit and vegetable vendors, staff also conducted research on the current licensing landscape for fruit and vegetable vendors and the important role they play in providing accessible, affordable produce. Observations from by-law enforcement and City staff indicate that these vendors are active and well-used in the communities they serve, particularly in areas such as Thorncliffe Park, and currently rely on

hawker/pedlar licences. The proposed fee changes below aim to reduce financial barriers for fruit and vegetable vendors.

### *Consultation*

Through focus groups and public consultations, vendors identified high fees as a significant barrier to entering the street vending business. In addition to MLS licensing and permit fees, vendors face other costs such as insurance, equipment purchase and maintenance, commissary or workshop use, employee wages, fuel, and generator expenses. Many consulted vendors wanted lower permit costs, particularly to support small, first-time, and lower-income businesses. Survey results echoed these concerns.

### *Recommendation: Lowering Permit Fees by ~30%*

Staff recommend lowering fees for most permit types, to increase opportunities for vendors, right-size Toronto's fees, harmonize fees across permit categories, and reflect consultation feedback and research from jurisdictional scans. Specifically, staff recommend:

- Reducing Mobile Vending permit and Sidewalk Vending permit fees by approximately 30% to better align with other jurisdictions and lessen the cost impacts on vendors;
- Establishing new Short Stop Vending permit fees that align with current Ice Cream Vending permit fees;
- Requiring Short Stop Vendors with a push cart (previously hawker / pedlar with push cart) to apply for the same licence as a non-motorized refreshment vehicle, if selling food or drink;
- Reducing licence fees for refreshment vendors on foot to \$65 (before taxes) to reflect the low-risk nature of their business when not in the public right-of-way;
- Maintaining R55 Curb Lane fees, as the permit is a legacy permit and guarantees the vendor a dedicated space; and
- Introducing a reduced permit fee for whole fresh fruit and vegetable vendors. Motorized fruit and vegetable vendors will be able to apply for a Motorized Refreshment Vehicle Licence and either a Mobile Food Vending Permit (vending up to 12 hours), or a Motorized Short-Stop Vending Permit (for 30 minutes or less per block per day).

Some total fees are increasing where new permits are introduced, including for those who had a hawker/pedlar licence, to reflect the added benefit of vending on the public right-of-way and the associated impacts and regulatory oversight required to manage public space use. Further details about the proposed fee reduction for each permit class can be found in Attachment 7.

Although fees are proposed to be reduced for several vending permit categories, the introduction of a short stop vending permit, lifting the sidewalk vending moratorium, and permitting non-food vending are expected to increase permit volumes, offsetting the

forgone revenue of the proposed fee reductions and resulting in no net financial impact to the City. Fees will continue to recover costs.

MLS will monitor permit uptake and vendor participation following implementation, and will consider adjustments, including further reductions, in the future.

#### **4. By-law Harmonization, Burden Reduction & Administrative Updates**

This report recommends by-law amendments to incorporate administrative, process and regulatory improvements that reduce regulatory burden on licence and permit holders and enhance the City's ability to deliver services efficiently, improve regulatory clarity, and make the rules easier to understand, follow, and enforce.

##### *Recommendations:*

1. Standardize and harmonize distance and location requirements in Chapter 740, Street Vending and Artists
2. Reduce duplication with Public Health requirements in Chapter 545, Licensing
3. Consolidate and simplify requirements for Refreshment Vehicles in Chapter 545, Licensing
4. Limit transferability of sidewalk vending permits
5. Extending Non-Motorized Trailer Mobile Vending City-Wide
6. Removing the expiry on Legacy R55 Curb Lane Permits
7. Consolidating buskers and sidewalk artist regulations into Chapter 740, Street Vending and Artists
8. Amend Chapter 950, Traffic and Parking, Chapter 743, Streets and Sidewalks, Use of, and Chapter 910, Parking Machines and Metres, to align with proposed bylaw Chapter 740, Street Vending

These updates aim to modernize licensing requirements and processes to better align with evolving business models, technological advancements, and environmental considerations, ensuring that the City's regulatory framework remains current and responsive to changing conditions. Further details about these recommendations can be found in Attachment 5.

#### **5. Ongoing Work and Future Reviews**

##### *Vending in Parks*

MLS vending permits do not currently allow vending in Toronto's parks. The Parks & Recreation division often has exclusive contracts with vendors and restaurants to operate within a specific park.

According to survey data:

- When asked in an open-ended question, vendors commented on where they would like to see more vending permitted. Around 44% said that they would like to see more vending in parks.
- 76% of residents and visitor respondents responded that they 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the statement "I would like to see more vending in City Parks".

MLS is working with Parks & Recreation to develop a program to bring vendors to select parks and will continue to collaborate on future opportunities to enhance this program.

### *Environmental Considerations*

Most street vendors in Toronto rely on gasoline, diesel, or propane-powered equipment, which generates emissions and noise, contributes to climate change, and increases operating costs. There are potential opportunities to reduce these impacts, including exploring on-street power sources, battery systems, and solar technology.

Survey results indicate strong public and vendor interest in cleaner power sources. Air pollution from generators was among the top concerns raised by residents, visitors, and commuters, while 45 per cent of vendors indicated that access to electrical hookups was very or somewhat important.

Jurisdictional research shows that other North American cities are pursuing electrification through infrastructure investments, pilot projects, or restrictions on fossil fuel generators. For example, New York City has piloted electric food carts and battery programs<sup>34</sup>, while Ottawa prohibits the use of external fossil fuel-powered generators.<sup>5</sup>

Survey results also show that some Toronto vendors already use lower-emission power sources, including battery-powered equipment (18 per cent), electric hookups (16 per cent), hybrid systems (10 per cent), solar-powered equipment (5 per cent), and zero-emissions practices (13 per cent).

MLS staff recommend working with Environment, Climate and Forestry, and Economic Development and Culture, to look at options, incentives or programs that could be implemented to reduce emissions from street vendors in the city. Specifically, staff will explore options to:

- Identify areas where plug-in charging could be made available to vendors, and explore the costs associated with doing so.
- Research financial incentives for vendors to switch or choose an electric battery instead of a diesel or gas generator.
- Consider educational programming for street vendors to learn about electric alternatives to diesel generators as well as the health, noise, and environmental implications of generators.

## **6. Compliance and Enforcement**

MLS' by-law enforcement team aims to enhance public awareness of and obtain compliance with City by-laws. The Division uses a priority response model to prioritize the high volume of requests, with incoming service requests being assessed according

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<sup>3</sup> Better Future Awards, Simply Grid – electrifying a food cart in Union Square.

<https://betterfutureawards.com/NYC14/project.asp?ID=12812>

<sup>4</sup> Street Vendor Project, Environmental Justice for Vendors, by Vendors. <https://www.streetvendor.org/copy-of-small-business-empowerment-pr>

<sup>5</sup> City of Ottawa, Schedule NO. 22 Relating to Mobile Refreshment Vehicles. [https://documents.ottawa.ca/sites/default/files/lbr\\_guide22\\_en.pdf](https://documents.ottawa.ca/sites/default/files/lbr_guide22_en.pdf)

to urgency, frequency, and impact. Each issue is addressed on case-by-case basis to make sure reasonable, fair, and appropriate actions are taken.

In 2025, MLS' Public Spaces Team, which is responsible for enforcement of street vending and artist regulations, had a complement of 38 staff across the city, including enforcement officers, supervisors, and managers.

Officers work under a proactive model based on data heat mapping as guide to persistent issues. In addition, proactive patrols for vending and performing are generally in areas with known high concentration of vending or performing, whether licensed or unlicensed. MLS also works closely with City partners and major venues across the City to conduct joint proactive patrols and operational plans when major events occur, such as sporting events, festivals and major concerts to address any potential increased non-compliance.

There has been an increase in fines and charges since 2019 driven by a higher volume of complaints from members of the public, neighbouring businesses, referrals from the Toronto Police Service, as well as enhanced enforcement activity. During this period, MLS expanded proactive patrols, including the introduction of a bike enforcement team, allowing officers to cover a wider area and identify violations more efficiently. Targeted enforcement was also conducted during periods of heightened activity and major events, such as Toronto Blue Jays playoff games and large concerts near the Rogers Centre. For more details, see Attachment 6 on enforcement data.

### *Phased Approach to Enforcement Related to By-law Changes*

Staff will use an enforcement approach aligned with the phased implementation timeline of the recommendations in this report. This approach is intended to minimize disruption, support consistent administration, and allow time for officer training, communication with vendors, and transition to new licence and permit requirements, with the expectation that by March 1, 2028, enforcement will be fully aligned with the new regulatory framework.

## **7. Customer Service, Implementation, and Next Steps**

MLS will support implementation through proactive communication and customer service measures, including updating public-facing materials, providing clear guidance to affected stakeholders, and ensuring internal processes and staff training are in place to support consistent and timely service delivery.

Staff recommend a phased implementation to the recommendations of the report, with recommendations coming into effect on June 1, 2026 and March 1, 2027, with implementation completed by March 1, 2028.

### *Phased Implementation*

The first phase of changes, proposed to take effect in June 2026, will focus primarily on opening opportunities for vendors. These updates are intended to minimize disruption

for vendors, increase some vending opportunities, while supporting consistent administration and providing by-law officers with clearer tools to manage anticipated operational pressures associated with the FIFA World Cup. Changes include:

- Lifting sidewalk vending moratoriums in Wards 10, 11, 13;
- Increasing vending time limits from 5 hours to 12 hours for Mobile Vending
- Removing the January 1, 2027 expiry on Curblane Vending permits;

The second set of changes related to lowering permit fees would take effect on January 1, 2027 to align fee reductions with the start of the new year so that all permit holders benefit from the reduction in 2027.

The third set of changes will take effect on March 1, 2027, due to the complex nature of changes, and will include:

- Adopting a revised Chapter 740, Street Vending and Artists, which includes new definitions, allowances for non-food vending and short stop vending, provisions to improve enforcement, inclusion of permits for buskers and sidewalk artists (and allowing amplification for buskers) and other changes to clarify and harmonize the by-law;
- Making permanent the pilot for trailers in Ward 11, by expanding the offering throughout the City of Toronto;
- Removing the need for Pedlar Assistants to be licensed; and
- Repealing the busker permitting section in former City of Toronto Chapter 313, Streets and Sidewalks;
- Repealing Article IV in Chapter 545, Licensing and replacing it with a new article for refreshment vehicles to reduce regulatory burden;
- Introduction of a new article in Chapter 545, Licensing, 'Refreshment Vendor on Foot';
- Adding new licence and permit fees for Short Stop Vending and Refreshment Vendor on Foot, and seizure storage and retrieval fees; and
- Beginning the transition for Hawkers / Pedlars to other licence and permit types.

To minimize confusion for Hawkers, Pedlars and Ice Cream Truck Vendors transitioning to the new framework, MLS will:

- Provide direct communication to vendors prior to the start of the transition period, with clear information on what their licence or permit type will transition to, any applicable fee changes, and why the change is being made;
- During the transition period, when existing licences come up for renewal, guide vendors through the transition to the appropriate new licence and permit types, where applicable. Fruit and vegetable vendors will be able to self-identify (and may be inspected) to be eligible for reduced fees; and
- Waive application fees, if any.

The transition will be implemented over a one-year period to align with existing 12-month licence cycles and ensure all vendors have the opportunity to transition. At the

end of 12 months, Article XVII in Chapter 545, Licensing, will be repealed, along with all fees and charges related to Hawkers and Pedlars in Chapter 441.

### *Communication and Customer Service*

Currently, most information related to street vending and artists is located across several pages on Toronto.ca. As part of consultation, a primary area of feedback was that it was difficult to find information about the application process, types of licences and permits available, and regulations for street vendors, artists and performers.

Staff recommend updating information on Toronto.ca and developing a user-friendly vending and artists plain-language guide, as a user-friendly resource to help current and prospective vendors understand licensing requirements, application processes, and conditions of operation. This guidebook would include graphics about how to determine where busking and performing can occur, what information is needed to support an application, and details about the rules of operation vendors and artists must follow. Staff will provide translated version of this guide, where possible.

MLS will collaborate with the Economic Development and Culture Division and the Communications Division to develop and communicate this guide to vendors and artists using a variety of networks and communication streams.

Staff will also work with the Toronto Parking Authority (TPA) to improve information for licensed refreshment vehicle owners and clarify how vendors may contact TPA to operate from designated spaces in surface parking lots, for a fee. Although the TPA program was introduced through a previous street vending by-law review, it has seen limited uptake and has not been widely operationalized. No additional Council authority or by-law amendments are required to advance this work. Details on the process, including conditions of operation and fees, will be published on Toronto.ca by the end of 2026.

### *Monitoring Plan*

Staff will monitor the implementation of the recommendations in this report to assess operational impacts and identify areas requiring adjustment. Monitoring will focus on identifying emerging pain points, areas of confusion for vendors, enforcement challenges, and public feedback, including complaints related to noise, crowding, and use of public space.

Collectively, the measures in this report are intended to improve business opportunities, which may lead to an increase in vending activity. The extent of such an increase is challenging to quantify, but is expected to be minimal, given current volumes of licensed vendors. The proposals have sought to mitigate any potential congestion impacts of an increase in vending activity through operating conditions on permits when operating in the right of way. As suggested by the Chief Congestion Officer, MLS will track increases in permits and monitor the roll-out of the proposals in this report for any congestion related impacts, so that they can be mitigated as necessary.

Staff will also monitor any impacts from the 12 hour time limit for mobile vendors, on both parking and on vendors. If space constraints continue to be an issue for vendors, staff will work with Transportation Services to explore the feasibility of reintroducing designated on-street vending spaces, including potential impacts on parking, curbside management, revenues, and enforcement. Staff will communicate with vendors and report back if implementation is determined to be feasible and warranted.

Staff will continue to review impacts of these recommendations and identify impacts on congestion, noise and operations and report back with any recommended adjustments to support effective implementation and ongoing management of street vending and busking activities in the City of Toronto.

## **CONTACT**

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Joanna Hazelden, Director (Acting), Policy and Strategic Support, Municipal Licensing and Standards, 416-392-9830, [Joanna.Hazelden@toronto.ca](mailto:Joanna.Hazelden@toronto.ca)

Anna Fernandes, Director, By-law Enforcement, Municipal Licensing and Standards, 416-396-8221, [Anna.Fernandes@toronto.ca](mailto:Anna.Fernandes@toronto.ca)

Kevin Lurkhur, Director (Acting), Business Licensing and Regulatory Services, Municipal Licensing and Standards, 416-338-5079, [Kevin.Lurkhur@toronto.ca](mailto:Kevin.Lurkhur@toronto.ca)

## **SIGNATURE**

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Gadi Katz  
Interim Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards

## **ATTACHMENTS**

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- Attachment 1: Proposed Chapter 740, Street Vending and Artists
- Attachment 2: Proposed Chapter 545, Licensing Revised Article IV
- Attachment 3: Summary of Rules for Vendors and Artists
- Attachment 4: Consultation Report from Barnes Management Group
- Attachment 5: Recommendations for By-law Harmonization, Burden Reduction and Administrative Updates
- Attachment 6: Data Overview of Licenses and Permits Types
- Attachment 7: Proposed Licence and Permit Fee Changes
- Attachment 8: Summary of Proposed Changes