

STREET FOOD VENDING INITIATIVE: MAKING SEATTLE FRIENDLY TO STREET FOOD

Project Summary

The City of Seattle would like to encourage more mobile food vending in our city, especially in the Center City neighborhoods. Affordable and culturally-diverse street food can improve public safety and street life, increase access to local food, and create new business opportunities.

What are the benefits?

- *Economic vitality.* The experience of other cities shows that food vendors attract foot traffic to commercial districts—which means increased sales and a more vibrant retail business overall.¹ By offering low-cost, culturally-diverse foods for people on the go, they typically complement— rather than compete— with sit-down restaurants and give people more reasons to frequent local shopping districts.
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- *Festive, pedestrian-friendly streets.* Food vendors bring positive activity to the street and add a festive, people-oriented feel that improves public safety. In many cities, food vendors provide a window into many diverse cultures, introducing people to new foods and to the pleasures of spending time in the public space of the city.
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- *An entry point to owning your own business.* Food vending can be an ideal first business. For a modest investment, it helps an entrepreneur develop a track record and build loyal clientele. For many immigrant and refugee communities, food vending offers a point of entry to the economy and a way to learn the food service industry.

In a recent survey, **58% of business owners in downtown Portland, Oregon** – which is known for its vibrant street food scene— **found food vendors increased foot traffic**, and 66% of business owners citywide had a positive perception of food vendors.

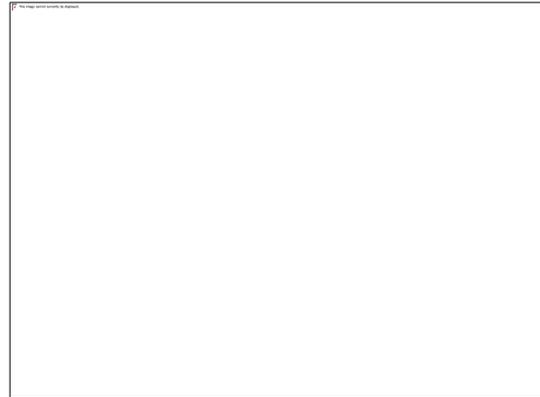
¹ [Food Cartology](http://www.portlandonline.com/shared/cfm/image.cfm?id=200738), p. 24 – 27_www.portlandonline.com/shared/cfm/image.cfm?id=200738

Recommendations for Seattle

The City of Seattle is considering the following reforms for mobile food vending in the right-of-way:

Citywide:

- *Diversify types of food that can be sold from food carts.* Currently carts are limited to hot dogs, espresso, popcorn and flowers. The Health Dept is considering expanding this list to allow assembly of pre-cooked ingredients and other foods on a case-by-case basis.
- *Eliminate required 200' Park setback.* This requirement would change to an approach where Parks and SDOT would collaborate on any application within 50' of a park.
- *Set "pedestrian zone" and "pedestrian visual corridor" standards, for carts on sidewalks.* Food carts would only be permitted where there is sufficient sidewalk space to ensure clear sidewalks for persons with disabilities and easy access to area businesses.
- *Create a Street Use Permit for mobile trucks.* Currently only trucks serving construction sites are permitted. This would allow the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) to issue street use permits where mobile trucks could operate from the right-of-way, in designated spaces.
- *Set standards for design, litter pickup, and hours of operation.* Allow SDOT to set guidelines for cart design, and standards for trash clean up and hours of operation.
- *Create setbacks from restaurants.* Require food vendors be 50 feet from an adjacent food service, unless with the written permission of the business.
- *Improve noticing requirements to the public and area businesses.* Require public notice of all pending applications for mobile food vending in the right-of-way, and require the food vending applicant notify all adjacent businesses in person of a pending application.

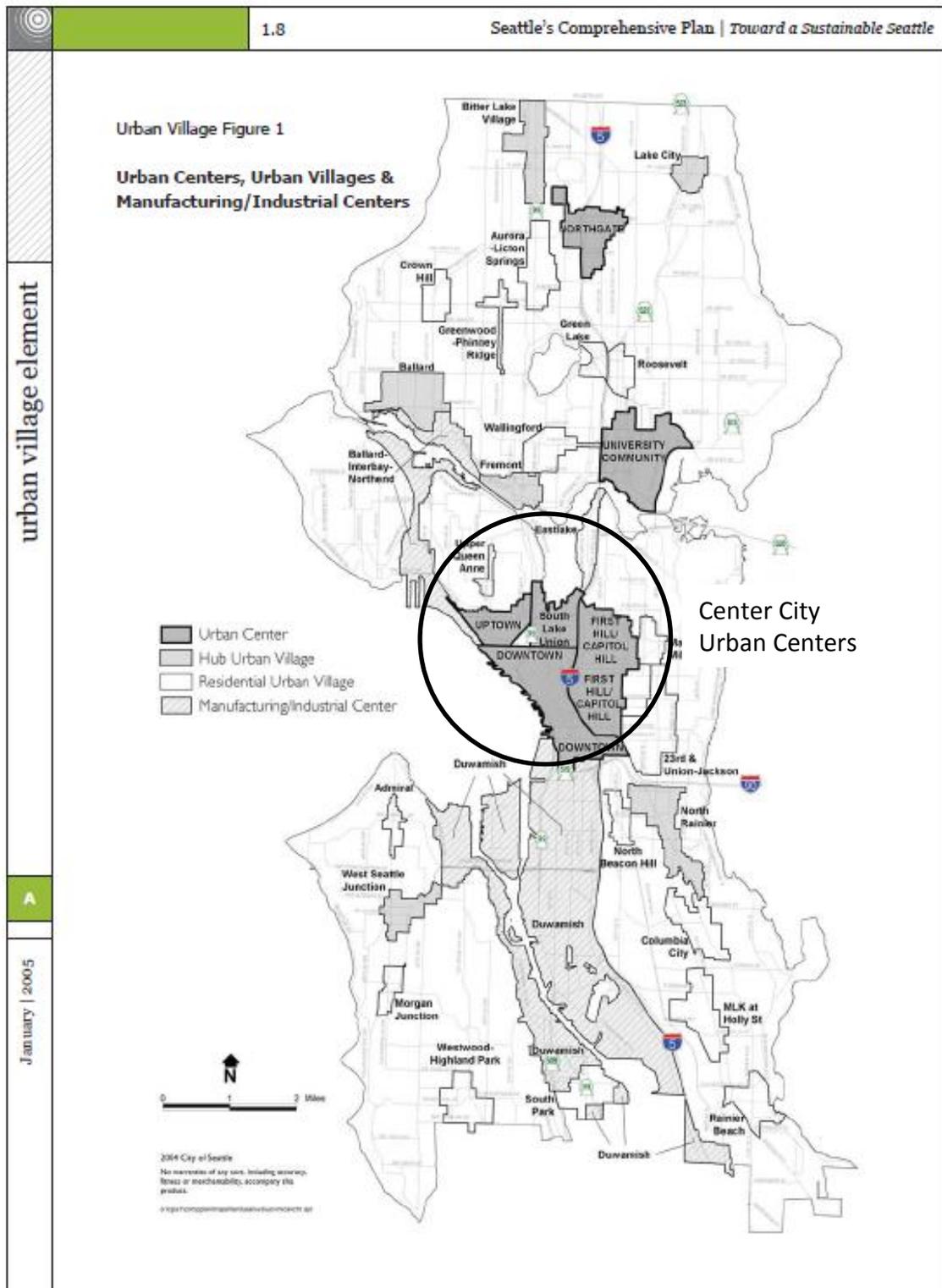


In Center City Urban Centers (see attached)

- *Allow mobile vending from the street.* Mobile food vending from the street is currently prohibited. SDOT would identify locations in Center City neighborhoods, as a pilot, where curbside vending would be permitted during certain days and times. A vendor would need to secure a street use permit to operate in a designated space.
- *Issue an RFP for vendors at specific locations.* Solicit proposals from vendors to help activate certain public places and provide public amenities.



Curbside Vending Pilot Area- Center City Neighborhoods



Next Steps

City staff are meeting with community organizations, businesses and other stakeholders to discuss these ideas. A specific proposal will be considered by the Mayor and City Council in summer 2010.

Links for more Information

- "Food Cartology – Rethinking Urban Spaces as People Places." Food Cart Study for the City of Portland, OR by the Urban Vitality Group.
<http://www.portlandonline.com/shared/cfm/image.cfm?id=200738>
- Study Project for Public Spaces – the benefits of food vending in the right-of-way.
http://www.pps.org/civic_centers/info/how_to/how_to_vending
- Food Vending in Portland, OR – fun information, potential for Seattle.
<http://foodcartsportland.com/>
- FareStart – Seattle's job training and placement program for homeless and disadvantaged individuals.
<http://www.farestart.org/>
- Hacienda CDC, Portland OR, micro-enterprise food vendor program
<http://www.haciendacdc.org/Programs/EconomicDevelopment.html>
- Toronto, CA – Street Food Vending Project and Design Competition
http://multistorycomplex.org/street_food_vending_project
- NYC Street Vendor Project
http://streetvendor.netfirms.com/public_html/staticpages/index.php?page=20040616184504992

We welcome your comments. For more information, please contact:

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