

Food Truck Program FAQ's for Residents and Area Businesses

Updated February 2022

Q: Why is the City doing this?

A: The City of Cambridge Community Development Department (CDD) Food Truck Program is the result of a successful year long Food Truck Pilot which provided entrepreneurial opportunities to vendors, diverse food offerings to patrons, and additional street level amenities to Cambridge public spaces.

The Food Truck Program continues in the spirit of the Pilot, helping to incubate and grow food businesses, with a focus on historically excluded proprietors as well as first-time food truck operators, and food truck businesses without other venues for selling.

Q: How long is the Food Truck Program?

A: The Food Truck Program offers year-round vending, with a season that starts on May 1 and ends April 30.

Q: Where will the trucks be and during what times?

A: There are three public locations:

1. Central Square/City Hall (Massachusetts Avenue) Weekend Dinner (Thursday, Friday & Saturday 8PM to 12:00AM)*
2. Cambridgeport (Sydney Street at Erie Street) Weekday Lunch (Monday – Friday, 10AM to 3PM)*
3. Northpoint Park (Education Street) Weekend Lunch (Saturday and Sunday 10AM to 6PM)*

** Please note: actual vending time always ends at least a half hour before the end of a shift, so for example, last call for an order at Cambridgeport would be 2:30 PM, not 3PM when the permitted shift time ends.*

Q: How many trucks can park in a location?

A: Cambridgeport can host up to three trucks, while Central Square and North Point Park can host up to two. This is the maximum and fewer trucks may be scheduled at any given time.

Q: How are trucks chosen for the Food Truck Program shifts?

A: Trucks are chosen in the following manner:

1. A truck is first reviewed for site eligibility. This is based on submitted menu and whether a directly competing brick-and-mortar restaurant is near the truck's requested locations.
2. Trucks are then reviewed according to program goals and for participation in special consideration categories. For a detailed list of the special consideration categories, view the Cambridge Food Truck Program Guidelines document on cambridgema.gov/foodtrucks.
3. For sites with high demand, an online People's Choice poll, will be used to help determine public interest for the trucks which requested high demand slots. The results of this poll will be considered to help the internal review committee make final determinations. For a more detailed overview of the People's Choice process, please visit cambridgema.gov/foodtruckvote.

Q: Are food trucks smelly and will they be in the way?

A: Regarding smell: Food Truck operations (prepping and cooking specifically) have dramatically changed in recent years. Trucks are equipped with hood and ventilation systems as sophisticated as brick-and-mortar restaurants and are required by law to clean their vents on a regular basis. Additionally, many trucks perform most of their prep and cooking at a remote location like a commissary kitchen or restaurant kitchen to help ensure faster delivery of ordered items at the truck. The result is overall less cooking on the trucks which means the trucks are less like kitchens on wheels and more like "last stage assembly" on wheels. This helps to reduce smell nuisances. Residents can expect smell levels on par with, or lower than, a traditional restaurant.

A: Regarding space: CDD staff in the Economic Development Division have worked carefully with the Traffic, Parking & Transportation Department to identify locations and to carefully site trucks. All public locations can host more than one truck, though not all sites may be fully subscribed. Most shifts utilize spaces after meter hours (e.g. Central Square vending starts at 8PM when the meters have been shut off) or in un-metered areas. Food truck vending locations have official Traffic, Parking & Transportation Department signs fabricated and hung to ensure spaces are free for trucks at the start of a shift. Additionally, through the Program, trucks will be in specific, pre-determined locations so that trucks will not be parking in any unexpected spaces.

Q: Won't the food trucks take business away from my brick-and-mortar restaurant?

A: CDD staff in the Economic Development Division have exercised discretion to ensure brick-and-mortar establishments are not directly competed with. For example, a pizza truck will not be placed right outside of an Italian restaurant. Research has shown that food trucks can help bring business to brick-and-mortar businesses in the areas where they vend – whether it is food truck patrons buying a drink from a nearby business, returning to the area for dinner after passing a place they had never noticed before on the way to a truck, or getting lunch from a nearby spot they notice on a new walking route to a food truck site. To ensure the comfort of both trucks and brick-and-mortar establishments, CDD staff visited abutting businesses in person to share news of the Program when it launched during the Pilot phase to address concerns. Abutters were grateful to hear that directly competing trucks would not be parked in front of their business and that if questions were to arise that CDD staff in the Economic Development Division could be contacted directly. Additionally, abutters in Central Square specifically mentioned that increased foot traffic and activity at night would be a perk and help business. Continued outreach has occurred over the course of the Pilot with opportunities for feedback ongoing.

Q: I see trucks out but they are vending in places that aren't the public sites listed here. Is that allowed?

A: Trucks can vend in the City of Cambridge on private property if they have a written agreement with the landlord as well as a Cambridge Mobile Food Truck Permit. Trucks can also vend on public

property not included in the CDD Food Truck Program, one time a year only, for special events that are open to the public (e.g. employee appreciation day) and per approval of the Traffic, Parking & Transportation Department. Questions about one time vending on public property can be directed to the Traffic, Parking & Transportation Department who issues the Special Permit for such events at 617/349-4700.

Q: What kind of permits and licenses do the trucks need? What fees do they pay?

A: There are two sets of fees: 1) fees that apply to the business 2) fees that apply to the Program vending fee (rent).

The fees that apply to the food truck business are:

1. City of Cambridge Business Certificate: **\$50 every four years**
2. City of Cambridge Fire Department Inspection: **\$50 annually**
3. City of Cambridge Mobile Food Truck Permit (Inspectional Services): **\$200 annually**
4. City of Cambridge Hawkers & Peddlers License (License Commission): **\$185 (first year) + \$39 (renewal)**
5. State of Massachusetts Hawkers & Peddlers License: **\$62 every four years**
6. Active insurance: **varies based on provider and policy**
7. ServSafe Certification: **varies based on location of courses**
8. Valid license or permit for restaurant or commissary kitchen where food is prepared: **see respective departments if outside of Cambridge, if inside see Inspectional Services (varies based on type)**

The fees that apply to the Pilot program (rent) are:

1. \$50, \$40, or \$30 per shift, depending on the public location.

Q: Where can I get more information?

A: Visit cambridgema.gov/foodtrucks or contact CDD staff, Christina DiLisio, Economic Development Specialist at (617) 349 4601 or cdilisio@cambridgema.gov.