

Food Truck Pilot FAQ's for Food Truck Owner/Operators

Updated March 2018

Q: How much will it cost and what permits or licenses do I need?

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

The fees that apply to your 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)**

** Information about permit, license, and certificate fees provided here is intended for budget planning purposes for the Food Truck Pilot only. Fees may change for occasional one-time vending. Please confirm fees with the respective City agencies and departments.*

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

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

Trucks need not be fully permitted and licensed at the time of application, but do need to be fully permitted and licensed in order to be granted any requested shifts and accepted into the Pilot. Please

note that the deadline to submit an application to the Cambridge License Commission for your city Hawkers and Peddlers License is January. This deadline ensures your truck will be reviewed in time.

Q: Where are the vending locations?

A: For the Pilot, there are three 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 a sandwich would be 2:30 PM, not 3PM when the permitted shift time ends.*

Q: How many trucks can park in a location?

A: Most locations in the Pilot can support more than one truck, up to three trucks at a time.

Q: How often can I change my spot or shift?

A: For the Pilot, shifts chosen and scheduled will be the same for the full 28-week season.

Q: How do I pay for my locations in the pilot? Will I be sent a bill?

A: Billing for the Pilot will be like the billing process for Special Events. Your permit will be issued out of the Traffic, Parking, and Transportation Department and you will pay that department upon picking up your permit. Billing will occur monthly and trucks will pay one month in advance (e.g. bills for April vending are paid in March).

Q: I don't want to vend in the Pilot locations. Where else can I go? What if I have another spot in mind?

A: The three locations in the Pilot are the only currently available public space sites in Cambridge where trucks can vend regularly. You can vend on public property rarely (e.g. one-time for a special event). Please contact the Traffic, Parking, and Transportation Department with questions about the special event process. You can regularly vend on private property with the permission of the landlord. Please contact the Community Development Department with questions about whether land is public or private (as it is sometimes not obvious). If you have questions about one-time vending on public property, please contact the Traffic, Parking, and Transportation Department and ask about their Special Events permit.

Q: How are trucks chosen for the Pilot?

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 or not a directly competing brick and mortar restaurant is near the truck's requested locations.
2. Trucks are then reviewed according to program goals: women or minority-owned business, food businesses owned by Cambridge residents, food business with no brick and mortar locations in Cambridge, food business with no more than 2 brick and mortar locations outside of Cambridge, and food trucks not already vending in Cambridge (i.e. the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority Food Truck Program, Central Flea, and the "overpass" at Harvard University, etc.). Trucks not meeting these goals will still be considered but given lower priority.
3. For sites with very high demand, an online People's Choice poll, will be used to help determine public interest for the trucks requesting 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: I don't have a food truck – I have a coffee trike/canteen cart/push cart. Can I still participate?

A: Presently the Food Truck Pilot does not support these kinds of mobile vending units. Please contact Economic Development Division staff in the Community Development Department for help with accessing other vending opportunities.

Q: I don't have a restaurant or a truck. Can I still participate?

A: Presently there are no options for shared trucks – you must have your own. You do not need a restaurant but you do need a safe, and fully inspected, commercial kitchen where food is cooked and prepped. Presently, there are no shared commercial kitchen facilities in Cambridge, however, some exist in the Greater Boston area (for example, Malden and Dorchester) and a quick Google search using the words “Commercial Kitchens in Greater Boston” will pull up a good working list.

Q: Can you recommend menu items?

A: No. The City of Cambridge cannot recommend menu items.

Q: What do I do if someone is parked in my spot?

A: Call the City of Cambridge Police Department Non-emergency line at 617-349-3300. Cambridge Police will dispatch a unit to ticket and tow the vehicle.

Q: What else should I know before I start vending?

A: Like other businesses in Cambridge, food trucks are expected to comply with all applicable City regulations that apply to businesses. If you have any questions about recent legislature and how it applies to your food truck business, please contact CDD staff, Christina DiLisio, Associate Economic Development Specialist at (617) 349 4601 or cdilisio@cambridgema.gov.