



ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: January 7, 2011
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Meeting Date: January 20, 2011

TO: Standing Committee of City Services and Budgets

FROM: Deputy City Manager, General Manager of Engineering Services and the Director of Social Policy

SUBJECT: Expanded Food Options on City Streets

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT Council direct staff to incorporate the 17 street food pilot vendors into the regular street vending program.
- B. THAT Council increase the number of food vendors on City streets by permitting an additional 60 locations (30 downtown and 30 outside downtown) over an approximate period of 4 years, subject to revision if required.
- C. THAT all new food vending and mobile food vending permits be contingent upon meeting minimum nutritional standards as defined by Provincial Health professionals.
- D. THAT Council approve amendments to the mobile food vending program for a trial period from June 1, 2011 to May 31, 2012 to allow a greater variety of food to be sold from mobile units.
- E. THAT Council direct staff to report back with recommendations for street food vending on private property in 2012.

COUNCIL POLICY

On April 23, 2002, Council adopted definitions and principles for environmental, economic and social sustainability to guide City actions and operations.

On July 8, 2003, Council approved a motion supporting the development of a just and sustainable food system for the City of Vancouver that fosters equitable food production, distribution and consumption; nutrition; community development and environmental health.

On February 15, 2007, Council adopted the Vancouver Food Charter which sets out Vancouver's commitment to the development of a coordinated municipal food policy.

On February 3, 2009, Council passed a motion to establish a Mayor's Greenest City Action Team (GCAT) as a type D Committee.

On May 5, 2009, Council received a 'Quick Start' report from GCAT with forty-four recommendations on actions the City can take immediately to advance the goal of becoming the greenest city in the world by 2020. The recommendations include green economic development, green jobs, and green procurement.

On May 4, 2010, Council adopted the long-term environmental goals recommended by the Greenest City Action Team (GCAT) in their report, *Vancouver 2020: A Bright Green Future*. Council also directed staff to proceed with the development of a "Greenest City 2020 implementation Plan," which includes "local food" and the "local economy" as goals.

PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

This report contains recommendations to expand the City of Vancouver's street food vending program. Further, the report summarizes other administrative enhancements undertaken or underway by staff to enhance food vending on city streets.

Program expansion supports the City's sustainability, food policy and GCAT goals. Street food vending is recognized as an effective means to improve access to affordable food, enliven the public realm, promote neighbourhood vitality, encourage pedestrian and bicycle-friendly communities, improve sense of place, and increase opportunities for micro-enterprise and small business incubation.

Staff recommendations and program enhancements are based on research conducted on Vancouver's street food vending context, lessons learned from the 2010 Expanded Street Food Options pilot program, and research on street food vending in other North American cities including Toronto, Portland, Cleveland and Seattle.

BACKGROUND

On March 13, 2008, Council put forward a motion directing staff to work with the Vancouver Food Policy Council to:

1. Expand the variety of food sold through street vendors in the City of Vancouver with a focus on foods that are nutritious and represent the cultural diversity of Vancouver;
2. Expand the geographical area in which street vendors selling food can operate in the City of Vancouver;
3. Increase access to affordable, nutritious food in low-income communities through the Street Vendor program.

Current context

There are currently 120 street vending locations approved for both food and non food products (100 in the downtown core and 20 outside the core). This number and ratio were approved by Council on January 13th 1994.

Prior to the June 2010 pilot program, street food was sold in approximately 60 locations with the majority in the downtown core. Food products approved for sale included: pre-packaged, non-perishable food such as soft drinks, chips, candy bars and granola snacks; whole fruit and whole vegetables; hot dogs, regular and specialty coffee, popcorn, pretzels, pre-packaged ice cream and yoghurt. Selection for vending locations was conducted through a lottery system, and subject to location guidelines and health requirements.

In addition to the regular street vending program, Engineering Services administers the mobile food vending program that applies to the sale of approved pre-packaged food and non-alcoholic beverages on City streets from mobile vehicles. There is no limit to the number of such permits issued, however restrictions exist on the type of food approved for sale. There are currently 15 mobile food vending permits issued.

Expanded street food options pilot program

In June 2010, a pilot program added an additional 17 street food vending locations to the existing 60. To be eligible, applicants were required to provide a menu including items other than hot dogs and packaged foods (more nutritious and diverse), and a waste management/diversion plan. The existing lottery process was used to award pilot locations. The pilot program attracted 400 applicants for over 800 locations (applicants could apply for more than one location). The pilot also enabled existing food vendors to sell healthier and more diverse food options provided that health and location requirements were satisfied. Appendix A provides a map of pilot and existing vendors in the city.

Pilot program results

- The creation of 20 healthier and more diverse street food vending locations: 14 of the 17 lottery winners are currently operational, with the remaining 3 expected to be operational in early 2011. In addition to the 14 new vendors, 6 existing food vendors adapted operations and are now serving healthier and more diverse offerings.
- Increased public awareness: The pilot attracted extensive media coverage, public interest, and resulted in a new food blog.

Pilot program lessons learned

- Successful program expansion depends on partnerships between many City departments and key partners (e.g Vancouver Coastal Health, BIAs, BC Restaurant and Food Services Association, Vancouver Food Policy Council, cart manufacturers, existing and potential vendors).
- Enhanced screening mechanisms are important to ensure vendor readiness.
- Improvements can be made to selection process and other program requirements (e.g. nutritional standards).
- Quality of the program will be maintained by on-going consideration of ideas and concerns that may arise from various partners.

Lessons learned from other cities

- High municipal regulation, comparatively high permit fees, and locations without sufficient pedestrian traffic can impact the success of street food vending programs (e.g. Toronto).
- Low municipal regulation can also impact street food vending programs. An example is the City of Portland where the majority of street food vending occurs on private property with comparatively low regulation. Although Portland's program is vibrant and successful in many regards, issues include waste management, perceived fairness to neighbouring businesses, and building code issues (e.g. structures, size of carts/trucks).
- Vancouver can learn from elements of street food vending programs in other cities that have similar goals: a focus on healthy, affordable food and local ingredients; micro-loans to small entrepreneurs; artist commissions for cart design (e.g. Cleveland, New York's Green Carts).

DISCUSSION

Based on a review of our current program, lessons learned from the 2010 pilot program, and research conducted on other cities, this section of the report sets out the rationale for each recommendation and provides information on other program enhancements.

A. Incorporate the 17 street food pilot vendors into the regular street food vending program

Staff recommend that the 17 street food pilot vendors be incorporated into the regular street vending program and their permits be renewed on an annual basis provided that all regular program requirements are met. This supports the momentum of the overall street food program, contributes to stabilizing new vendors as they build their clientele, and recognizes the significant investment made by the pilot vendors.

B. Increase the number of food vendors on City streets by permitting an additional 60 locations (30 downtown and 30 outside downtown) over an approximate period of 4 years, subject to revision if required

Staff recommend phasing in vendors at a similar rate to the increase under the 2010 Pilot program. Fifteen additional food locations for each of the next 4 years will achieve an increase in food vending locations from 80 to 140, a total increase of 75%. This increase will result in the presence of a vendor approximately every 2-3 blocks downtown and the presence of approximately 2 vendors in each of Vancouver's main commercial districts. Engineering staff will identify new locations that conform to existing regulations (that include limits on proximity to existing retail establishments selling similar food and space requirements). Engineering staff will monitor the expansion of the program by selecting locations that are appropriately sited with respect to surrounding uses and impacts.

C. All new food vending and mobile food vending permits be contingent upon meeting minimum nutritional standards as defined by Provincial Health professionals

Staff recommend that any new food vendors over the next four years be required to meet minimum nutritional standards. The nutritional standards are being developed in consultation with Community Nutritionists from Vancouver Coastal Health, and based on recognized dietary guidelines. Vancouver will be the first city in Canada to develop required nutritional standards for street food vending. The nutritional requirement will apply equally to mobile food vending permits.

Staff are considering ways of encouraging compliance with nutritional standards for all food vendors. This will be reviewed as part of ongoing program modifications including impacts on current vendors.

D. Allow a greater variety of food to be sold from mobile vending units

The current Street Vending Bylaw restricts mobile food vending on City streets to pre-packaged food. Staff recommend a trial expansion of allowable types of food sold from mobile vending units. This trial allows for a greater variety of food offerings from mobile units. The trial would make available a maximum of 20 mobile food vending permits for a trial period from June 1, 2011 to May 31, 2012. The 20 permits will allow a greater diversity of healthy, non-packaged food to be sold from mobile units. All other regulations pertaining to mobile vending will remain in place.

E. Report back on street food vending options on private property in 2012

Recognizing the complexity of issues pertaining to street food vending on private property, staff recommend a report back to Council in early 2012 including options for a pilot program.

PROGRAM ENHANCEMENTS

The following program enhancements are being put in place or are being considered.

i. Permit conditions: Renewals, leasing restrictions and tenure requirements

Current permit guidelines allow a holder indefinite renewal of the annual permit, the ability to lease the location to a different operator, and the ability to leave the site vacant.

Pilot program permit holders who choose to continue, as well as all future new permit holders will be required to operate the site themselves (instead of leasing the space to another operator). Phasing out previous leasing arrangements in effect prior to the Pilot program will also be undertaken after discussion with those affected. Guidelines for a limit on the number of times a permit can be renewed as well as minimum requirements for operation of the site will be evaluated, and any adjustments made as part of on-going program modifications.

ii. Selection process

All street vending permits (flowers, handicrafts, artworks and food) have been awarded through an annual lottery process administered by Engineering Services. Permits have become available when the City identifies additional locations, or when an existing permit is returned to the City either because the vendor no longer wants to continue, or has failed to meet renewal requirements.

An alternate selection process for food street vendors is under development to ensure successful applicants are ready to commence operation upon awarding of the permit, and to

ensure that food nutrition, origin and diversity requirements are met. Food applications will be rated on the basis of: readiness, experience, qualifications, nutritional content, menu diversity, innovation, use of local/organic/fair trade food, proposed business plan, and environmentally friendly waste management practices.

City staff will undertake an initial screening to determine the applications that best meet the above criteria; these applications will then proceed to final selection. Final selection will be carried out by a panel of local individuals including chefs, a food critic, a member of the public, a food blogger, a nutritionist, a sustainability expert, and representation from BIAs, the BC Food and Restaurant Association, Vancouver Food Policy Council, Vancouver Economic Development Commission, and the Farmers Market Society. Staff are considering the use of web based technology as a mechanism to gain additional public input.

Choice of available locations will be based on point scores. The applicant with the highest overall score will have first choice from the list of available locations; the second highest will have second choice, and so on. A draw will be used to resolve any tied scores.

iii. Hours of operation

Currently street vendors may operate daily between 7 AM and 2 AM. Extending street vending hours until 4 AM will be considered on a case by case basis in locations where adjacent bars are ceasing liquor service at 3 AM. Vancouver Police Department support this approach as a means of addressing street disorder.

iv. Encouraging local and organic food

A partnership between Social Policy and the Vancouver Farmers Market Society will seek to develop guidelines and resources to encourage street food vendors to source their ingredients from local (BC) producers where possible. Resources will include information on what products are available by season, and which farmers are able to supply products in what quantities.

v. Opportunities for low Income Populations

Social Policy staff are working with the Vancouver Farmers Market Society, the Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood House, Kitchen Tables Project and others to explore street food vending as an economic development opportunity for low income populations.

BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT AREA (BIA) COMMENTS

The BIAs expressed concern that food cart height and noise generated can interfere with access to street level business, and identified permit condition concerns such as indefinite permit renewal of vendors, more business input into leasing locations as well as program enforcement, annual fees, proximity guidelines, provision of City electrical power. These additional issues will be examined and revised in consultation with the BIAs as part of on-going program adjustments. Consultation was conducted more specifically with the Downtown Vancouver BIA with respect to the number of vendors in the downtown and concerns have been satisfactorily addressed.

VANCOUVER COASTAL HEALTH COMMENTS

Vancouver Coastal Health, Health Protection supports the recommendations provided in this report and looks forward to a continued partnership with the City of Vancouver to meet these goals.

Summary of proposed changes to City of Vancouver Street Food Program

Existing Program	Proposed Change
Permits of 17 street food pilot program vendors expire on April 30, 2011.	17 street food pilot program vendors will be incorporated into regular street vending program.
Approximately 80 food vendors on City streets (65 downtown and 15 outside of downtown).	Increase the number of street food vendors by adding 60 locations (30 downtown, and 30 outside downtown), over an approximate period of 4 years, subject to revision if required.
No nutritional standards exist for street food vendors.	Minimum recognized nutritional standards as defined by Provincial Health professionals will need to be met by all new street food vendors.
Mobile food vendors may only serve approved pre-packaged food.	Under a trial program, 20 mobile food permits will be issued to sell a greater variety of food (healthier, more diverse, more local ingredients).
Food vendors are selected through an annual lottery.	The selection process for Food Street Vendors will be carried out by staff and a judging panel of local experts who will rate each application on the basis of: readiness, experience, qualifications, nutritional content, menu diversity, use of local/organic/fair trade food, proposed business plan, environmental factors etc.
No guidelines exist on local (BC) food procurement.	Social Policy has partnered with Vancouver Farmers Market Society to develop guidelines and resources to encourage street food vendors to source their ingredients from local (BC) producers where possible.
No resources exist on supporting street vending as an economic development opportunity for low income populations.	Social Policy staff are working with the Vancouver Farmers Market Society, the Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood House, Kitchen Tables Project and others to explore how a sub-program could use street food vending as an economic development opportunity for low income populations.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no significant financial changes anticipated at this time.

PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

It is anticipated that the enhanced Street Food Vending program as outlined can be implemented with existing resources.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

The expanded street food program supports the “Greenest City 2020 implementation Plan,” which includes “local food” and the “local economy” as goals. Operationally, street food vendors are required to have a plan to reduce the environmental impact of their operation (i.e. waste management and / or diversion).

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The expanded Street Food program meets the City’s social goals including the City’s commitment to create a “just and sustainable” food system (2003), social sustainability definition (2005) and Food Charter (2007). It also supports the City’s partnership with Vancouver Coastal Health to promote an Urban Health initiative.

CONCLUSION

This report presents recommendations that allow for the expansion and development of the City of Vancouver’s food vending program on City streets. Program expansion will support the City’s sustainability, food policy and GCAT goals.

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Expanded Food Options on City Streets

Appendix A

