



PROPOSED CHANGES TO SAN FRANCISCO'S VENDING PROGRAM

Currently, vending or selling food or merchandise on City property and sidewalks in the public right of way without a permit is prohibited. San Francisco Public Works (Public Works) administers the Street Vendor Permit Program, which issues permits to allow a person to sell prepackaged food or merchandise on City property or sidewalks.

Following the passage of California Senate Bill 276 (2025), in November and December 2025, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors will consider changes to the City's vending program to increase penalties for vending without a permit.

Please read on to learn more about the proposed ordinance that will bring changes to San Francisco's vending program and how you can receive assistance with or ask questions about the permit application process! To learn more about the ordinance, go to <https://sfgov.legistar.com/Legislation.aspx> and search for File Number 251051.

PROPOSED PENALTIES THAT WILL TAKE EFFECT IN JANUARY 2026, IF ENACTED BY THE CITY

Currently, failure to comply with the City's vending requirements may result in enforcement by the City and County of San Francisco (City), including the issuance of fines and/or seizure of goods. Fines range from \$100 to \$500 for vendors with permits and from \$250 to \$1,000 for vendors operating without a permit.

If the proposed ordinance passes, selling merchandise that is a common target of retail theft on City property without a permit may result in escalating penalties within 18 months of the first violation. Enforcement starts with a written warning for the first violation, an infraction for the second and third violations, and an infraction or a misdemeanor punishable by up to six months in jail and/or a fine up to \$1,000, for the fourth violation. Violations include, but are not limited to:

- Operating without a permit
- Not displaying the permit in public view or not having it readily available upon request
- Vending in an area not allowed under the permit
- Vending during days and times not allowed under the permit
- Obstructing the path of travel on a sidewalk or City property; in most cases, at least 6 feet of clearance is required
- Blocking building entrances and exits, fire escapes and Fire Department connections, curb ramps, driveways, blue zones and transit stops

- The vendor's inability to demonstrate proof of ownership for the goods being sold; proof of ownership includes receipts
- Selling goods that do not match the description on the vendor's permit
- Creating conditions that are dirty or excessively noisy or smelly

Public Works Code Article 5.9, Public Works Order No. 206,887 and other orders and permit conditions regulate vending of merchandise as well as prepackaged food and drink, on City property and right of way, including sidewalks. Additional Health Code and Fire Code requirements may apply.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. **WHAT IS A STREET VENDOR PERMIT?** The City established the Street Vendor Permit Program to support economic opportunity and encourage entrepreneurship with a low barrier to entry, while also serving the public interest by maintaining a safe and accessible public right of way. Permits can be issued for both stationary and roaming vendors. Stationary vendors must sell from one or more fixed locations designated in the permit, while roaming vendors may move from place to place and stop only intermittently to complete a transaction.

2. **HOW DO I APPLY FOR A STREET VENDOR PERMIT?**

The City created an online portal for streamlined submission and review of vendor applications. Applications can be submitted online at www.sf.gov/streetvendorpermit. The form is available in English, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Filipino.

The following materials must be submitted as part of the permit application:

- Business Account Number
- Description of vending location or vending route
- Applicants seeking a fee waiver or reduction must provide documentation verifying low-income status (see examples below). Fees will be invoiced to the applicant after an application is submitted. Permit fees shall not exceed \$25 for applicants earning less than 200% of area median income or receiving certain public benefits, such as CalWORKs, CalFresh, general assistance, Medi-Cal, Supplemental Security Income, the State Supplementary Payment Program, the California Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, the California Alternate Rates for Energy (CARE) program, or the Family Electric Rate Assistance program

- Days and hours of operation
- Items to be sold
- Photograph of applicant
- Proof of identity (applicant will not be asked about immigration or citizenship status)

3. WHAT ARE SOME BASIC RESTRICTIONS ON VENDORS?

A. Vendors must operate only at the location(s) listed on their permit and only during the approved times

B. On-site vendor must match the photograph and Business Account information submitted in the vendor's permit application; third parties, such as employees of a business, must submit their own application(s)

C. Vendors must actively attend to any equipment placed in the right of way and remove the equipment promptly at the conclusion of operations each day

D. Vendors may not obstruct utilities or other similar facilities located in the right of way

E. Vendors may not obstruct construction or other permitted commercial activity

F. Stationary vendors may not operate in areas that are zoned exclusively residential

G. Vendors shall maintain a minimum two (2) feet of clearance along the curbside when operating adjacent to existing on-street parallel parking

H. Vendors may not operate in proximity of the following locations without written consent from the Director of Public Works: certified farmers' markets, swap meets, or City-permitted special events at United Nations Plaza and Hallidie Plaza

I. Items sold must be listed on the vendor's issued permit

J. The vendor's operation must allow for a straight, unobstructed path of travel for pedestrians; the path must be at least 6 feet wide

K. The vendor's operation must allow for larger clearances in the following locations: eight (8) feet from Street Artist License operators, seven (7) feet from fire hydrants, and fifteen (15) feet from bus zones or blue zones, two (2) feet from the curb, when operating adjacent to existing on-street parallel parking

L. Vendors shall not obstruct access to any corner or mid-block accessible curb ramp or sidewalk angular return or other designated pedestrian crossing

M. Vendors must not interfere with building entrances, driveways, Fire Department connections or access to fire escapes

4. WHAT ARE SOME BASIC PERMIT HOLDER RESPONSIBILITIES?

- A. Ensure they sell the goods at the approved location(s)
- B. Maintain cleanliness of the vending area and limit excessive noise and odors related to the vending operation
- C. Sidewalk areas may not be painted, landscaped or altered in any way without prior approval from Public Works
- D. Display a copy of their Street Vendor Permit and Business Registration Certificate in public view while operating
- E. Be able to demonstrate lawful proof of ownership of goods being sold, such as receipts from stores or suppliers
- F. Renew the permit annually in advance of the expiration date
- G. Comply with the applicable rules and regulations of Public Works, the San Francisco Department of Public Health, and the San Francisco Fire Department

Vendors seeking to operate within the jurisdiction of the Port of San Francisco will, in addition to requiring a permit from Public Works, be subject to siting and operating requirements specified by the Port.

5. WHO SHOULD I CALL IF I HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THE APPLICATION PROCESS?

If you have any questions, contact Public Works at (628) 271-2000 or Streetvendorpermit@sfdpw.org .