

Mobile Food Units (MFUs) Updated Code Proposal

Mobile Food Unit Task Force

- The Better Block Foundation, an urban design nonprofit based in Oak Cliff, along with members of the mobile food unit task force, began meeting earlier this year to study Chapter 17, Article VIII of the Dallas City Code to determine what, if any, updates were needed. The task force members included: Krista Nightengale , Kristin Leiber, Angela Hunt, Sparkle Carter, Taylor Adams, Jason Boso, and Melanie Linnear.
- The Task Force researched 18 cities, had conversations with City Staff and City Councilmembers, and hosted a 30-day pop-up Food Park in South Dallas with more than 20 food vendors (food trucks, trailers, and cottage food vendors).
- We drew upon these conversations, research, and real-life experiences, to compile four proposed changes and one proposed pilot.

A Few of the MLK Food Park Vendors



4 Simple Changes (and 1 Pilot)

- We believe that the following 4 simple changes (and 1 pilot) to mobile food vending ordinances will make big improvements for Dallas' entrepreneurs and food scene.
- These proposals increase diversity among entrepreneurs by reducing barriers to small-business ownership.
- The tide rises all ships: reduced barriers into entrepreneurship expand Dallas' food scene with more representation of cultural cuisines and more competition in the market.
- Significantly increases healthy options.
- Increases the overall destination draw to Dallas for tourism with a vibrant and well-represented food culture.

These Concepts Work for Other Cities; Why Not Dallas?

- We compared Dallas to 18 cities of more than 500,000 and up to 12 million residents, and referenced multiple up-to-date studies that are cited on the reference page.
- These proposals are already active in most of these cities (see slide 14). This provides well-documented precedents that our proposals can be implemented while maintaining the same public health standards.



Change No. 1: Change “Mobile Food Preparation Vehicle” to “Mobile Food Unit”

Why the current ordinance is a problem

The interpretation of “Mobile Food Preparation Vehicle” and “Motorized Mobile Food Establishment” is that the unit is “self propelled.” This interpretation is the No. 1 barrier for the small-business entrepreneur, and therefore limits the owners to big businesses and the wealthy.

Solution

Change language from “motorized” to “Mobile Food Unit” (MFU) which would be defined as: *any vehicle that is self-propelled or can be pulled or pushed safely down a sidewalk, street, or highway that is readily mobile on wheels and complies with all health and transportation safety standards.*

Change No. 2: Better Define MFUs & Permitting

Why the current ordinance is a problem	The lack of defined classes of Mobile Food Units in the current codes causes confusion for entrepreneurs and can make enforcement of the codes inconsistent. (IE While a food truck can have an annual permit; a trailer cannot.)
Solution	<p>Have one annual permit and process with four classes of specific mobile food units, each with varying levels of what can be sold, cooked, prepared, etc.</p> <p>Class I</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Units are only allowed to sell pre-packaged foods and beverages. <p>Class II</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Class I + they can have a hot or cold holding display for unpackaged foods. No cooking or prep can be done onboard. <p>Class III</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Class I & II + cooking in an external covered area (BBQ pit, wood fired pizza oven, seafood boils), where all prep, assembly, and service is done in an enclosed health code compliant area. <p>Class IV</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fully "enclosed" mobile food unit has no restrictions because it has all safety equipment & standards as brick & mortar; you are a restaurant on wheels. <p>(see examples next page)</p>

MFU Class Examples

Class I: pre-packaged sodas, chips, paletas, etc.



Class II: hotdog cart, scoopable ice cream cart, etc.



Class III: BBQ/Pizza trailer w/ enclosed service area



Class IV: fully enclosed, "a restaurant on wheels"



Change No. 3: Allow Prep of All Foods on Health-Qualified MFUs

Why the current ordinance is a problem	Current ordinance creates a huge barrier to operators wanting to provide healthy options.
Solution	Allow all food to be prepared and served in enclosed Mobile Food Units, as long as they meet the same health code standards of a brick-and-mortar restaurant (Classes III, IV).

Change No. 4: Reduce Commissary Visit to 1/week, or as necessary, for Qualified MFUs

Why the current ordinance is a problem

Returning to commissary daily is a killer of operational sustainability and the primary reason for the failure of these small businesses.

We propose giving an option to either return daily or the solution below.

Solution

In order to have a minimum of 1 commissary visit per week (or as needed) to properly change and replenish water and oil, the MFU must be:

- an enclosed MFU that adheres to the same Health and Safety standards of a brick & mortar restaurant (Class III & IV);
- And all cleaning supplies must be disposable and discarded each night.



Pilot 1: Create Mobile Food Vending Zones

The Concept	In some cities, free vending sites are designated by the city/county on public rights of way and are first come, first serve for mobile vending units without the need for special permits or usage fees. Mobile vendors are not restricted to private property or food parks where they will have to revenue share with property owners.
Proposed Pilot	We propose the City of Dallas pilots this concept, setting parameters and guidelines on the locations of the Mobile Food Vending Zones, and testing to see how the concept is received by both the community and mobile food vendors.

	Use of "Mobile Food Unit" language	Less frequent commissary visits	Allow all food to be cooked on Unit	Annual permitting for trucks and trailers
Dallas	NO	NO	NO	NO
Austin	YES	YES	YES	
Charleston	YES	YES		YES
Charlotte	YES		YES	YES
Chicago		YES	YES	
Cleveland	YES		YES	
Denver				
Jackson	YES		YES	YES
Kansas City	YES		YES	YES
Miami	YES	YES	YES	YES
Nashville	YES	YES	YES	
New Orleans	YES	YES	YES	YES
NYC	YES	YES		YES
Oklahoma City	YES		YES	
Phoenix	YES	YES	YES	
Portland	YES	YES		YES
San Antonio	YES	YES	YES	
Seattle	YES			YES

YES = the city has a similar solution in place to what has been proposed in earlier slides

Click on city name to be directed to their MFU ordinances

References

- [Government Census](#)
- [Food truck Market- Global Industry Analysis, Size, Share, Growth, Trends and Forecast 2017 - 2025](#)
- [Small Biz Genius: 20+ Food Truck Industry Strategies: What's Cooking in 2021?](#)
- [US Chamber of Commerce Food Truck Index](#)
- [Food Truck Industry in the US – Market Research](#)

Thank You.