Supportive Vendor and Concession policies offer an opportunity to both create jobs and increase food access in Chicago. Some cities, such as New York, have developed vending initiatives that specifically focus on healthy food access.

In the interest of protecting public health and zoning regulations, licensing and restrictions are required. Chicago offers three types of licenses for street-vendor businesses; Peddler, Mobile Food Dispenser, and Park Concessions. Each one has distinct properties and procedures, which offer different advantages and disadvantages.

**STREET VENDING**

**PEDDLER LICENSE**

Peddlers sell their items from a mobile wagon, cart, pack, or basket. There are two types of licenses available: Food Peddlers and Non-Food Peddlers. A Non-Food license permits individuals to sell non-food commodities. Food Peddlers:

“...are permitted to sell whole, uncut fruits and vegetables and no other food items. Peddlers are not allowed to handle or prepare food. Food peddlers may also sell non-food items as long as they are less than 15% of gross sales.”

Food Peddlers can only sell whole, uncut, and unprepared foods. This means that no cooked or handled food is permitted. There are also restrictions on where Peddlers can sell their merchandise. For example, the areas within 1,000 ft of the United Center, Wrigley Field, U.S. Cellular Field, Millennium Park, and City sponsored special events are off-limits. Vendors may be finned for violating these restrictions.

You must apply for a license in person at the Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection: 121 N. LaSalle St. City Hall, Room 800. Their hours are Monday-Friday 8:30-4:30. The license costs $165 for most applicants, but $88 for seniors, veterans, and the disabled.

C/o Growing Power
1741 N. Western Ave.
Chicago, IL 60647
773-486-6005
MOBILE FOOD DISPENSER
A Mobile Food Dispenser is licensed to sell food items directly from a vehicle, such as an ice cream truck. All food must be prepared and pre-packaged by a facility licensed for Wholesale or Retail Food Establishment. Mobile Food Dispensers are not allowed in some wards.

To apply, contact the Business Assistance Center at 312-744-6249. There is a $275 for this license.

PARK CONCESSIONS

The Chicago Park District operates with a different licensing program. Aspiring park vendors must apply for a Park Concession license that costs between $75 and $125. You may not sell in a park with a peddler or mobile food license, you need specific approval from the Park District. Other expenses include:

- A Performance Deposit of $400.00
- Food Sanitation Permit - Cost of permit varies depending on location size and product mix.
- Insurance – The minimum liability policy must be $1,000,000 per occurrence and $2,000,000 in the aggregate. (You will have to shop around; many companies quote a minimum rate of $750 for an annual policy).
- Registration fees for a Foodservice Sanitation Class (approx. $320.00/person). Completion of this course is required;
- A concession location - you must purchase your own concession facility (i.e., cart, trailer, kiosk) and standard concession signage.
- Operational service costs of services provided by the Park District, including but not limited to: utilities, trash removal, etc.

Park vendors may sell prepared foods, but must have a hand-washing station either on the cart or be parked near a washing station (i.e., bathroom).
**NEW YORK’S GREEN CARTS**

In March 2008, Mayor Bloomberg of New York City signed Local Law 9. This law established 1,000 permits for a Green Cart program that aims to increase availability of fresh fruit and vegetables in several NYC neighborhoods “so that more New Yorkers can buy fresh fruit and vegetables close to home.”

With this initiative, vendors can apply for a two-year permit to sell whole, raw fruits and vegetables in one of 5 boroughs.

The City of New York outlines the following costs:

- If you do not already have a valid mobile food-vending license, you will need to pay $53 for the Food Protection Course and $50 for your license. A license is valid for 2 years. Renewals cost $50 for each 2-year period, plus a $10 fee for tax clearance. You do not need to take the course again if you renew.
- A Green Cart permit costs $75 and is valid for 2 years. Renewals cost $50 for each 2-year period.
- If you are issued a Green Cart permit, you must buy your own cart and produce. The Health Department must inspect and approve your cart before you operate it. When your cart passes the inspection, the Health Department will give you Green Cart umbrella to display with your produce at no cost to you.

The license and permit fees are waived for US Veterans and their spouses or domestic partners. For additional financial support, the City has partnered with a non-profit business lender, ACCION-USA, to provide reduced-interest loans.

The City offers technical assistance, marketing and outreach resources, and advice for vendors. Additionally, vendors can attend a city-sponsored, free workshop to learn more about the program and application process and a review of available resources to start up and maintain a viable Green Cart business.

**Sources**

City of Chicago

City of New York
STREET VENDING AND CONCESSIONS

http://ChicagoFoodPolicy.org

Questions

What kinds of licenses or permits do I need?

It depends on where and what you want to sell. If you want to sell prepared foods, you need a Mobile Food Dispenser (MFD) license. To sell whole, uncut foods, you need a Peddler license. Park Concessions are permitted through the Park District and all you to sell prepared foods at a specific park location.

What are the start-up costs for vending?

It depends on the kind of sales you are doing. You must purchase your own cart/vending station, have the proper signage, and pay for the licensing. Licenses and fees range from $165 for Peddlers, $275 for MFDs, and over $800 for Park Concessions.

What kind of food can I sell?

Again, this is dependent on the type of license you have. The strictest is the Peddler license, which only allows you to sell whole, uncut, unprepared foods. Uncut fruits and vegetables are a good example. MFDs and Park Concessions can sell prepared foods so long as they were purchased from a licensed facility.

Answers

Policies

Sections 4-8-36 and 4-8-37 of the Chicago Municipal Code

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