

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

Updated February 2022

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 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 Program 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 Program (rent) are:

1. \$50/shift to vend at Cambridgeport, \$40/shift to vend at North Point Park, or \$30/shift to vend at Central Square.

Please note: do due ongoing COVID-19 restrictions, the vending fees for public locations is being waived for a period of time.

Trucks need not be fully permitted and licensed at the time of application but do need to be fully permitted and licensed to be granted any requested shifts and accepted into the Program.

Q: Where are the vending locations?

A: There are three locations for the Food Truck Program

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 menu item at Cambridgeport would be 2:30 PM, not 3:00 PM when the permitted shift time ends.*

Q: How many trucks can park in a location?

A: Cambridgeport can host up to three trucks, while Central Square and North Point Park can host up to two.

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

A: Shifts can be changed depending on site availability. Shifts awarded at the start of the Program season (May 1) may be kept until the end of the Program year (April 30).

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

A: Billing for the Food Truck Program will be like the billing process for the Traffic, Parking & Transportation Special Events process. Your permit will be issued out of the Traffic, Parking & Transportation Department and you will pay that department upon picking up your permit. Billing occurs monthly, quarterly, or yearly depending on operator preference.

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

A: The three locations in the Program are the only currently available public space sites in Cambridge where trucks can vend regularly. You can vend on public property rarely (i.e. only one-time for a special event that must be open to the public). Please contact the Traffic, Parking & Transportation Department with questions about the Special Event process. You can regularly vend on private property with the written 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 & Transportation Department and ask about their Special Events permit.

Q: How are trucks chosen for the Program?

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 a directly competing brick-and-mortar restaurant is near the truck's requested locations.
2. Trucks are then reviewed according to program goals and for participation in special consideration categories. For a detailed list of the special consideration categories, view the Cambridge Food Truck Program Guidelines document on cambridgema.gov/foodtrucks.
3. For sites with high demand, an online People's Choice poll, will be used to help determine public interest for the trucks which requested 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 Program does not support these kinds of mobile vending units. The program allows for food trucks or food trailers that remain attached to their towing vehicle. Please contact Economic Development Division staff in the Community Development Department for help with accessing other vending opportunities. Additionally, you can contact the Inspectional Services Department at 617/349-6121 to schedule an inspection of your vending unit and determine classification.

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: 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. For a detailed list of these regulations view the Cambridge Food Truck Program Guidelines document on cambridgema.gov/foodtrucks. If you have any questions about how this applies to your food truck business, please contact CDD staff, Christina DiLisio, Economic Development Specialist at 617/349-4601 or cdilisio@cambridgema.gov.