

## MOBILE FOOD VENDING: MAKING SEATTLE FRIENDLY TO STREET FOOD

### Project Summary

The City of Seattle would like to encourage more mobile food vending in our city, especially in the Center City neighborhoods. Affordable and culturally-diverse street food can improve public safety and street life, increase access to local food, and create new business opportunities.

### What are the benefits?

- *Economic vitality.* The experience of other cities shows that food vendors attract foot traffic to commercial districts—which means increased sales and a more vibrant retail business overall.<sup>1</sup> By offering low-cost, culturally-diverse foods for people on the go, they typically complement— rather than compete— with sit-down restaurants and give people more reasons to frequent local shopping districts.
- 
- *Festive, pedestrian-friendly streets.* Food vendors bring positive activity to the street and add a festive, people-oriented feel that improves public safety. In many cities, food vendors provide a window into many diverse cultures, introducing people to new foods and to the pleasures of spending time in the public space of the city.
- 
- *An entry point to owning your own business.* Food vending can be an ideal first business. For a modest investment, it helps an entrepreneur develop a track record and build loyal clientele. For many immigrant and refugee communities, food vending offers a point of entry to the economy and a way to learn the food service industry.

In a recent survey, **58% of business owners in downtown Portland, Oregon** – which is known for its vibrant street food scene— **found food vendors increased foot traffic**, and 66% of business owners citywide had a positive perception of food vendors.

<sup>1</sup> [Food Cartology](http://www.portlandonline.com/shared/cfm/image.cfm?id=200738), p. 24 – 27\_www.portlandonline.com/shared/cfm/image.cfm?id=200738

## Recommendations for Seattle

The City of Seattle is considering the following reforms for mobile food vending in the right-of-way:

### Citywide:

- *Diversify types of food that can be sold from food carts.* Currently carts are limited to hot dogs, espresso, popcorn and flowers. The Health Dept is considering expanding this list to allow assembly of pre-cooked ingredients and other foods on a case-by-case basis.
- *Eliminate required 200' Park setback.* This would be dropped as vending has been shown to improve park safety.
- *Set "clear path of travel" standards, consistent with the Pedestrian Master Plan guidelines, for carts on sidewalks.* Food carts would only be permitted where there is sufficient sidewalk space to ensure clear sidewalks for persons with disabilities and easy access to area businesses.
- *Create a Street Use Permit for mobile trucks.* Currently only trucks serving construction sites are permitted. This would allow the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) to issue street use permits where mobile trucks could operate from the right-of-way, in designated spaces.
- *Set standards for design, litter pickup, and hours of operation.* Allow SDOT to set guidelines for cart dimensions and design, and standards for trash clean up and hours of operation.
- *Create setbacks from restaurants.* Require food vendors be 50 feet from an adjacent food service, unless with the written permission of the business.
- *Improve noticing requirements to the public and area businesses.* Require public notice of all pending applications for mobile food vending in the right-of-way, and require the food vending applicant notify all adjacent businesses in person of a pending application.

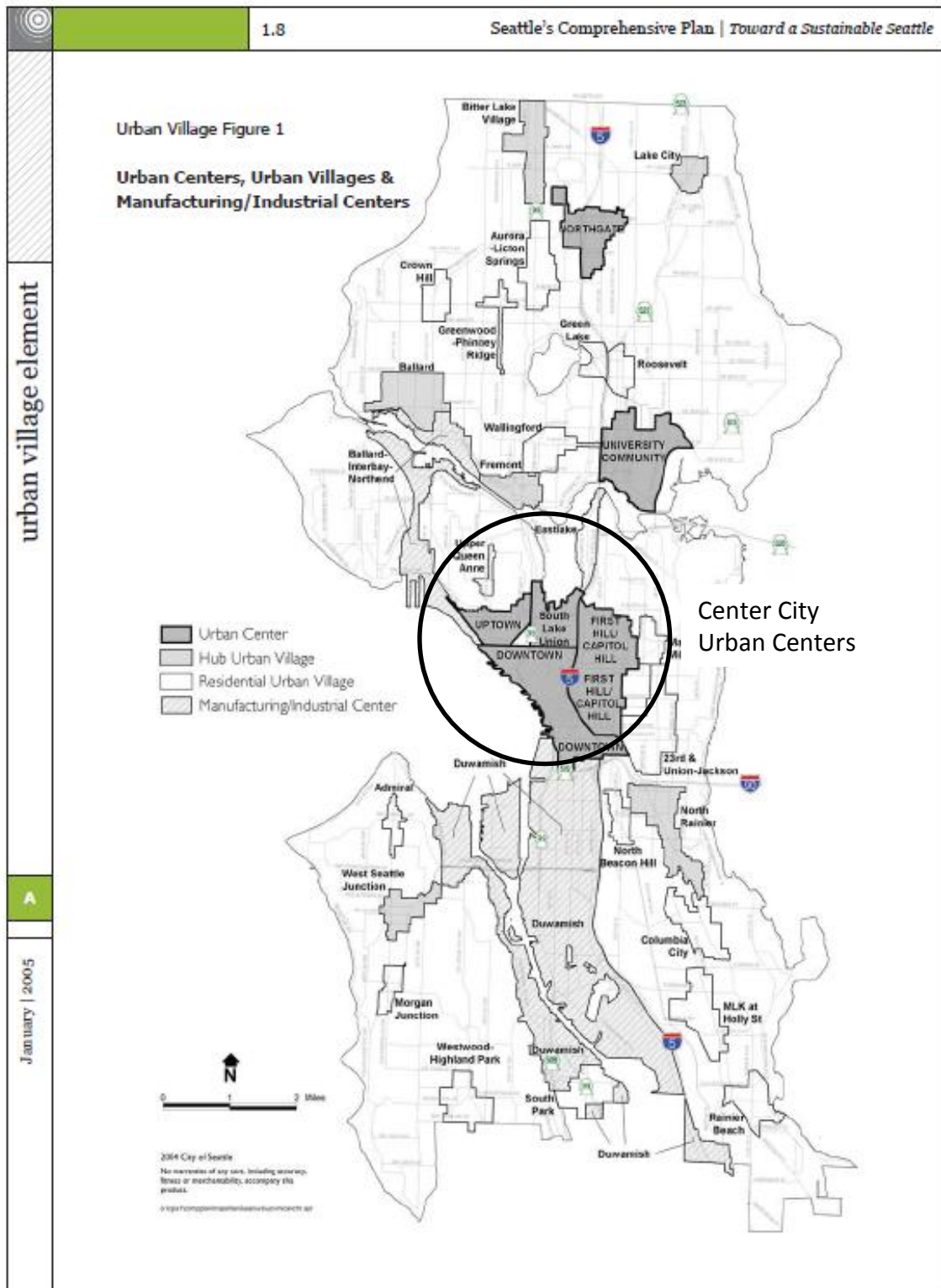


### In Center City Urban Centers (see attached)

- *Allow mobile vending from the street.* Mobile food vending from the street is currently prohibited. SDOT would identify locations in Center City neighborhoods, as a pilot, where curbside vending would be permitted during certain days and times. A vendor would need to secure a street use permit to operate in a designated space.
- *Issue an RFP for vendors at specific locations.* Solicit proposals from vendors to help activate certain public places and provide public amenities.



# Curbside Vending Pilot Area- Center City Neighborhoods



## Next Steps

City staff will be meeting with community organizations, businesses and other stakeholders to discuss these ideas. A specific proposal will be considered by the Mayor and City Council in spring 2010.

## Links for more Information

- "Food Cartology – Rethinking Urban Spaces as People Places." Food Cart Study for the City of Portland, OR by the Urban Vitality Group.  
<http://www.portlandonline.com/shared/cfm/image.cfm?id=200738>
- Study Project for Public Spaces – the benefits of food vending in the right-of-way.  
[http://www.pps.org/civic\\_centers/info/how\\_to/how\\_to\\_vending](http://www.pps.org/civic_centers/info/how_to/how_to_vending)
- Food Vending in Portland, OR – fun information, potential for Seattle.  
<http://foodcartsportland.com/>
- FareStart – Seattle's job training and placement program for homeless and disadvantaged individuals.  
<http://www.farestart.org/>
- Hacienda CDC, Portland OR, micro-enterprise food vendor program  
<http://www.haciendacdc.org/Programs/EconomicDevelopment.html>
- Toronto, CA – Street Food Vending Project and Design Competition  
[http://multistorycomplex.org/street\\_food\\_vending\\_project](http://multistorycomplex.org/street_food_vending_project)
- NYC Street Vendor Project  
[http://streetvendor.netfirms.com/public\\_html/staticpages/index.php?page=20040616184504992](http://streetvendor.netfirms.com/public_html/staticpages/index.php?page=20040616184504992)

**We welcome your comments. For more information, please contact:**

Gary Johnson, City of Seattle  
Dept. of Planning and Development  
[gary.johnson@seattle.gov](mailto:gary.johnson@seattle.gov)  
(206) 615-0787 phone