

Mobile Food Trucks Operating Adjacent to Neighbourhood Parks Pilot Program - Update

ISSUE

This report provides an update on the 2017 Pilot Program to permit mobile food trucks and trailers to operate adjacent to parks. The Food Truck and Trailer - Parks Pilot Program (Pilot Program) has existed for three years. A decision to discontinue the Pilot Program, or make it permanent through policy amendments, is required.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Standing Policy Committee on Planning, Development and Community Services recommend to City Council:

1. That the Food Truck and Trailer - Parks Pilot Program be discontinued; and
2. That Policy No. C09-039, the Mobile Food Truck Policy, be amended to permit hitched food trailers to vend on-street.

BACKGROUND

On April 24, 2017, City Council approved a Pilot Program to allow on-street mobile food trucks and trailers to operate adjacent to neighbourhood parks in residential and institutional zoning districts. The Pilot Program provided opportunity to assess any implications or conflicts that could arise as a result of food trucks and trailers vending in these locations.

The Business License Program established administrative guidelines to implement the Pilot Program for the 2017 season. Due to low participation, the Pilot Program was extended through the 2018 season and expanded to allow food trucks and trailers licensed for off-street vending to participate. This also provided a trial period to assess the suitability for the use of food trailers to vend on-street. At its meeting on April 29, 2019, City Council resolved to extend the Pilot Program to the 2019 vending season.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Food Truck and Trailer Parks Pilot Program

Administration held a meeting with the Saskatoon Food Truck Association and other vendors on November 20, 2019, to discuss the vending season and effectiveness of the Pilot Program. The meeting was attended by 7 out of 29 vendors.

Feedback from the vendors indicated there are not enough customers at neighbourhood parks to make it economically viable to operate. The location log review indicated only one food truck participated in the Pilot Program in the 2019 vending season, operating for a total of 16 hours (eight evenings for approximately two hours per evening).

Vendors noted they did vend in conjunction with special events in parks, as these events were more profitable for them with higher volumes of people in attendance. Approval of a special event includes designation of the area of park to be used for the event and may include adjacent roadways. At the invitation of the event organizer, food trucks/trailers can vend from within that area, subject to conditions such as being located on a hard surface. Provisions set out in the Pilot Program to allow for vending in residential areas, are not necessary to accommodate vending at special events.

If the Pilot Program is discontinued, food trucks and trailers can continue to vend as part of a special event. This existing option is currently underutilized, but provides several advantages over the parks Pilot Program, including being able to vend from a parking lot in a park and is less complicated to implement for both Administration and vendors.

During the three years of the Pilot Program, only one complaint related to food trucks was received. The complaint was related to noise from the food truck's power generator.

Notification was sent to vendors about the possibility of discontinuing the Pilot Program and advising the ability to vend as part of a special event would remain available. One vendor replied and advised the special event option could meet their business needs and was seen as a suitable alternative to the Pilot Program.

Administration conducted a municipal scan of 19 cities across Canada to determine which municipalities allow vendors to operate adjacent to and within parks. A summary of findings, provided in Appendix 1, indicates approximately half of Canadian municipalities have programs to permit food trucks and trailers to vend within or adjacent to parks, as part of regular vending operations.

Mobile Food Trailers Operating on-Street in Conjunction with the Parks Pilot Program

During the same engagement meeting held on November 20, 2019, food truck and trailer business owners requested an amendment to the Mobile Food Truck Policy to permit hitched food trailers to vend on-street. Currently, food trailers may only be used to vend at off-street locations, on the understanding that a trailer must be unhitched from the tow vehicle prior to vending and therefore could not be readily moved if necessary.

In participating in the Pilot Program, mobile food trailer vendors were able to demonstrate vending from a food trailer could occur while hitched to a tow vehicle, due in part to new technology available to level the trailer while hitched. As a result, on-street vending restrictions for food trailers are no longer required. The Mobile Food Truck Policy would require a trailer remain hitched at all times to a trailer/vehicle unit not exceeding a length of 13.4 meters, which is consistent with the total length permitted for a mobile food truck and its support vehicle.

The proposal to permit on-street vending from food trailers was reviewed by Parking Services, Community Standards Division and by Transportation Division, who had no concerns.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATION

There are no financial implications to discontinuing the Pilot Program or amending the policy to permit food trailers to vend on-street while hitched.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal, social or environmental implications at this time.

NEXT STEPS

If the recommendation to discontinue the Pilot Program is adopted, the Community Standards Division will work with Recreation and Community Development to make Community Associations and other special event organizers aware of the ability to include food trucks/trailers as part of special events in parks.

If the recommendation to amend the policy to allow hitched food trailers to vend on-street is adopted, food trailer businesses will be notified about the option to obtain an on-street license.

APPENDICES

1. Municipal Scan of Vending Programs Within and Adjacent to Parks
2. Proposed Amendments to the Mobile Food Truck Policy

REPORT APPROVAL

Written by: Shall Lam, Planner, Community Standards
Reviewed by: Mark Wilson, Licensing and Permitting Manager
Reviewed by: Jo-Anne Richter, Director of Community Standards
Approved by: Lynne Lacroix, General Manager, Community Services

SP/2020/CS/PDCS/Mobile Food Trucks Operating Adjacent to Neighbourhood Parks Pilot Program - Update/mh