

# 16

## Mobile Vending Carts and Food Carts on Private Property



Bureau of  
Development  
Services  
FROM CONCEPT  
TO CONSTRUCTION



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www.Portland.gov/BDS

If you want to buy, install or use a mobile vending cart or food cart, you need to know which Building and Zoning Code standards apply. Get information about permits and resources for food carts, food trucks, mobile food units and vending carts in the City of Portland.

The permits you'll need to get and the code standards depend upon the location of the vending cart or food cart, the type of vending cart, and which zones allow vending carts.

REGULATIONS	REQUIREMENTS
Electrical work	Requires an <b>electrical permit</b> ( <a href="http://www.portland.gov/bds/commercial-permitting/commercial-electrical-permits">www.portland.gov/bds/commercial-permitting/commercial-electrical-permits</a> ) and inspection. Only a licensed electrical contractor can do this work.
Food service	Needs approval from the <b>Multnomah County Health Department</b> . ( <a href="http://www.multco.us/services/food-carts">www.multco.us/services/food-carts</a> )
Private property or public right-of-way	For carts located on private property, check with <b>Planning and Zoning</b> ( <a href="http://www.portland.gov/bds/zoning-land-use">www.portland.gov/bds/zoning-land-use</a> ) to determine if retail sales and service uses are allowed at your proposed location. Transportation approval required if placement is to be in <b>right-of-way</b> . ( <a href="http://www.portland.gov/transportation/permitting/apply-vending-cart-permit">www.portland.gov/transportation/permitting/apply-vending-cart-permit</a> ).
Mobile vending carts or food carts 16 feet or less in length	Non-motorized utility trailers measuring 16 feet or less in length are allowed in existing, paved vehicle areas such as parking lots. If new paved vehicle area is proposed, you must have a <b>zoning permit</b> ( <a href="http://www.portland.gov/bds/zoning-land-use/zoning-permits">www.portland.gov/bds/zoning-land-use/zoning-permits</a> ) or Development Review Permit. Other permanent structures such as trash and recycling enclosures or restrooms require a separate <b>building permit</b> ( <a href="http://www.portland.gov/bds/building-and-zoning-permit-application">www.portland.gov/bds/building-and-zoning-permit-application</a> ).
Mobile vending carts over 16 feet in length or motorized food trucks	Additional zoning restrictions apply. Check with <b>Planning and Zoning</b> ( <a href="http://www.portland.gov/bds/zoning-land-use">www.portland.gov/bds/zoning-land-use</a> ). In most zones that allow retail sales and service uses, mobile vending carts longer than 16 feet in length are not allowed.
Plumbing for water and sanitary sewer services	<b>Commercial plumbing permits</b> ( <a href="http://www.portland.gov/bds/commercial-permitting/commercial-plumbing-permits">www.portland.gov/bds/commercial-permitting/commercial-plumbing-permits</a> ) and <b>inspections</b> ( <a href="http://www.portland.gov/bds/commercial-permitting/commercial-permit-inspections">www.portland.gov/bds/commercial-permitting/commercial-permit-inspections</a> ) are required.
Portable Signs	Sign regulations apply and you must have a <b>sign permit</b> . ( <a href="http://www.portland.gov/bds/sign-permits">www.portland.gov/bds/sign-permits</a> )
Propane use	Portland Fire & Rescue requires an <b>annual permit</b> . ( <a href="http://www.portland.gov/fire/permits-inspections/code-policies-pfrs-fire-safety-inspection-program/vending-food-cart">www.portland.gov/fire/permits-inspections/code-policies-pfrs-fire-safety-inspection-program/vending-food-cart</a> )

### Zoning code for vending carts

Vending carts are a Retail Sales and Service use. They're subject to all regulations regarding that use. Zoning Code requirements for vehicles also apply to vending carts. They may also have accessory uses such as storage, garbage enclosures, or bathrooms.

If you plan to put a vending cart on private property, check to see if the zoning on the site allows retail sales and service uses. To research zoning, enter the address on Portland Maps ([www.portlandmaps.com](http://www.portlandmaps.com)) or call the Zoning information line.

There are very limited locations for drive-through vending carts in Portland.

Regulated by the Zoning Code ([www.portland.gov/bds/zoning-land-use/zoning-code-overview](http://www.portland.gov/bds/zoning-land-use/zoning-code-overview)). Check with Planning and Zoning. Requires a commercial building permit ([www.portland.gov/bds/building-and-zoning-permit-application](http://www.portland.gov/bds/building-and-zoning-permit-application)) and inspections ([www.portland.gov/bds/commercial-permitting/commercial-permit-inspections](http://www.portland.gov/bds/commercial-permitting/commercial-permit-inspections)).



## Small Business Empowerment Program

The Small Business Empowerment Program assists Black, Indigenous, people of color business owners and business owners with disabilities recognized by the ADA who have experienced barriers in the review process. Email us at [empowered@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:empowered@portlandoregon.gov) or give us a call at 503-823-7300.

## SMALL BUSINESS RESOURCES

### Some more small business resources to check out:

- The Black American Chamber of Commerce provides business networking events, community-building events and more. [www.blackamericanchamber.org](http://www.blackamericanchamber.org)
- The Hispanic Metropolitan Chamber works to help Latinos prosper and contribute as business owners and industry leaders. [www.hmccoregon.com](http://www.hmccoregon.com)
- Mercy Corps Northwest provides vital financing, mentorship and education to small business owners across the Pacific Northwest. [nw.mercycorps.org/what-we-do/business](http://nw.mercycorps.org/what-we-do/business)
- Oregon state Office of Small Business Assistance helps small businesses that have questions about state or local government. [www.oregon.gov/smallbusiness/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.oregon.gov/smallbusiness/Pages/default.aspx)
- The Portland Small Business Development Center offers tools and resources to help you get started. [www.oregonsbdc.org/centers/portland-sbdc](http://www.oregonsbdc.org/centers/portland-sbdc)
- Prosper Portland offers a range of economic development programs that support small businesses. [www.prosperportland.us](http://www.prosperportland.us)
- SCORE Portland, the nation's largest network of volunteer, expert business mentors, helps small businesses get off the ground, grow and achieve their goals. [www.portlandor.score.org](http://www.portlandor.score.org)
- Venture Portland supports Portland businesses. [www.ventureportland.org](http://www.ventureportland.org)

## Free 15-minute appointment with a City planner

You can set up a free virtual 15-minute appointment ([www.portland.gov/bds/early-assistance/15-minute-appointments](http://www.portland.gov/bds/early-assistance/15-minute-appointments)) to talk about your vending cart or food cart. You'll want to meet with a planner for a general zoning and tree code appointment.

## WHERE CAN YOU PUT A VENDING CART OR FOOD TRUCK?

### Vending carts on private property

If you want to set up a vending cart, first you'll decide on the location. The location of the vending cart decides which codes apply and what permits you need.

If you plan to put a vending cart on private property, check to see if the zoning on the site allows retail uses. To research zoning, enter the address on Portland Maps ([www.portlandmaps.com](http://www.portlandmaps.com)) or call the Zoning information phone number.

### Vending carts on public property

If you want to place a vending cart in the public right-of-way (on the sidewalk), you must apply for a permit ([www.portland.gov/transportation/permitting/apply-vending-cart-permit](http://www.portland.gov/transportation/permitting/apply-vending-cart-permit)) with Transportation.

### Vending carts in City parks

Portland Parks & Recreation requires a permit for all commercial activity on park property. For information on permits for pushcarts, trailers and motorized vehicles in any City park, contact Portland Parks and Recreation ([www.portland.gov/parks/customer-service-center](http://www.portland.gov/parks/customer-service-center)) to ask about concessions.

### Vending carts that drive around

Vending from the roadway is allowed in the City of Portland. You don't need a permit, but you must follow specific traffic regulations.

You can't leave mobile vending carts unattended for 30 or more minutes, parked or stored overnight on any public grounds, street, or highway. You can't conduct business in a roadway next to or directly across from residential property within the same block for more than 10 minutes. You also can't return to the same block within two hours.

### Vending cart pods and pods of food carts

Vending cart pods need a Development Review (DR) permit to review zoning and utility requirements. If any permanent structures, such as restrooms or covered eating areas are proposed, these will need a commercial building permit. Please call or visit the Development Services Center for more information.

## Source controls & System Development Charges (SDCs) for vending carts/food trucks

Garbage and recycling areas must be screened to the base zone standard and meet Environmental Services' requirements for pollution prevention. The Environmental Services' Source Control Manual (Chapter 6) ([www.portland.gov/bes/stormwater/scm](http://www.portland.gov/bes/stormwater/scm)) has specific criteria for vending carts. Also, BES requires a dump station for two or more carts which requires payment of System Development Charges (SDCs) as well. ([www.portland.gov/bds/current-fee-schedules/systems-development-charges-sdcs](http://www.portland.gov/bds/current-fee-schedules/systems-development-charges-sdcs))

## Which zones allow a mobile food unit or vending cart?

The uses allowed on a property vary based on the property's zoning. Only some zones allow for retail sales and services uses. Learn more about where you can use a vending cart for retail sales and services:

- **Residential (R) Zones:** RH and RX have provisions for Retail Sales and Service uses but only as new floor area within a multi-dwelling development.
- **Commercial/Mixed Use (C) Zones:** You can have vending carts set up for retail sales and services in CM2, CM3, CE, and CX. CR and CM1 limit the square footage of Retail Sales and Service uses. Hours of operation are also limited in the CR zone. Please check with a planner to determine if a new Retail Sales and Service can be developed on your site.
- **Employment (E) Zones:** You can have vending carts set up for retail sales and services here.
- **Industrial (I) Zones:** All of the industrial zones have limits on the number of retail uses on a site. Please check with a planner to determine if a new Retail Sales and Service use can be developed on your site.
- **Campus Institutional (CI) Zones:** You can have vending carts set up for retail sales and services in CI2. CI1 limits the square footage of Retail Sales and Service uses. IR allows Retail Sales and Service uses as accessory and if identified in the institution's approved impact mitigation plan or conditional use master plan.

Please call the Planning and Zoning information phone number if you have questions.

## Put food carts and vending carts in vehicle areas

Vehicles are allowed on legally established parking or vehicle areas only. If new parking or vehicle areas are created, they must meet development standards including vehicle area limitations on frontage, placement and paving (33.266.130.C or 33.266.120), landscaping requirements (33.248), and any overlay zone or plan district standards. Vehicles can be allowed on nonconforming vehicle or parking areas if the areas were legally established. Parking areas must always be paved unless legally established without paving.

## The difference between parking areas and vehicle areas

Parking areas are areas where motorized vehicles are kept. If a car, truck, or any vehicle with an engine is kept in this area, it is a parking area. New parking areas always require landscaping and paving and must meet all of the development standards of 33.266.130 including striping, aisle width, paving, and landscaping. Additional standards may apply depending if the site is in an overlay zone or plan district.

Vehicle areas are areas where non-motorized vehicles are kept. Utility trailers can be kept in vehicle areas that do not have striping and aisle width requirements and that may or may not need landscaping and paving depending on the base zone, overlay zone, and plan district.



## How is the vending cart classified?

- **Utility Trailers** are vehicles designed to be pulled by a motor vehicle that are used to carry property, trash, or special equipment and are 16 feet or less in length. Trailers longer than 16 feet are Heavy Trucks.
- **Light Trucks** are trucks and similar vehicles with single rear axles and single rear wheels.
- **Medium Trucks** are trucks and similar vehicles with single rear axles and dual rear wheels.
- **Heavy Trucks** are trucks, including truck tractors, and similar vehicles with two or more rear axles. Trailers longer than 16 feet are Heavy Trucks.

## What zones allow which type of vending carts?

Some zones have restrictions on the types of vehicles allowed:

- **Utility Trailer:** Allowed in all Commercial/Mixed Use (C), Employment (E) zones, Industrial (I), and Campus Institutional zones.
- **Light Truck:** Allowed in all Commercial/Mixed Use (C), Employment (E) zones, Industrial (I), and Campus Institutional zones.
- **Medium Trailer:** Allowed in CE and CM3, and Employment (E), Industrial (I), and CI2 zones.
- **Heavy Trailer:** Allowed in EG1 and EG2 and all Industrial (I) zones.

## Public health requirements for food carts and food trucks

Vending carts providing food or beverages for public consumption must receive approval from the Multnomah County Health Department. Multnomah County requires that all plumbing fixtures be connected to an approved drainage system (OPSC 304.0, 305.0 and 713.0). Visit the Multnomah County Health Department website ([multco.us/health](http://multco.us/health)) or call 503-988-3400 for more information.

## ADA requirements

All businesses are required to make themselves accessible to people with disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Title III guidelines. For more information visit this website: [adata.org/guide/ada-national-network-disability-law-handbook#Public%20Accommodations%20and%20the%20ADA](http://adata.org/guide/ada-national-network-disability-law-handbook#Public%20Accommodations%20and%20the%20ADA)

## Vending cart and food truck signs

Vending carts are allowed one portable sign (A-board) ([www.portland.gov/bds/documents/portable-board-sign-registration](http://www.portland.gov/bds/documents/portable-board-sign-registration)) per cart. The sign must comply with Title 32.30.030, Portable Sign Regulations. For more information on registering a portable sign, please call 503-823-2633.

## More information about vending carts and mobile food units

- Location/Zoning, Signs, electrical, plumbing, Permitting
- Location if using sidewalk/public property (Right of Way)
- You'll need a City of Portland Business license
- Propane use- Portland Fire & Rescue requires an annual permit for vending carts that utilize propane for cooking.
- Water service and /or sanitary sewer- A plumbing permit is required if a water service or sanitary sewer is installed. The plumbing must comply with the Oregon Plumbing Speciality Code.
- Wastewater (grey water) ([www.portland.gov/bes/stormwater/scm](http://www.portland.gov/bes/stormwater/scm)), Fat, Oil and Grease disposal ([www.portlandoregon.gov/bes/54538](http://www.portlandoregon.gov/bes/54538)), Trash Enclosure Requirements. You must meet the Storm Water Management Manual requirements. Contact Pollution Prevention for more information at 503-823-7122.
- Garbage, Recycling & Composting ([www.portland.gov/bps/garbage-recycling/business-recycling](http://www.portland.gov/bps/garbage-recycling/business-recycling))
- Electrical service- An electrical permit is required for electrical work. Work must be done by a licensed electrical contractor.

Also, Multnomah County Health Department ([www.multco.us/services/food-carts](http://www.multco.us/services/food-carts)) must inspect and license all mobile food carts. You might also want to read more about Multnomah County food cart guidelines ([www.multco.us/assessment-taxation/multco-food-carts](http://www.multco.us/assessment-taxation/multco-food-carts)).

## Contact Us

Bureau of Development Services  
 City of Portland, Oregon  
 1900 SW 4th Avenue, Portland, OR 97201  
[www.portland.gov/bds](http://www.portland.gov/bds)

### Office Hours:

Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
 BDS main number: 503-823-7300

### Permit Information is available at the following location:

- Development Services Center (First Floor)  
 For Hours Call 503-823-7310 or visit [www.portland.gov/bds](http://www.portland.gov/bds)
- Permitting Services (Second Floor)  
 For Hours Call 503-823-7310 or visit [www.portland.gov/bds](http://www.portland.gov/bds)

## Important Telephone Numbers

BDS main number .....	503-823-7300
DSC automated information line .....	503-823-7310
Permit information for electrical, mechanical, plumbing, sewer and signs.....	503-823-7363
Building code information .....	503-823-1456
Site Development Services & Sanitation .....	503-823-6892
Zoning information .....	503-823-7526
Permitting process and fee information .....	503-823-7357
Permit resources and records .....	503-823-7660
Residential information for one and two family dwellings....	503-823-7388
Neighborhood Inspections .....	503-823-2663
Maintenance Bureau (dye test) .....	503-823-1700
BES Hotline .....	503-823-7761
BES Clean River Rewards .....	503-823-1371
BES Nonconforming Sewer Hotline .....	503-823-7869
Multnomah County Vector Control .....	503-988-3464
Call before you dig .....	503-246-6699
BDS 24-hour inspection request line (requires IVR number and three-digit inspection code) .....	503-823-7000
PBOT Sewer Repair/Right-of-way Inspection .....	503-823-7002
Oregon Relay Service .....	711

**For more detailed information regarding the bureau's hours of operation and available services:**

**VISIT OUR WEBSITE:  
[WWW.PORTLAND.GOV/BDS](http://WWW.PORTLAND.GOV/BDS)**

Note: All information in this brochure is subject to change.

Traducción e interpretación | Chuyển Ngữ hoặc Phiên Dịch | 翻译或传译  
 Turjumida ama Fasiraadda | 翻訳または通訳 | Письменный или устный перевод  
 Traducere sau Interpretare | 번역 및 통역 | الترجمة التحريرية أو الشفوية |  
 ການແປພາສາ ຫຼື ການອະທິບາຍ | Письмовий або усний переклад



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[www.portland.gov/bds/brochures-forms/translated-brochures-forms](http://www.portland.gov/bds/brochures-forms/translated-brochures-forms)

The City of Portland is committed to providing meaningful access. For accommodations, modifications, translation, interpretation, or other services, please call **503-823-7300** or the **Oregon Relay Service** at **711**.