



AGENDA REPORT

Public Works

DATE:	July 1, 2025
TO:	Mayor Martinez and Members of the City Council
FROM:	Daniel Chavarria, PE, Director of Public Works Robert Armijo, PE, Deputy Public Works Director / City Engineer Andy Cho, PE, Senior Civil Engineer
Subject:	Annual Update on Sidewalk Vending Program
FINANCIAL IMPACT:	There is no direct financial impact associated with this informational update and request for Council direction. All current program activities, including consultant support, are funded through previously approved appropriations. No additional funding is requested at this time.
PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION:	June 25, 2024 July 2, 2024
STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE:	City staff is providing a one-year update on the implementation of the City's Sidewalk Vending Ordinance, which was adopted to promote public health, safety, accessibility, and economic opportunity through the regulation of sidewalk vending. This update summarizes key enforcement activities, vendor engagement efforts, and lessons learned during the first year of implementation. City staff are seeking City Council feedback on program direction and potential ordinance revisions to inform a more comprehensive update anticipated later this year

RECOMMENDED ACTION:	RECEIVE a PRESENTATION on the first-year implementation of the City's Sidewalk Vending Program and PROVIDE DIRECTION to staff regarding program priorities and potential revisions to the ordinance – Public Works (Andy Cho 510-620-6547/Robert Armijo 510-620-5477).
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DISCUSSION:

On July 2, 2024, the City Council adopted a Sidewalk Vending Ordinance, codified at Richmond Municipal Code Chapter 7.42, to align with State law (SB 946) and promote public health, safety, accessibility, and economic opportunity through the regulation of sidewalk vending. The ordinance established requirements including the need for a special business permit, operational and locational standards, food vending provisions, and enforcement protocols. On the same date, the City Council adopted a companion resolution establishing fees, fines, and administrative penalties to support program implementation.

Following adoption, staff launched a coordinated, multi-departmental effort to implement the ordinance. This included a sustained education and outreach campaign aimed at informing sidewalk vendors of the new regulations and helping them come into compliance. The Mobile Vendor Plaza flyers and informational packets—including permit applications, regulations, and a map of suggested vendor locations—have been distributed during outreach to sidewalk vendors.

Additional meet and confer is needed since the current enforcement of the sidewalk vendor ordinance is within the public right of way, and as such, within the Department of Public Works. In the interim, Consultant 4Leaf, Inc., is under contract with the Public Works and provides up to 40 hours per week of field-based enforcement and outreach. The consultant's consistent presence and multilingual engagement have been instrumental in building relationships with vendors, especially those with limited familiarity with City requirements.

Initial implementation has revealed both successes and challenges. While many vendors have demonstrated a willingness to comply, sustained outreach, translated materials, and technical assistance have been necessary to support that compliance. Interdepartmental coordination—particularly with the City Manager's Office, Community Services Department, Police Department, Economic Development Department, Community Development, and Contra Costa County Health—has been essential in navigating the permitting process, supporting food vendors, and addressing public health and safety concerns.

Program Statistics (Fiscal Year 2024–25):

- Number of sidewalk vending permits issued: 14
- Total vendor encounters by enforcement staff: 303

- Number of Notices of Violation issued: 298
- Fines collected: \$0

Despite the volume of citations, the City has not collected fines from vendors. This is primarily due to the difficulty of confirming vendor identities in the field, limited authority to compel payment, and broader enforcement constraints under SB 946. As a result, monetary penalties have had limited deterrent value, particularly with non-cooperative vendors. However, persistent field presence and non-punitive outreach have proven more effective in encouraging compliance.

Enforcement Trends and Activity Areas:

Enforcement activity varied over the course of the year. The consultant conducted saturation patrols in commercial and recreational corridors based on complaint data, observed activity, and seasonal trends. Key areas of vendor concentration included:

- **August–September 2024:** 23rd Street, Macdonald Avenue, Cutting Boulevard
- **October–December 2024:** Civic Center and San Pablo Avenue area
- **January–March 2025:** 23rd Street corridor, Barrett Avenue, and southern Cutting Boulevard
- **April–May 2025:** Hilltop Mall, Miller/Knox Regional Park, and Central Richmond

Monthly breakdowns of vendor encounters, Notices of Violation, and other statistics—including use of open flames and proximity to 23rd Street merchants—are included in the attached report. Heatmap images documenting vendor activity by location and quarter are also included as attachments to this report.

Analysis - Key findings:

- When the enforcement program launched in August 2024, 68 unpermitted vendors were identified. Since then, that number has steadily decreased, with monthly figures now consistently in the 20s. These trends suggest that the enforcement program has been largely effective. However, the persistently low, but stable numbers highlight ongoing challenges and the program's limitations.
- To date, no fines have been collected. Identifying vendors remains a challenge, as many are reluctant to provide identification for a variety of reasons. Additionally, our enforcement officer is not legally authorized to request personal identification.
- Time of vendor encounters was broadly distributed:
 - 5:000 am – 11:59 am: 82 encounters
 - 12:00 pm – 5:59 pm: 145 encounters
 - 6:00 pm – 12:00 pm: 55 encounters
- Street vendors showcased a vibrant variety of goods, with food items making up a dominant 96 percent of all sales. Offerings ranged from tacos, hot dogs, and fresh fruit to pupusas and roasted corn—while a smaller share, just 4 percent, featured non-food items like clothing and even cell phones.

- Vendors utilized a wide variety of equipment, such as pushcarts, grills, mobile food trucks, trailers, and setups with tents and tables.
 - Equipment snapshot: 70 tables, 66 carts; 8-foot trucks, 8 trailers, 4 trucks, 1 cooler,
- Gender breakdown of vendors: 60 percent male (144 individuals) and 40 percent female (106 individuals).
- Ethnicity distribution was predominantly Hispanic/Latino (97%):
 - 264 Hispanic/Latinos, 5 African Americans, 1 Indian, 1 Samoan
- A total of 14 Special Business Permits have been issued, with the majority being stationery and non-food vendors:
 - 12 stationary vendors and 2 roaming vendors
 - 4 food vendors and 10 non-food vendors
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Mobile Vendor Plaza (MVP) now “The Lot” and Program Highlights:

One of the program’s most impactful developments has been the establishment of the Mobile Vendor Plaza (MVP), now known as “The Lot,” by the City Manager’s Office, Economic Development, and Public Works Departments, in collaboration with the Richmond Farmers Market. This initiative has resulted in a total of three City-sponsored vendor locations in Richmond.

“The Lot” operates downtown at 1395 Macdonald Avenue, on Thursdays and Saturdays, 11:00 AM – 9:00 PM. With the support of City Council and all stakeholders, “The Lot” has emerged as a popular, well-attended, and structured venue that provides a safe, supportive space for sidewalk vendors. It has also served as a valuable tool for encouraging compliance by offering a designated, City-sanctioned location for vending, and is becoming a promising best practice to support local entrepreneurship. There is also an opportunity for vendors to participate in the two other locations hosted by the Richmond Farmers Market – Civic Center Market at 325 Civic Center Plaza on Fridays, 7:00 AM to 1:00 PM, and the Marina Bay Market at Regatta Blvd. and Melville Square on Saturdays 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM.

To enhance branding and public recognition, the MVP is currently undergoing a rebranding effort, now known as “The Lot.” City staff believe that this rebranding will further enhance the program’s visibility and reinforce its role in promoting safe, legal, and successful sidewalk vending in Richmond.

Program Review and Potential Ordinance Refinements:

On May 13, 2025, staff held a coordination meeting with participating departments to review the program’s first-year performance and prepare for this Council update. The meeting covered ordinance implementation, enforcement results, public health coordination, and opportunities for program improvement.

Based on operational experience and inter-departmental feedback, staff have identified several potential refinements to the ordinance for Council consideration:

- **Clarify permissible vending locations**, particularly in relation to sidewalk width, curb ramps, and driveways, to ensure ADA compliance and preserve pedestrian circulation
- **Increase the minimum setback distance** between sidewalk vendors and primary entrances to brick-and-mortar businesses, especially in high-foot-traffic commercial areas
- **An alternative enforcement mechanism or tool** may need to be explored, as imposing fines is nearly impractical.

This agenda item marks the one-year anniversary of the program's implementation. Staff are providing this update to share data, highlight accomplishments and challenges, and request feedback from the City Council on the direction of the program and possible ordinance revisions. Based on Council input and continued engagement with vendors and stakeholders, staff anticipate returning in December 2025 with formal recommendations for ordinance amendments.

DOCUMENTS ATTACHED:

Attachment 1 – Sidewalk Vendor Enforcement – Annual Report (Aug 2024 – May 2025)
 Attachment 2 – Sidewalk Vendor Activity Heatmap (Aug–Sep 2024)
 Attachment 3 – Sidewalk Vendor Activity Heatmap (Oct–Dec 2024)
 Attachment 4 – Sidewalk Vendor Activity Heatmap (Jan–Mar 2025)
 Attachment 5 – Sidewalk Vendor Activity Heatmap (Apr–May 2025)