

Frequently Asked Questions about the City of Austin's Mobile Food Establishment Ordinance

What is a Mobile Food Establishment?

A Mobile Food Establishment is defined in [Section 10-3-1](#) of the Austin City Code.

Do you need a license to operate a mobile food establishment?

Yes. A mobile food establishment must be licensed by the Health Department. You can find an online application at the [Health Department website](#) or call 974-0508. You do not need to obtain a site plan, site plan exemption, or temporary use permit from the [Planning and Development Review Department](#) to operate a mobile food establishment.

What are the allowed hours of operation for a mobile food establishment location?

They may be allowed to operate any time except between 3:00 AM and 6:00 AM. Further restrictions for hours of operation can be requested by a City of Austin-recognized Neighborhood Plan Contact Team or a [neighborhood association registered with the City of Austin](#). See section below regarding **restrictive regulations** for more information.

Where can a mobile food establishment locate?

They can locate in most commercial zoning districts (LR, GR, CS, CS-1, DMU, and CBD) and an industrial district (LI). They may not be located in any office zoning district (NO, LO, and GO).

A mobile food establishment may not be located within 50' of a building that contains both residential and commercial uses and may not be located at least 20' away from a building containing a restaurant.

Further restrictions regarding the location of a mobile food establishment can be requested by a City of Austin-recognized Neighborhood Plan Contact Team or a [neighborhood association registered with the City of Austin](#). See section regarding **restrictive regulations** for more information.

May a mobile food establishment have a drive-through?

No.

What type of sign may a mobile food establishment have?

A sign must be mounted flush against the mobile food establishment.

May a mobile food establishment have lighting?

Yes; however, it must be shielded so as to not be directly visible from a residence.

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May a mobile food establishment have permanent water and waste water lines?

No.

Where will a mobile food establishment's operators and customers place their garbage?

A trash receptacle must be available during business hours and the area around the mobile food establishment must be kept free of litter and debris.

Can neighborhoods recommend adopting more restrictive regulations for mobile food establishments?

Yes. Additional regulations can be adopted that further restrict the location and hours of operation for mobile food establishments. A City of Austin-recognized neighborhood plan contact team or a [neighborhood association registered with the City of Austin](#) may request that the following set of regulations be adopted for a given area:

- A mobile food establishment must be located 50' or further from property zoned SF-1 through SF-5 or further than 50' from townhouses, duplexes, or single-family houses.
- A mobile food establishment may operate between the hours of 6:00 AM and 10:00 PM if it is further than 50' and not more than 300' from a property zoned SF-1 through SF-5 or where townhouses, duplexes, and single-family houses are located.
- A mobile food establishment may operate between the hours of 6:00 AM and 3:00 AM if it is located more than 300' from property zoned SF-1 through SF-5 or further than 300' from where townhouses, duplexes, or single-family houses are located.

For information on the zoning district for a certain property, visit the City of Austin [Development Web Viewer](#)

Once these additional regulations are recommended to the City Council and the City Council votes to adopt them for the specific areas of the city, mobile food vendors within the area have 60 days to comply.

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Who can submit an application to the city requesting additional mobile food regulations?

For an area with an [adopted neighborhood plan](#), the chair of the City of Austin-recognized neighborhood plan contact team can submit an application.

For areas with an existing adopted neighborhood plan, but not a recognized contact team, an officer of a neighborhood association may submit the application.

For an area without an adopted neighborhood plan, an officer of a [neighborhood association registered with the Public Information Office](#) can submit the application.

[Applications for Mobile Food Vending](#) can be submitted during the open filing period in February of each year to the City of Austin [Planning and Development Review Department](#) offices at 505 Barton Springs Road, 5th floor. Notice of application is mailed to planning contact teams and neighborhood associations registered with the Community Registry near the end of each calendar year.

How can my Neighborhood Association or Neighborhood Plan Contact Team apply to be placed on the Mobile Food Area Map?

There are two ways a [registered neighborhood association](#) or City of Austin-recognized contact team may request these additional regulations for their area:

- 1) Submit an application during the open filing period in February of each year.
- 2) During the neighborhood planning process.

A Mobile Food Establishment application can be found [online](#).

How can I find out what neighborhoods have been approved for these additional regulations?

The City of Austin maintains a [map](#) of these areas.

How can I find out if a mobile food ordinance establishment is allowed on a specific property?

For information on the zoning district for a certain property, visit the City of Austin [Development Web Viewer](#)

For additional information regarding zoning information, please call the [Development Assistance Center](#) at 974-6370.

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Are there additional requirements for a food vending push cart located on a sidewalk or park?

To sell food in a City of Austin right-of-way (ROW), a vendor is required to obtain an additional permit from the [Austin Transportation Department's ROW Management Division](#) at 974-2217. Vending on city park property is administered by the Parks and Recreation Department. Please contact the main office at 974-2300 for more information.

Who enforces the Mobile Food Ordinance?

The City of Austin [Code Compliance Division](#) is the enforcement agency for this ordinance.

What do I do if I see someone violating the Mobile Food Establishment Ordinance?

To report a suspected violation of Mobile Food Establishment Ordinance [contact 311](#) and ask for Code Compliance. When calling, you must have a specific address.

What are the penalties given for violating the Mobile Food Ordinance?

In most cases, a single warning is given; however, if the mobile food vender is a repeat offender, charges can be filed with the Municipal Court.

Will the City of Austin help me find a location for a trailer/cart?

No. You must find a location on your own.