

Frequently Asked Questions about Vending in the District of Columbia

The Vending Moratorium

What is the vending moratorium?

The DC Council passed a law—a moratorium—that stopped the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) from issuing street vending business licenses, starting in 1998.

Why did we need a moratorium?

Many of the 3,000 vendors were competing for the same spaces. Some vendors followed informal “first come, first served” rules—but others were intimidated into moving by vendors who didn’t follow the informal rules. DC needed a better, safer, and more enforceable system to give vendors public space.

How many vendors are currently licensed?

About 670 vendors have licenses now.

When will the moratorium be lifted?

The vending moratorium ends on October 15.

Then, during the 90-day implementation period, DCRA will introduce the new vending program to vendors who have licenses now and people who want to get licenses.

DCRA is starting the new program in phases.

The Phased-In Plan

What is the phased-in approach?

The phased-in approach is the process for identifying and mapping vending sites. There are four phases:

1. Vendors who have licenses now (City-wide)
2. Downtown Business Improvement District (BID), the 120-block area of downtown DC, including F Street, 14th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue near Freedom Plaza)
3. Complete Central Business Zone (including K Street from Georgetown to Union Station)
4. City-wide (anywhere that zoning regulations allow Vending Licenses and Public Space Permits).

Overview of Vending Phases

The new law gives DCRA 90 days to implement the new vending program.

Phase 1

October 15, 2006 – January 14, 2007

We’re giving current, licensed vendors the chance to get the Department of Transportation’s (DDOT) Public Space Permits for their current locations.

Phase 2

January 15 – July 14, 2007

Applicants can get Vending Licenses and Public Space Permits starting Tuesday, January 16, 2007. DDOT will issue Public Space Permits for the Downtown BID area (120-block area of downtown DC, including F Street, 14th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue near Freedom Plaza)

Phase 3

July 15 – December 31, 2007

Vending applicants can get vending licenses and public space permits starting Monday, July 16, 2007. DDOT will issue Public Space Permits for the area in the Complete Central Business Zone (including the K Street corridor from Georgetown to Union Station).

Phase 4

January 1 – April 30, 2008

Vending applicants can get vending licenses and Public Space Permits starting Wednesday, January 2, 2008. DDOT will issue Public Space Permits city-wide.

Vending Licenses

Who issues vending licenses?

- DCRA will issue vending business licenses.

What else does a vendor need to get a license?

- The Department of Transportation (DDOT) will issue a Public Space Permit for the location the vendor chooses. DDOT's Public Space Permit will show the vendor's official location.
- Each applicant must get a Clean Hands Certificate from the Metropolitan Police Department and the Office of Tax Revenue.
- If an applicant plans to sell food, he or she must get Department of Health (DOH) health certifications and inspections before applying for the Vending License.

When can vendors get licenses?

Under the new vending law, vendors must have Vending Licenses and Public Space Permits, to vend in the District.

Vendors who have licenses now can apply for new licenses and Public Space Permits at their current locations.

DCRA is making a map of these locations. This map will be finished by January 14, 2007.

You can apply for your Vending License and Public Space Permit on Tuesday, January 16, 2007.

We encourage people who are vendors now or who want to be vendors to use the implementation period to develop a strong and viable business.

- Develop your business plan, seek funding, find wholesalers and research your audience.
- Use the resources offered by the District – especially the Business Resource Center. You can learn more at <http://brc.dc.gov>.
- Visit the Enhanced Business Information Center (e-BIC) office at Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library, 901 G Street NW, first floor, (202) 727-2241. To learn more, visit <http://restoredc.dc.gov/ebic>.
- Go to e-BIC classes.

Location

How are locations decided?

Each vendor will choose his or her location.

DCRA and DDOT will help vendors learn what sites are available.

Why did DCRA decide to link the Vending License and location?

DCRA surveyed seven cities—Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Miami, New York, Philadelphia, and Portland, Oregon—to find out what worked well there.

What did DCRA find?

- Other cities have learned that moratoriums do not work well.
- Other cities have had success linking vending licenses to vending sites.
- Most cities' vendors offer a wider variety of products – especially "street foods."

For More Information

- Go to a Vending Orientation, in, Old Council Chambers at 441 4th Street NW, 6-8 pm on one of these dates:
 - October 16 - with Korean interpreter.
 - October 17 - with Spanish interpreter.
 - November 7 - with Vietnamese interpreter.
 - November 9 - with Mandarin Chinese interpreter.
- Check dcra.dc.gov for updates.
- Call (202) 442-4512 if you have questions.