

City of Madison Vending Oversight Committee Meeting

Street Vending Staff Report

August 2025

Unless otherwise noted, the below statistics are current as of 8/18/2025

Art & Craft:

Applications Received/In Process – 2

License Issued – 98

Enforcement: Primary enforcement has been around ensuring that our office has received up-to-date Certificates of Liability naming the City of Madison as an additional insured.

Comments: We are in our groove this season with Art and Craft vending. Several large annual events, approved through the Special Event Resolution, have invalidated licenses around the Capitol Square and staff have been successfully communicating and relocating vendors are required.

Merchant Vending:

Applications Received/In process – 1

License Issued - 8

Enforcement: Nothing to report.

Comments: Azara has applied for their license but has not followed through with payment on their invoice. Repeated attempts to reach out to complete this process have been made with no response. It appears they have not been conducting any unlicensed Merchant Vending activity. In the interest in supporting their Merchant Vending activity going forward, staff have assisted Azara in the creation of application materials that will facilitate a swifter and smoother application process should they wish to apply closer to the beginning of the vending season in the future.

Sidewalk Cafes & Roadway Cafe:

Applications Received/in process – 8

Sidewalk Cafe ONLY applications - 4

Sidewalk & Roadway Cafe applications – 4

License Issued - 73

Enforcement:

Citations Issued - 1

Despite repeated attempts by staff to assist the business owner at 107 State Street in completing their café license application, the necessary information to issue an invoice and license has not been provided. Direct communication with management staff indicated that limited communication from the owner regarding the outstanding requirements has left management unaware of the unlicensed status, resulting in continued operation without approval. Given the multiple reminders that operations may not proceed until a license is issued, and the decision to operate despite this, staff issued a citation. At the same time, staff reiterated their willingness to assist the owner in completing the licensing process to bring the operation into compliance.

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Outdoor Overnight Storage Enforcement

A great deal of staff time has again been devoted this season to enforcement surrounding Outdoor Overnight Storage. Staff have notified all sidewalk and roadway café operators with the consistent message that even a single instance of improper storage creates opportunities for theft and poses risks of property damage. With increased societal tensions and the proximity of stored café equipment to the Capitol grounds, this is a matter staff are treating very seriously.

Common problems encountered include operators giving the appearance of security without actually securing equipment—such as locking only the top chair in a stack, leaving the rest easily accessible; using clasp-ended cables that can be unhooked rather than properly secured with locks; and locking equipment to city amenities such as trees and light poles, which has resulted in damage when these objects are subjected to tampering or high winds.

Unlike other enforcement areas where a progressive sequence of education, verbal warning, written warning, and citation may stretch across multiple years, enforcement of Outdoor Overnight Storage will not be effectively “reset” each season. Given the extensive amount of staff time already devoted to education, one-on-one communication, and multiple beginning- and mid-season reminders of expectations, operators have been clearly and repeatedly informed of requirements. Accordingly, enforcement responses going forward will be swifter and less tolerant of repeated errors. It is paramount that café operators ensure that our expectations are clearly communicated regardless of staff turnover to avoid citations. One that note, several operators are currently at a Final Warning.

Food Cart Vending

Mall Food Vending

Mall Concourse Applications in process – 1

Mall Concourse Licenses Issued - 31

Enforcement:

Nothing to Report – Vending while tow vehicle present has not been an issue that has come up since the enforcement earlier this season.

Comments:

Food cart operations in the Mall Concourse have been running smoothly. At this time in the season, staff time has been largely dedicated to the upcoming food cart review. A consistent challenge with review applications has been the submission of inaccurate or incomplete information, particularly regarding precise measurements (which determine eligibility to vend in the Mall Concourse) and other required details. Despite repeated messaging on the importance of accuracy, staff continue to receive incorrect or incomplete applications from both seasoned and new operators. As a result, considerable staff effort has been spent on verifying and collecting accurate cart measurements, as well as brainstorming strategies to streamline the data-cleanup portion of this process to make it more efficient moving forward.

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Southeast Campus Vending

Southeast Campus Applications in process – 0

Southeast Campus License Issued - 6

Enforcement: Nothing to report.

Comment: We are indeed seeing increased interest in this location as we prepare for students to come back for the school year.

State Street Night Vending

State Street Night Vending Applications Submitted/in process – 1

State Street Night Vending License Issued - 3

Enforcement: Nothing to report.

Comment: It is possible that this program will see more activity as students return for the school year.

Citywide Vending

Licenses Issued: 64

Umbrella: 54

Basic: 11

Basic Street Vending Applications Received/In process: 6

Umbrella Street Vending Licenses ONLY (no high-density vending licenses) – 4

Street Vending License (food only and not high-density vending) – 0

Enforcement:

Staff continue to dedicate significant time to addressing a wide range of enforcement issues related to food vending operations in violation of Madison General Ordinances. Complaints persist regarding vendors operating in unapproved locations without the required Free-Standing Vending approvals. A recurring challenge is the widespread misconception among vendors that obtaining permission from a property owner or holding a Transient Food Stand license alone is sufficient for vending in the City of Madison.

A recent example involved Chick-fil-A vending outside St. Mary's Hospital in a location expressly marked "No Parking at Any Time." Through outreach to the manager overseeing the company's food cart operations, staff uncovered an ongoing misunderstanding: many vendors assume a Transient Food Stand license allows vending citywide, when in fact vending on the public right-of-way requires a Mobile Food Establishment license from Public Health Madison & Dane County (PHMDC), a Base Kitchen license, and the appropriate City of Madison Street Vending license. Staff are identifying ways to make these distinctions clearer at the outset, so that new vendors are not inadvertently set up for failure.

The St. Mary's case also highlighted another important enforcement angle: hospitals inviting unlicensed vendors to serve staff and visitors. Staff were able to engage directly with St. Mary's primary contact to ensure they now understand and follow City licensing requirements when inviting vendors onto their property. In addition, vending staff have successfully coordinated with Parking Enforcement to explore signage changes at this location that would allow a legitimate vending opportunity for properly licensed vendors while still serving hospital staff and visitors. While this is a positive step forward for this

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location, similar issues continue at other clinics, and staff will need to work closely with Zoning and other departments to address Free-Standing Vending approvals across multiple sites.

Staff also remain concerned about the growing number of individuals preparing food in private homes and selling it via social media, often while concealing their locations and identities. These unlicensed operators typically advertise through posts and direct messaging, making verification difficult and raising public health concerns. Staff have been documenting these cases and are working with PHMDC to improve information sharing, coordinate enforcement, and either guide operators into compliance or pursue enforcement actions where necessary.

Comment:

Staff observed many vendors operating outside Madison West High School over the lunch hour. Based on the posted no parking area, vending outside of West will need to be revisited over the summer. During one site visit staff observed a few unlicensed vendors. These vendors were contacted directly to move through the licensing process.

Basic Street Vending License (not food):

License Applications Received/In process - 0

Enforcement: nothing to report

Comments: Nothing to report

TOSVOD – Top of State Vending Overlay District

TOSVOD application in process – 0

Enforcement: Nothing to report.

Comments: Nothing to report

Game Day Vending

License Applications received/in process: 5

Enforcement: In anticipation of common vending violations outside Camp Randall Stadium on game days, staff have coordinated with the Madison Police Department to assign an officer to accompany the Street Vending Monitor during the first two home games of the season. This proactive approach is intended to set an early precedent and clear expectations for repeat violators engaged in unlicensed ticket and goods sales. With an officer present, staff will be better positioned to properly identify these individuals - many of whom return to Madison for each home game - and issue citations immediately. The goal is to demonstrate that continued unlicensed activity will not be tolerated and that the only path forward is through obtaining proper licensing.

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Comments: Staff are working with vendors to receive licenses for the imminent game days. The first UW Badger home game at Camp Randall is August 28 and kickoff is at 8pm.

Banners Permits:

Number of individual organizations that have applied for a Banners Permit – 25

Number of individual Banners Permits in process or issued – 47

TEM Permits:

Number of Tabling Permits Received - 521

Number of Tabling Permits issued – 361

Number of Tabling Permits at fees due – 138

Comments:

Staff are actively working to ensure that all Jehovah Witness Permits are paid now that they have been properly processed in our workflow.

Ongoing Business:

- Staff have been meeting with the UW and other staff to review the concerts at Camp Randall and vending within the area. No vending was licensed during the three concerts this season.
- The food cart review applications are in. Staff are working through the eligibility and process for the review. This year the dates of the review are September 8 – October 4.
 - o 43 food carts/tents that applied
 - o 315 reviewers that applied