



Charlotte City Council
Housing, Safety & Community Committee
Meeting Summary for June 2, 2025

COMMITTEE AGENDA TOPICS

1. Policy Referral: Street Vending

COMMITTEE INFORMATION

Committee Members Present:	Victoria Watlington (CMGC), LaWana Mayfield (CMGC), Dimple Ajmera (CMGC), Tiawana Brown (CMGC), Reneé Johnson (CMGC)
Committee Members Absent:	n/a
Other Council Members Present:	Dante Anderson
Staff Resources:	Shawn Heath, City Manager's Office Charlie Jones, Charlotte Department of Transportation Christian Wagner, Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department Jessica Battle, City Attorney's Office
Meeting Duration:	4:00 – 5:30 PM

DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHTS

City Council member Watlington called the meeting to order and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

Policy Referral: Street Vending and Peddlers

Charlie Jones reviewed the city's existing street vending ordinances (Article VIII and Article X), the geographic area of the Congested Business District, national benchmarking, and provided a summary of the May 22 public input session.

Shawn Heath stated that staff supports higher fines with maximum amounts (e.g., up to \$500) for street vending in the Tryon Street and congested business district. He also reminded the Committee that a criminal penalty could be considered, particularly for repeat or chronic offenders. Additionally, he noted that if the Committee wants to consider a citywide vendor permitting process, several practical factors would first need to be addressed.

Christian Wagner explained that late-night vending in uptown, particularly after midnight, often involves individuals who are impaired, which can lead to disorderly and unsafe conditions if clear boundaries aren't in place. He also noted that the current fine is not effective in deterring illegal vending.

Jessica Battle explained that if criminal penalties were added, it would be a tool in CMPD's toolbelt to help deter turf wars and other subsequent criminal behaviors, and would only be used on an escalation basis - CMPD would still use verbal warnings.

Council member Watlington asked the members of the public in attendance representing the NoDa business community to share their street vending suggestions for Committee consideration. Highlights include:

- Vendors should be required to follow a prescribed permitting process comparable to storefront businesses.
- Designate specific spaces for vendors.
- Vendors should not set up directly in front of existing businesses.
- Sidewalks must remain clear; vending should not block ADA access or pedestrian flow.
- Permitting should address issues with sidewalk width, storefront access, and parking obstructions.
- Establish clear no-vending zones in areas with narrow sidewalks or unsuitable conditions.
- Street vendors selling food should be required to meet health department regulations, which are not always followed. This should be enforced, and enforcement should be responsive to timing of complaints.
- Consider designating certain areas as congested business districts (CBDs).
- Request to apply a CBD designation to the four-block NoDa business district.
- Implement escalating fines for violations.
- Use color-coded permits: one for food/beverage vendors, another for goods.
- Do not support a pilot program in NoDa due to limited space/existing constraints.
- Store owners should not be responsible for managing conflicts with vendors; city enforcement is needed.
- NoDa's vending issues are urgent and require immediate action.

Highlights of Committee discussion:

- Support increasing fines for illegal vending, based on benchmarking and current uptown vendor fees.
- Interest in expanding vending regulations to South End, University City, and other gathering areas in the city.
- Acknowledged limited sidewalk space as a challenge.
- Requested more information on criminal penalties for repeat offenders.
- Recommend a citywide street vending permit—color-coded, visibly displayed, and simple to obtain.
- Oppose criminalizing vending; believe vending alone shouldn't result in criminal charges.
- Support identifying city-owned spaces where vendors can operate and grow.
- Agree current vending situation is unsustainable and changes are necessary.
- Shared concerns about sidewalk obstructions, especially in NoDa, affecting families with small children (e.g. strollers trying to navigate around sidewalk vendors) and mobility overall.
- Permit fees should cover program costs, without burdening vendors but also without requiring city to subsidize program.
- Support pilot permit program followed by evaluation to learn if it addresses needs of residents, businesses, and vendors.
- Limiting unrestricted vending could help resolve issues like turf conflicts.
- Emphasized the need for a comprehensive and urgent citywide street vending plan.
- Recognize street vending as a public health and safety issue in densely developed areas lacking infrastructure.
- Pilot program should include designated vending locations to prevent overcrowding of vendors in an area.
- Recommend affordable annual permit fees, similar to uptown's \$160 fee.
- Stressed this is a citywide issue, not just limited to NoDa.
- Vending spaces should be equitably managed (e.g., rotating vendor assignments; no one vendor able to monopolize space).
- Permitting process should include vendor education and guidance.
- Collaborate with the County on how the Health Department handles illegal food vending and complaints.
- Permitting should consider physical conditions like sidewalk width.
- Support escalating fines for repeat violations.
- Track effectiveness of fines to determine if vendors relocate or comply.
- Doing nothing is not an option.

Motions and Vote.

Council member Ajmera made a motion to direct staff to develop an escalating fine structure up to \$500, including tracking, for Council discussion and consideration. Council member Mayfield seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

Council member Ajmera made a second motion to direct staff to create a pilot permit-based street vendor program to be implemented as soon as possible that addresses the concerns raised by the Committee and the community, and to provide Council with an update on the development of the pilot program before the summer recess. Council member Johnson seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

Next Meeting

Meeting adjourned at approximately 5:30 pm. The next meeting will occur on July 7, 2025.

MEETING MATERIALS

All meeting materials are available online at the [Charlotte Legistar Site](#). City Council Committee meeting videos and transcripts can be viewed on the [City of Charlotte's YouTube channel](#) (June 2, 2025 meeting link: <https://youtu.be/cuUfZxzSWPI?t=21565>) .

Street Vending

DISCUSSION WITH HOUSING, SAFETY & COMMUNITY COMMITTEE
JUNE 2, 2025

1

Recap of May 5, 2025 Committee Meeting

1. Policy referral
2. Existing street vending ordinances
3. Anecdotal community feedback
4. Benchmarking results
5. Committee discussion and feedback on policy

2

Existing Street Vending Ordinances

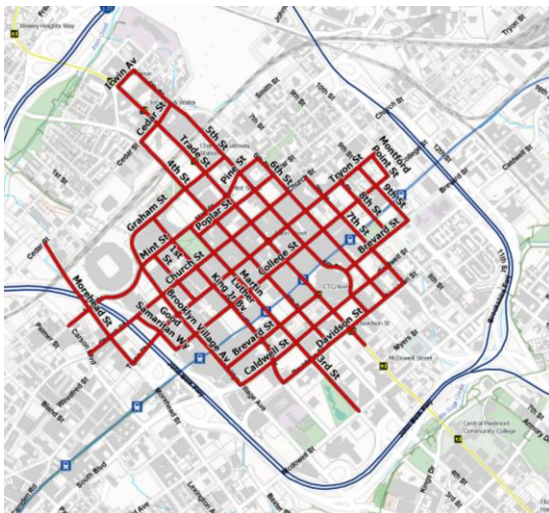
Ordinances

- ▶ Street vending is governed by **Chapter VI** of the City's Code of Ordinances
 - Article VIII – Peddlers
 - Article X – Tryon Street Mall Vendors
- ▶ This Chapter (most recently updated in mid-1980s) governs geographic-related requirements, allowed hours of operation, and licensing, etc.
- ▶ Violations of these ordinances can result in varying levels of fines, ranging from \$10-\$50

Geographic Summary

- ▶ **City wide:** street vending is legal without a permit in all areas outside the Congested Business District
- ▶ **Congested Business District:** street vending is illegal, except for Tryon Street Mall Vendors
- ▶ **Tryon Street Mall:** street vending is legal, but requires a permit (program is administered by Charlotte Center City Partners); footprint is from Brooklyn Village Ave to Eighth Street and the "100 blocks" of East/West Trade Street

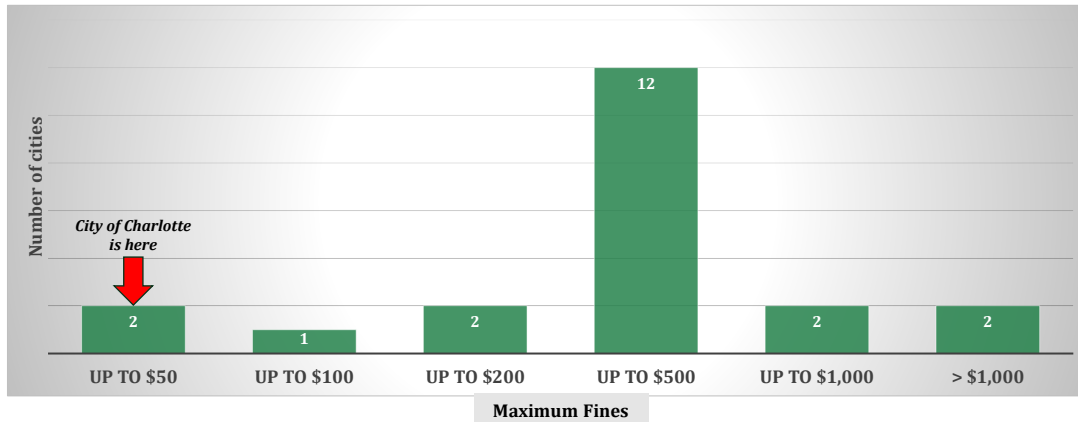
Congested Business District (CBD)



CBD Overview

- ▶ The CBD is established in the ordinance (Article XIII)
- ▶ The most recent expansion to the CBD was in 2016
- ▶ The ordinance grants the City Manager authority to amend the CBD (either expand or reduce)
- ▶ The ordinance does not establish criteria to inform CBD expansion/reduction decisions
- ▶ The Tryon Street Mall Vendor program is governed by a separate ordinance (Article X), enabling permitted vendors to legally operate in assigned locations

National Benchmarking of Maximum Fines



- ▶ 21 cities (including Charlotte) reflected in the chart above
- ▶ 19 cities have higher maximum fines than Charlotte, with \$500 being the most common maximum fine threshold for the benchmark group

Summary of May 22nd Public Input Session

Public Input Session Description

- ▶ 35 participants, including small businesses, residents, and street vendors (primarily from Uptown, South End, and NoDa)
- ▶ Two-hour session, with table discussions and report-outs

Key Observations

▶ Tryon Street Vendor Program

- Permitted vendors expressed concerns with illegal vending, including:
 - Lack of strong, consistent enforcement
 - Adverse business impacts and loss of family-friendly environment
 - Potential public health and safety issues

Frequent ordinance violations, with limited enforcement tools

▶ Congested Business District

- Specific areas – such as Spectrum Center – experience persistent illegal vending

▶ NoDa

- Brick-and-mortar small businesses expressed a range of concerns, including:
 - Personal safety
 - Adverse business impacts and loss of family-friendly environment
 - Sidewalk and street obstructions
 - Lack of oversight (e.g., health & sanitation concerns related to food and drink sales)
- Street vendors stated they attract people to the area and are part of NoDa's culture; also assert that many seek to successfully co-exist

Longstanding, deep-seated tensions between brick-and-mortar businesses and street vendors

Street Vendors: Policy Considerations

1. **Congested Business District (CBD) and Tryon Street Mall Vendor Program:** should higher fines be introduced to address illegal street vending occurring on Tryon Street or in the CBD?
2. **Areas where street vending is allowed:** are policy actions warranted in Noda, such as expansion of CBD in certain cases OR establishment of a small pilot program for a city-run street vending program?
3. **Local support for street vending community:** what ideas does the community have to support on private property?

Policy Referral: Next Steps

- ▶ Share policy recommendations with HSC Committee
- ▶ HSC Committee action/vote
- ▶ City Council Action Review
- ▶ Request for Council Action (Policy Item)
- ▶ Implementation