



Everything Tastes Better Standing Up:
A Comparative Analysis of
Food Truck Enterprise Bylaws in
Vancouver and Toronto

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Executive Summary

Street food was a common phenomenon on North American streetscapes during the first half of the twentieth century. As a result of sanitary concerns regarding street food, and the automobile oriented design of North American streets, street food vending was slowly phased out of prominence. In recent years, there has been a resurgence of street food, which has been lead by the popularity of food trucks.

From a theoretical standpoint, food trucks contribute many important social, cultural, as well as economic functions to the health of cities. They attract pedestrian activity and the use of public space, leading to more public life and street vibrancy. In addition, food trucks are mobile enterprises that, if given enough freedom to roam cities, can create very efficient use of space. Simply put, food trucks can move to areas where there is demand, thereby, escaping situations in which they are stagnant and with no business. Lastly, as a business entity, food trucks exemplify the essence of free enterprise. In theory, food trucks have relatively low start-up costs compared to bricks-and-mortar restaurants, allowing small-scale entrepreneurs and skillful chefs to thrive.

Despite their growing popularity and positive contributions to cities, food trucks may still be perceived as unsanitary and unfair competition by bricks-and-mortar restaurants. As a result of the dualistic nature of food trucks, Canadian municipalities have developed differing bylaws pertaining to food trucks. Two cities, Vancouver and Toronto, have implemented widely varying bylaws that exemplify their



diverging approaches to achieving a successful balance between regulation and encouragement of food truck vending.

Research Question and Methods

How can bylaws in Vancouver and Toronto enhance the mobility, variety and economic viability of food truck enterprises?

This report analyzes city bylaws related to food truck vending in Vancouver and Toronto. Bylaw analysis had a specific focus on the extent of food truck mobility within their respective cities, their ability to offer variety in their menus, and the economic viability, associated with license fees and permit expenditures, for start-up vendors. The research utilized three methods: literature review, document analysis and semi-structured interviews. The literature review organized competing viewpoints regarding food truck vending and compared them with popular precedents from Los Angeles, Portland and Boston. A content analysis of the City of Vancouver's and Toronto's food truck bylaws was utilized with the purpose of gaining an understanding regarding current regulations and the process by which permits are conferred. Interviews were conducted with food truck owners and operators to acquire first hand perspectives from chefs and entrepreneurs that have the experience of starting and operating food truck vending businesses. For the purpose of validating information, interviews were also conducted with City employees.



Recommendations

The report concludes with a series of recommendations, intended for Vancouver and Toronto municipal policy makers, in regards to how bylaws can enhance the mobility, variety and economic viability of food truck enterprises.

1. End moratorium on downtown vending permits by allowing a limited number of stationary vendors in the downtown core.

Toronto's moratorium on granting downtown vending permits has deprived food truck vending on the city's most vibrant locations, creating a detriment to their mobility and viability. For Toronto to create a street food culture, it must begin granting Designated Vending Area permits in downtown locations, according food truck enterprises a fair opportunity to succeed by not limiting them geographically, and allowing them to vend in the most economically viable locations.

2. Allow vendors to possess multiple locational permits.

Granting food trucks multiple public property location permits would enable them to circulate between the permitted site locations. This would enable food trucks to become more mobile, and ensure greater variety for food truck patrons.

3. Integrate food truck enterprises with existing BIAs.

Food trucks should be perceived as legitimate businesses that contribute to the shopping experience in a BIA. In Toronto, food trucks that have a Designated Vending Area permit location within a BIA should be integrated into the BIA by making their membership mandatory. They should be allowed to contribute and participate in BIA decision-making, just like the bricks-and-mortar businesses within the BIA. In



Vancouver, Street Food Vending permit locations should not be restricted to areas outside of established downtown BIAs. Instead, food trucks should be able to reach an agreement with a BIA in regards to vending within its boundaries and the possible BIA membership for the food truck enterprise should be encouraged. Food truck integration into BIAs would alleviate geographical restrictions of desired food truck locations, allowing for greater mobility, as well as viability for food trucks.

4. Commissaries should be mandatory, but their demands should be relaxed.

To maintain the popularity of food trucks, and to attract new patrons, Vancouver should continue to make commissaries mandatory, while Toronto should institute the requirement of commissaries. Despite their importance, certain aspects of commissary requirements can afford to be relaxed in order to decrease their financial impact. Commissary requirements for food trucks should be reviewed and analyzed to ascertain whether current requirements are necessary for the sanitation of food trucks, and how these requirements can be relaxed to reduce renting costs.

5. Vending permit point system should be graded based solely on business plans, not on menus.

To encourage variety in food truck menus, the success of a food truck vending permit application should not be influenced by the content of the proposed menu. The best chance for a street food meal to become culturally significant is for the public to exhibit sufficient demand for it, not by a jury of experts to deem it as culturally significant.



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Glossary

Bricks-and-Mortar Restaurant – Restaurant businesses that have a permanent, physical location.

Business Improvement Area (BIA) - Defined geographical area within which businesses pay an additional tax or fee in order to fund improvements within the district's boundaries.

Commissary – Commercial kitchen and cleaning depot where food trucks may be required to prepare their food and park while not in operation.

Designated Vending Area Permit – A permit that allows Toronto food trucks to choose their preferred public property location and reserve it for the duration of a calendar year.

Food Truck Pods – A conglomeration of multiple food trucks locating in close proximity to each other.

Loncheros – Food trucks that originated from East Los Angeles and specialize in Mexican cuisine.

Mobile Food Vending License – Business license that is required for all Vancouver food trucks prior to vending.

Mobile Food Vending Permit – A permit that is required for Vancouver food trucks that are vending outside of the city's downtown peninsula.

Refreshment Vehicle Owner Business License – Business license that is required for all Toronto food trucks prior to vending.

Street Food Vending Permit – A permit that allows Vancouver food trucks to choose their preferred public property location within the downtown peninsula and reserve it for the duration of a calendar year.

Vancouver Downtown Peninsula – Geographical area of Vancouver that is bounded by False Creek to the south, Main Street to the east and the Burrard Inlet to the North.



Food truck /fōd træk/

noun

a large vehicle equipped with facilities for cooking and selling food: *new gourmet food trucks take the street-food game to a higher level* (Oxford Dictionary, 2010).



1. Introduction

Street food was a common phenomenon on North American streetscapes during the first half of the twentieth century (Morales and Kettles, 2009); however, sanitary concerns regarding the sale and consumption of street food and the decline in public life caused by the automobile-oriented design of North American streets dampened the prominence of street food in public spaces (Morales and Kettles, 2009). In recent years, however, there has been a street food renaissance in North American cities, lead in part by the rise in popularity of food trucks.

Statement of General Problem

From a theoretical standpoint, food trucks contribute many important social, cultural, as well as economic functions to the health of cities. They attract pedestrian activity and the use of public space, leading to more public life and street vibrancy (Beresky 2011, Cameron Hawkins & Associates Inc. 2011, Stainsby 2011). In addition, food trucks are mobile enterprises that, if not restricted by bylaws, can create the efficient use of space (Urban Vitality Group, 2012). Simply put, food trucks can move to areas where there is demand, thereby, they escape situations in which business is stagnant. Lastly, as a business entity, food trucks exemplify the essence of free enterprise. In theory, food trucks have relatively low start-up costs compared to bricks-and-mortar restaurants, allowing small-scale entrepreneurs and skillful chefs to thrive (The Canadian Press 2011, Lederman 2011).



With the growth in the demand and popularity of food trucks, Canadian municipalities have experienced public pressure to amend food-vending bylaws and encourage the establishment of food truck enterprises. Conversely, complaints from traditional bricks-and-mortar restaurants, as well as fears of negative externalities caused by food trucks, such as over-crowding and noise pollution, have tended to stall the deregulation of food trucks (Wallace 2011, Needleman 2012 and Sanson 2009). As a result, Canadian cities have developed differing bylaws related to food trucks. Two cities, Vancouver and Toronto, have implemented widely varying bylaws that exemplify their differing approaches to achieving a successful balance between regulation and encouragement of food truck vending.

Research Question and Scope of Work

How can bylaws in Vancouver and Toronto enhance the mobility, variety and economic viability of food truck enterprises?

This report analyzes city bylaws related to food truck vending in Vancouver and Toronto. The bylaw analysis has a specific focus on the extent of food truck mobility within their respective cities, their ability to offer variety in their menus, and the economic viability, associated with license fees and permit expenditures, for start-up vendors. Bylaw analysis is supplemented with information gained from interviews with vendors and policy makers, and compared with popular precedents in multiple North American cities. Ultimately, a series of recommendations intended for



Vancouver and Toronto municipal policy makers is provided regarding how bylaws can enhance the mobility, variety and economic viability of food truck enterprises.

Report Structure

This report is divided into eight chapters. *Chapter 1* discusses the general problem as it applies to food truck bylaw regulation, and addresses the research question, along with its scope. *Chapter 2* presents a literature review, which addresses the social, cultural and economic contributions of food trucks to a city's vitality. *Chapter 3* outlines the methods and limitations of the research. *Chapter 4* introduces three precedent cases from Los Angeles, Portland and Boston; cities that have a history of rich food truck culture, or have recently established food truck vending initiatives. *Chapter 5* outlines the bylaws and regulations as they pertain to Vancouver and Toronto. *Chapter 6* analyzes the findings by linking them to the literature review, precedent cases, and interviews conducted with municipal officials and food truck vendors. *Chapter 7* provides a series of recommendations for the improvement of mobility, variety and viability of food truck enterprises in Vancouver and Toronto. *Chapter 8* includes the report conclusion and directions for further research.



2. Methodology

This report employed a qualitative research approach, allowing for in-depth investigation of issues facing policy makers and food truck vendors (Yin, 2009). In order to get a balanced perspective on food truck vending, the research data was triangulated through the analysis of multiple documents and sources. The three methods and sources that were employed were: review of literature and precedent case studies, followed by an analysis of municipal documents, and semi-structured interviews.

Qualitative Research

This report explores bylaws in Vancouver and Toronto as they relate to the mobility, variety and economic viability of food truck enterprises. Due to the subjective nature of the research involved, a qualitative approach was applied. Qualitative research focuses on the quality of research and attempts to answer questions regarding the 'why' and 'how' as opposed to the 'what', 'where' and 'when'. For the purposes of this report, it would be difficult to analyze the restrictions imposed on food trucks without examining the reasoning behind such restrictions. Instead, eleven sub-components that evaluate the extent of mobility, variety and economic viability of food trucks were described and analyzed.

Triangulation

Triangulation denotes that more than two methods were incorporated in the research in order to improve the construct validity of the research being conducted



(Yin, 2009). For the purposes of verifying the reliability and consistency of data, and allowing for multiple perspectives regarding food trucks, the research utilized three methods: literature review, document analysis and semi-structured interviews. The literature review organized competing viewpoints regarding food truck vendors and key precedents in the regulation of food trucks, considering their merits along with their limitations and hazards. A content analysis of the City of Vancouver's and the City of Toronto's food truck bylaws was conducted with the purpose of gaining an understanding of current regulations and the process by which permits are conferred. The perspectives of municipal governments, regarding intentions of allowing food truck vendors in limited numbers and places were contrasted with perspectives of various local stakeholders. Interviews were conducted with food truck owners and operators to acquire first-hand perspectives from chefs and entrepreneurs who have the experience of starting and operating food truck vending businesses. For the purpose of validating information, interviews were also conducted with City employees.

Research Components

Literature Review

First, a literature review was conducted addressing academic research, legislation, and trends in food truck policy from various North American cities. The literature review had a specific focus on precedent cases in cities with rich food truck cultures. Los Angeles, Portland and Boston have become renowned for their



progressive food truck policies, which have created a vibrant street food industry. Their food truck history, current and past bylaws, as well as food truck policy trends were studied for a better understanding of how these cities have created a vibrant food truck culture. Such precedents facilitated a more informed discussion regarding the strengths and weaknesses of Vancouver and Toronto's policies, ultimately leading to the development of a set of recommendations intended for municipal policy makers that are based on the literature review findings and successes of predecessor cities.

New York City, despite a burgeoning food truck scene, was not used as a precedent case study due to a lack of municipal support for food truck vending. The City of New York has sought to limit food truck vending by enforcing ordinances that make it illegal to vend from a curbside, creating tension with the New York City Food Truck Association (Zimmer, 2011). Thus, while there is a multitudinous number of food trucks in New York City, it is largely a result of a grassroots approach to street vending, rather than an example of municipal governance that supports food truck vending.

Review of Documents

A review and analysis of existing municipal documents provided the policy framework that both Vancouver and Toronto have applied towards food truck vending. The analysis of documents facilitated understanding of the laws, regulations and important permits pertaining to mobility, variety and economic viability. Key municipal documents that were examined:



City of Vancouver - Information & Application For Mobile Food Vending On City Property.

City of Vancouver - Street Food Vending Permit Application Form.

Vancouver Coastal Health - Regional Health Protection Guideline – Mobile Food Premises

City of Toronto - Administrative By-Law Chapter 738 - Street Food, Healthier

City of Toronto – Municipal Licensing & Standards – Street Food Vending Staff Report

Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted subsequent to the municipal document analysis with the intention of verifying data and gathering supplementary data. The semi-structured format allowed the participant an opportunity to explain unclear elements while also expressing their opinion and stance on the current food truck vending situation. Prior to conducting interviews, the General Research Ethic Board (GREB) application was completed and a letter of consent and information form were provided to participants. GREB has also stated that there were no field safety issues associated with this research.

A total of (4) interviews were conducted, two in each city (i.e., Vancouver and Toronto), reflecting differing perspectives on food truck vending regulation. In order to gather a municipal perspective on food truck policies, a planner from each city, who has knowledge of street vending, was interviewed. Questions to the municipal planners focused on themes such as the rationale for food truck regulation and potential drawbacks associated with the deregulation of food trucks. In addition, two entrepreneurs with functioning food truck enterprises, (i.e., one from each city) were interviewed. Contact information for the interview subjects was gathered through a



combination of online searches on each city government's website, as well as personally visiting the food truck vendors and exchanging email addresses. These interviews had the intended objective of gaining a better understanding of each city's food truck vending restrictions and the limits on mobility, variety and economic viability of food truck enterprises from the standpoint of the people who operate them. Furthermore, interview questions incorporated the six levels of questioning: information, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Yin, 2009).

Data Analysis

The intent of this report is to determine how municipal bylaws can enhance the mobility, variety and economic viability of food trucks. The three main components of the research question; the mobility, variety and economic viability, were broken down into eleven sub-components to be studied and documented. The two case study cities were compared based on the eleven sub-components in order to identify similarities and differences between their food truck bylaws. The results of this data were then analyzed and discussed according to their strengths and weaknesses. The current situation was taken into account, along with successful precedent cases and interview information, for the eventual formation of a set of recommendations directed at municipal policy makers.



Limitations

There was a general bias on the part of the researcher in support of the de-regulation of food truck bylaws. To mitigate bias, data and differing perspectives were drawn from a variety of sources. Moreover, due to the lack of acknowledgement in the literature review regarding the role of BIAs in limiting food truck mobility, no interviews were conducted with BIA members, but such an interview could have provided a contribution to the discussion.

Construct validity posed a problem as the chosen interviewees have had particular experiences that might differ from other people's experiences, leading to a perspective that might not reflect the true experiences of operating a food truck enterprise. As a precautionary measure, neutral sources of information, such as the literature review, are triangulated with the interviewee subjects to mitigate bias.

Additionally, the focus on Toronto and Vancouver's bylaws will inevitably cause a lack of generalizability of research findings. Every city will have its unique set of issues that might hinder food truck enterprises from forming; the conditions in Vancouver and Toronto might not be the same in other cities due to different economic, weather and cultural issues. However, examples and precedents in multiple North American cities will be discussed and eventually guide policy recommendations, allowing for the prospect of analytic generalizability.



Reliability, on the other hand, has the potential to become a strength of the study. Although not all barriers to entry into food truck industry are quantifiable, the major barrier tends to be financially related. The cost of applying, purchasing insurance and obtaining licenses are quantifiable. Therefore, simply quantifying the financial barriers to starting up food truck enterprises can enable comparisons between past and future food truck vending bylaws.



3. Literature Review

Food trucks are dramatically growing in popularity in North American cities. TV shows, such as 'Eat Street' and 'The Great Food Truck Race,' have exhibited the public's growing enthusiasm and intrigue with food trucks (Tester et al, 2010). From a perspective of planning theory, food trucks contribute many important social, cultural, as well as economic functions to the health of cities (Beresky 2011; Gold 2012; Morales & Kettles 2009). Yet, the North American food truck industry has experienced difficulty in growth due to outdated bylaws that severely regulate street food vending. Food trucks have also gained popularity in Canada. As Canadian cities continue to deal with the rise in demand for food trucks, two cities, Toronto and Vancouver, have taken varying approaches to accommodating food trucks.

A Short History of Food Trucks in North America

During the first half of the twentieth century, street food was a common phenomenon in major North American streetscapes (Cameron Hawkins & Associates Inc. 2011, Morales & Kettles 2009). As a result of sanitary concerns regarding street food, complaints from established bricks-and-mortar businesses and the automobile-oriented design of North American streetscapes, street food vending was slowly phased out of prominence (Cameron Hawkins & Associates Inc. 2011, Gold 2012, Morales & Kettles 2009). Ice cream trucks, hot dog carts and pretzel stands are the historical remnants of street food vending's past glory, but they fail to properly represent the diverse and multi-cultural backgrounds of Canada's population (City of



Toronto, 2011a). With technological advancements, perceived sanitary problems related to street food vending have been curbed, and its cultural importance to streetscapes and public life has been acknowledged.

Among the various methods of street food vending, mobile food vending has gained wide appeal and popularity in North America (Leeder 2011, Wint 2011). Mobile food vendors, often simply referred to as food trucks, are essentially restaurants inside of vehicles with the ability to move around. Food truck resurgence in the twenty-first century can be attributed to several factors, including the three below:

- Technological advances have allowed food trucks to employ the same quality of amenities as bricks-and-mortar restaurants, which have created an opportunity for food trucks to experiment with, and offer, culinary variety while maintaining health and sanitary standards (Beresky 2011, Cameron Hawkins & Associates Inc. 2011).
- Food trucks are suited for North America's fast paced lifestyle, the growth and originality of food truck menus, coupled with their relative affordability, has attracted a clientele that has been seeking an alternative to traditional fast food establishments, especially during economic recessions (Cameron Hawkins & Associates Inc. 2011, Morales & Kettles 2009 & Wint 2011).
- The proliferation of social media has been utilized to connect clientele with food truck enterprises. Not only are social media outlets, such as *Facebook*, *Twitter* and smart phone applications used for advertising, but they can also convey current and future locations of food trucks, making them more accessible to the public (Gold 2009, Leeder 2011).

Food Trucks and their Contribution to City Vitality

The increasing number of food trucks on North American streets has necessitated a theoretical analysis to better understand how food trucks contribute to



a city's social, cultural, and economic vitality. Additionally, if allowed some freedom of mobility, food trucks can be characterized by efficiency, making use of available time and city space.

Social Vitality

Social vitality refers to the capacity of a place to grow and develop social interactions. During the twentieth century, the vast majority of North American streets were designed to accommodate automobiles, with little regard for pedestrian activity (Morales and Kettles, 2009). In recent years there has been an interest in reversing the trend of auto-oriented development and creating a revival in public life in downtown areas (Gehl et al., 2006). Jan Gehl, the Danish pioneer in reversing auto-oriented development, has advocated for the conversion of empty parking lots and streets into pedestrianized avenues that promote sociability between people (Gehl, 1987). The location of food truck vendors on empty parking lots and sidewalks attract pedestrian activity and the use of public space, leading to more public life and street vibrancy (Beresky 2011, Cameron Hawkins & Associates Inc. 2011 and Stainsby 2011). The importance of food trucks and other street food vendors has influenced famed urban socialist William H. Whyte's contention that 'vendors have become the caterers of the city's outdoor life' (Urban Vitality Group, 2012). In essence, food trucks can be considered an automobile solution to an automobile problem.



Cultural Vitality

In addition, the quality and variety of street food is often reflected in the cultures of particular cities. Street foods, such as the *smažený sýr* in the Czech Republic, *choripán* in Argentina and the *börek* in Turkey are street foods that are synonymous with distinct cultures and nations. Canadian street foods currently lack variety. Due to outdated bylaws that restrain diversity in the foods that are sold, most street food vendors are reduced to selling food that have minimal sanitary issues attached to their preparation, and food that does not directly compete with nearby bricks-and-mortar businesses (The Canadian Press 2011, Lederman 2011, Wint 2011). As a result, the most common street foods are hot dogs, pretzels and chestnuts, which typically do not reflect the multi-cultural make-up of Canadian cities or cuisine (City of Toronto 2008, City of Toronto 2009).

Food trucks, on the other hand, provide an opportunity for street food to reflect the mosaic of cultures that comprise Canada. They are technologically advanced and big enough to be equipped with proper cooking amenities that reduce the risk of sanitation, while allowing for more extensive menus and variety in food (The Canadian Press 2011, Lederman 2011). Thus, food trucks should not be treated in the same manner as other street food vendors, such as hot dog, pretzel and chestnut stands. Municipal bylaws should reflect this difference, and strive for a balance between public safety and economics, without restricting the cultural function of food trucks in society.



Economic Vitality

As a business entity, food truck enterprises exemplify the essence of free enterprise. In theory, food truck vending has relatively low start-up costs compared to traditional bricks-and-mortar restaurants, allowing small-scale entrepreneurs and skillful chefs to thrive. According to a *Globe and Mail* study (2011), food truck enterprises require approximately one-tenth of the start-up costs compared to brick-and-mortar restaurants. Young entrepreneurs and chefs can experiment with various recipes and ideas without engaging in high-risk financial commitments. As a result, food trucks' menus provide original and unique foods from diverse cultures that, in many instances, are able to economically thrive on the sole basis of the cuisine quality (The Canadian Press 2011, Lederman 2011).

A prominent example of innovative street food entrepreneurialism can be illustrated by the Japadog stands in Vancouver. Japadog started in 2005 as a single stand in Vancouver operated by recent immigrants (japadog.com, History, Accessed April 2013). Low start-up costs associated with street food allowed the Japadog chefs to daringly fuse traditional Japanese spices and ingredients into an ordinary hot dog recipe. The unique blend of eastern and western cuisine garnered many admirers and media attention. Although the Japadog did not initially start off as a food truck, it does successfully demonstrate the level of originality and uniqueness that can be achieved when entry costs are low. Japadog's popularity does not only exemplify the economic vitality of street food, but also its cultural impact. Since its inception, the



Japadog has become synonymous with Vancouver's multi-ethnic culture, symbolizing the city's role as a gateway to eastern culture.

Efficiency

Lastly, food trucks are mobile enterprises that, if not restricted by bylaws, can create very efficient use of space and time. When food trucks are located in a vacant parking lot they are creating an efficient use of space as an otherwise empty lot is suddenly filled by food truck patrons (Urban Vitality Group, 2011). Furthermore, food trucks have the ability to travel towards areas of demand. Many bricks-and-mortar restaurants suffer from unbalanced demand throughout the day, such as extremely busy lunch and dinner hours, with few patrons between these periods (Urban Vitality Group, 2011). Food trucks, with their mobility, can target areas where there is a demand for food but an insufficient supply of restaurants.

Dualism in Planning for Food Trucks and the 'A La Failure'

Canadian municipalities have struggled with the dualistic nature of planning for food trucks: trying to strike a balance between encouraging city vitality and regulating it at the same time. As a result, Canadian cities have developed differing bylaws related to food trucks. Two cities, Vancouver and Toronto, are chosen for comparison in this report because of their widely different bylaws that exemplify their approaches to achieving a successful balance between regulation and encouragement of food truck vending. This report will show that while Vancouver has initiated a food truck pilot program with relaxed food truck bylaws in an attempt to encourage food



truck enterprises, Toronto has taken a precautionary approach in handling the food truck popularity by preserving existing bylaws that have a tendency to over-regulate.

Although not a food truck program per se, Toronto's now defunct A La Cart pilot program is a prime example of a failure to achieve such a balance in street vending. The three-year food cart pilot program was initiated in 2009 as a means of broadening street food menus and providing healthier options, but only lasted two years due to a lack of interest from potential vendors (City of Toronto, 2012). The main reasons for its demise are related to the program's over-restrictive nature and unwarranted expenses. A La Cart vendors were subject to paying expensive license and locational permit fees, greatly diminishing their viability. Healthier menus were assured by limiting the types of food and ingredients that were allowed to be served, creating unnecessary 'red-tape' and inconveniences for vendors. As a means of distinguishing the A La Cart vendors from all other street vendors, the City required vendors to purchase over-priced A La Cart branded food stands that repeatedly experienced equipment failures, and whose design and weight impeded mobility (Cameron Hawkins & Associates Inc., 2011). Eventually, all of A La Cart's problems contributed to the program's demise, and the media rebranding it as the 'A La Failure' program (Powell, 2010).

Despite A La Cart's failures, there are several North American cities that have successfully achieved a balance between regulation and encouragement of food truck vending. In the following section, the regulatory aspects of food truck policies in



precedent case studies from Los Angeles, Portland and Boston will be investigated to help illuminate the contexts and practices in planning for food trucks.



4. Precedents

Through bylaws and licensing, planners have the capabilities and professional tools to regulate food trucks' mobility, variety and economic viability, allowing food trucks to efficiently provide positive social, cultural and economic contributions to a city. The positive contributions of food trucks have been documented in the preceding section, yet, planners must balance competing interests and viewpoints regarding food trucks. Competing interests include those of traditional bricks-and-mortar restaurants fearful of unfair competition, City officials worried about negative noise and traffic externalities that occur, as well a lingering public perceptions that all street food is unsanitary (Wallace 2011, Needleman 2012 and Sanson 2009). The multiple perspectives attributed to food trucks make it a contentious, but particularly exciting issue in the planning of Canadian municipalities.

The often under-regulated nature of street vending in the cities of the United States, coupled with that nation's fast food culture, has spawned entrepreneurialism in the American food truck industry. Thus, prior to analyzing the Canadian food truck bylaws, it is worthwhile to examine American ordinances in order to gain a better understanding of what constitutes a successful balance between regulation and encouragement of food truck enterprises. Three cities will be examined; Los Angeles, in which food truck popularity has been engrained in city culture; Portland, a pioneering city that has become synonymous with street food; and Boston, which has recently enacted a food truck pilot project. The precedent case studies will offer



insight and guidance into the eventual recommendations presented for Vancouver and Toronto municipal policy makers.

From Loncheros to Seoul Food – Los Angeles Food Truck Culture

In a city that was built around the automobile, food trucks have evolved into a natural way of delivering food. While the popularity of street food diminished in many North American cities during the latter half of the twentieth century, food trucks in Los Angeles were able to sustain their popularity, particularly in the ethnic neighbourhoods of East Los Angeles (Hermosillo, 2012). Dubbed ‘loncheros,’ these food trucks embody the essence of traditional Mexican taco stands by serving ethnic meals that properly reflect the culture of East Los Angeles.

The generally lenient Los Angeles food truck laws allow the loncheros to serve ethnically diverse menus, efficiently locate in areas of demand, while retaining economic viability. The City views the food trucks as veritable kitchens, allowing them the same freedom in cuisine variety as restaurants, as long as they pass health inspection (Morales and Kettles, 2009). During operating hours, the trucks are allowed to roam the city and set up on any public parking spot with the requirement that they are to follow parking rules as stated on the street signs, as with any other vehicle. During hours of non-operation, the trucks have to be moved to an approved ‘commissary’, or a centralized kitchen and cleaning depot. Although the commissaries are an added expense for food truck operators, their existence is rationalized because



they are deemed to create more sanitary conditions for food preparation, and allow health inspectors easier access to the trucks (Hermosillo, 2012).

The same regulations that allowed loncheros to thrive for decades, allowed chef Roy Choi's Kogi Korean BBQ taco truck to gain national attention, and ultimately become the first food truck to receive the 'Best Chef' accolade from Food & Wine magazine in 2010 (Gelt, 2009). Kogi used social media, such as twitter and youtube, and an innovative menu that fused traditional Korean and Mexican cuisine to gain a cult following in Los Angeles. Due to a demand for cheaper food alternatives brought upon by the recession, and to the entrepreneurial spirit of small-scale chefs, similarly innovative gourmet food trucks started setting up in posh Los Angeles locations, allowing food trucks to gain mainstream attention.

The resurgence of food trucks has prompted numerous complaints from bricks-and-mortar restaurants (Lyons, 2010). The Los Angeles County has had a mixed reaction to the complaints by passing two new ordinances with contradicting messages. The first ordinance was driven by fears that the presences of food trucks were detrimental to existing bricks-and-mortar businesses. The ordinance limits the food trucks mobility by requiring all trucks to change location every hour, something that has been fiercely criticized by the loncheros that have traditionally relied on stationary locations in East Los Angeles (Renaud, 2008). The second ordinance extends the Restaurant Grading Program to mobile vendors, symbolically legitimizing the presence of food trucks as not just another fad, but a genuine dining experience.



Much like brick-and-mortar restaurants, food trucks now have to properly display their health inspection grade on their truck (County of Los Angeles, 2011).

Custom Tailor Shops... On Wheels? – Portland's Street Food Scene

Portland, Oregon, has not only allowed the presence of food trucks in its city, but has been forthright in embracing their existence and their values. Not just a food truck city, Portland is currently home to nearly 600 licensed street food vendors, but it's the 'food truck pods' that conglomerate at the edges of parking lots, that have garnered its street food scene international attention (Beresky, 2011). The city's thriving street food culture has prompted many municipalities, including Vancouver, to emulate its stance on food trucks.

Much like Los Angeles, Portland has traditionally incorporated minimal regulation for food trucks (Urban Vitality Group, 2008). However, unlike Los Angeles, Portland boasts a vibrant and walkable downtown, which was the setting for its food truck revolution. During the recession of the seventies, Portland's downtown commercial districts were struggling economically. Developers were skeptical of building during an uncertain economic climate. As a result, Portland's downtown was littered with numerous vacant parcels of land and empty parking lots. Small-scale entrepreneurs saw an opportunity and began renting space on privately owned vacant parcels and underused parking lots in order to vend their street food. The partnership worked well: the lot owners were compensated for the space they rented



out, while the street food vendors proliferated because of the public's demand for cheaper food alternatives brought upon by the recession (Ritchie et al., 2010). Eventually, economic conditions improved, and downtown businesses started to thrive once again, but the food trucks pods gained such a following that street vending became a permanent feature of downtown Portland.

Because the food trucks were allowed to operate on private property, vendors were able to avoid some of the uncertainties related to vending on public property, such as finding suitable parking spots and the time limitations imposed by these spots. The City of Portland enforces few regulations on private property vending; the vending units must be mobile; they must have functional wheels, an axle for towing, and they must be located on commercially zoned land (City of Portland, 2013). Unlike Los Angeles, Portland food trucks do not have to be relocated to a commissary each night. In essence, if they choose to, food trucks can stay in the same spot for months. In many instances, food trucks choose not to move around, and instead, form a quasi-permanent vending location on these private properties. In regards to variety, Portland's food truck menus are regulated by the Multnomah County Health Department, which solely inspects the food for sanitary conditions, allowing for immense originality in the meals being served (Multnomah County, 2013).

The food trucks have not only contributed to the vibrancy of downtown Portland, but they have also become engrained in the city's culture. The City's most recent comprehensive long-range plan has called for '20 minute neighbourhoods', in



which 90 percent of Portlanders will be able to easily walk or bike within 20 minutes to meet all basic non-work-related needs, i.e. grocery shopping, exercise, laundry etc. (Beresky, 2011). In this plan, food trucks have been directly acknowledged as a great resource due to their ability to bring their products to the market. But for some food trucks in Portland, their business model has not been isolated to just food. Some trucks have utilized the food truck model to create a vintage clothing store, a bike repair truck, and a custom tailoring shop on wheels (Beresky, 2011).

The Hub City Becomes Yum City – Boston’s Food Truck Pilot Program

Los Angeles’s and Portland’s food truck industries are unique because they were able to establish organically due to permissive regulations. In comparison, Boston, also known as the Hub City, is more reminiscent of more typical North American cities because of its historically strict regulations on food trucks. Furthermore, Boston’s food truck bylaws have just recently been relaxed in order to accommodate a thriving market for food trucks.

Prior to 2011, Boston did not have any food trucks roaming its historic streets. As of 2013, the Hub City will have 56 distinct food trucks as part of a new initiative to encourage food truck vending (Ross, 2013). A committee consisting of representatives from various City departments was formed for establishing standards and developing acceptable routes of operation in the city (City of Boston, 2011). Similarly to the aforementioned Los Angeles and Portland regulations, Boston food trucks are not



subject to any menu restrictions besides those imposed by the Inspectional Services Department for health and sanitary purposes. Vending locations are, however, restricted to certain areas within the city that have been delegated as areas viable for street food vending based on their pedestrian traffic and absence of bricks-and-mortar restaurants. Each vendor is granted a single location within these designated areas, prohibiting them from moving around the city. During non-working hours, food trucks must be stored in a City-approved commissary.

Although the new food trucks have been popular with Bostonians, the economic viability of their business ventures has faced considerable challenges. The restrictions applied to their mobility have hampered their ability to roam the city in search of a market. Instead, their business is reliant on the viability of the single specific location granted to them. The early reviews by food truck entrepreneurs have stated some of the allocated vending areas are in fact, not viable, and have emphasized for more freedom in mobility in order to sustain their economic viability (Radio Boston, 2012).



5. Findings: Food Trucks... Eh? – The Canadian Context

This section will outline how two Canadian cities, Vancouver and Toronto, have taken varying approaches to food trucks. It is interesting to examine what Vancouver's deregulated bylaws have been able to achieve, and to what degree have Toronto's bylaws have impeded the mobility, variety and viability of food trucks. Each section concludes with a table that summarizes the bylaws as they pertain to the sub-components of the research question.

Mobility

The mobility of food trucks was reviewed in regards to what extent their movement is restricted, where they can locate, and for how long; these include elements of efficiency of time and space in the city too. Both Vancouver and Toronto bylaws provide special provisions for food truck vending in their downtown cores. Aside from this one similarity, their bylaws are vastly different, providing unique opportunities and challenges for food truck vendors.

Vancouver food truck permits are divided into two groups based on geographical boundaries of where they can vend. The Mobile Food Vending permit allows food trucks to vend on any street outside of the downtown peninsula, which is geographically defined as North of False Creek and West of Main Street (City of Vancouver, 2013a). Mobile Food Vending permit holders are bound to a few other minor restrictions. Vending is not allowed on streets adjacent to or within one block



of a school between operating school hours. Furthermore, vending is not allowed within the bounds of any park, beach, school grounds, or private property. In addition, vendors may not sell within 50 metres of a business selling a similar food product, concept, or theme (City of Vancouver, 2013a). In terms of time limitations, the Mobile Food Vending permit stipulates that trucks are authorized to vend between 7am and 11pm. Truck also cannot stay in a single location for more than 60 minutes if there are no customers (City of Vancouver, 2013a). As a result, Mobile Food Vending permit holders attain considerable roaming freedom on public streets outside of downtown Vancouver with few minor geographical restrictions.

Vancouver's most desirable food truck vending locations are in fact located on the vibrant and pedestrian saturated streets of its downtown core (Mund, personal communication, 2013). For food trucks to vend on the downtown peninsula, they must successfully apply for the Street Food Vending permit. Roaming of any sort, for any type of street food vendor, is prohibited in downtown Vancouver (City of Vancouver, 2013b). When applying for the permit, food trucks must state their preferred vending location on the peninsula. If the application is successful, the food truck may only vend in that particular downtown location for the duration of the calendar year (City of Vancouver, 2013b). The permit's location may only be changed in 'absolutely necessary circumstances' (City of Vancouver, 2013b).

Potential locations are also restricted as to avoid competition between similar businesses. Locations may not entirely block any store front from street or sidewalk



visibility, and as with the Mobile Food Vending permits, there may not be a restaurant or business within 60 metres of the proposed vendor location that sells a similar food product, food theme or concept. The food trucks are also bound to time restrictions; they may only vend between the hours of 7am and 2am, unless they are located on the Granville St. entertainment district, at which case they may be open till 4am (Rockett, personal communication, 2013).

In addition, there are certain broad geographical limitations of potential locations. As of 2013, food trucks cannot choose locations within the business improvement areas (BIAs) of downtown Vancouver (City of Vancouver, 2013b). In the initial years of Vancouver's food truck pilot programs, locational permits within the BIAs were granted; these locational permits will be grandfathered into the existing locational restrictions structure. Unlike the Mobile Food Vending permit, which prohibits vending on private property, the downtown-oriented Street Food Vending permit has, as of early 2013, begun to accept permits located on public, as well as private property (City of Vancouver, 2013b). The stipulation states that the food truck vendor must reach an agreement with the property owner, and obtain City of Vancouver zoning approval (City of Vancouver, 2013b).

In Toronto, food trucks must obtain the City of Toronto Refreshment Vehicle Owner Business license to operate legally (City of Toronto, 2010). Additionally, if the vendors would like to operate on public property within the city, a Designated Vending Area permit is required (City of Toronto, 2011b). Similar to Vancouver's policy



on downtown vending, the Designated Vending Area permit allows food trucks to choose their preferred public property location and reserve it for the duration of a calendar year. The permitted vending locations are restricted to areas that are not within 25 metres of existing restaurants. Moreover, if the proposed vending location is within an existing BIA, the food truck vendor must receive written consent from the BIA to locate within its boundaries (City of Toronto, 2011b).

However, the most effective geographical restriction on food truck vending in Toronto is the moratorium on any new Designated Vending Area permits on public property in wards 20, 27 and 28 (City of Toronto, 2011b). These wards, bound by Bathurst St. to the west, Eglinton Ave. to the north and the Don River to the east, comprise the core of downtown Toronto and most coveted street food vending locations in the entire city (Callahan, personal communication, 2013). The moratorium's rationalization has its origins in the 1998 amalgamation of the 6 municipalities that comprised Metro Toronto (Thornback, personal communication, 2013). To counteract a rapidly growing downtown Toronto street food scene that was occurring, the newly amalgamated City of Toronto decided to impose a moratorium in 2002 until the 6 former municipalities could create a harmonized street food-vending bylaw. Currently, there are a handful of food truck vendors that consistently locate on downtown Toronto streets, most notably on Queen St. in front of Toronto City Hall and around the University of Toronto downtown campus. These food trucks received their



Designated Vending Area permits prior to the moratorium and have renewed them each year (Thornback, personal communication, 2013).

While public property food truck vending is fairly restricted in Toronto, vending on private property on the other hand is permitted, even in the moratorium wards (Callahan, personal communication, 2006). For vending on private property, food trucks do not have to have the Designated Vending Area permit, just the refreshment vehicle owner business license. Certain preconditions apply to private property food truck vending; there has to be an agreement between the property owner and the food truck vendor, and the zoning must allow for retail (Thornback, personal communication, 2013). In theory, food trucks can relocate to multiple private property locations during a single day, however, when the difficulties and complexities of finding suitable locations in regards to market demand and zoning, and reaching agreements with property owners, it is fairly difficult to achieve this level of mobility (Callahan, personal communication, 2013).

Due to the restricted nature of Toronto food truck vending bylaws, food trucks have resorted to exploiting a 'loophole' in vending on downtown public property regulations. As possessors of the Refreshment Vehicle Owner Business license, food trucks are allowed to cater to patrons of ticketed events (City of Toronto, 2011b). The food truck vendors must reach an agreement with the event organizers, and they must assure bylaw officers that their customers are attendants of the ticketed event, usually this is achieved by requesting hand stamps or event tickets from customers



(Callahan, personal communication, 2010). In these instances, food trucks are allowed to locate on public property, and as some events are located in the downtown area, food trucks may even vend from the moratorium wards without a Designated Vending Area permit (Callahan, personal communication, 2013). As all Toronto food trucks are not bound to any specific hours of operation, their enterprises can stay open late and cater to the late night crowd (Callahan, personal communication, 2013).

Table A: Summary of Findings for the Mobility of Food Trucks in Vancouver and Toronto

| | Sub-components | Vancouver | Toronto |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| Mobility | Allowed to move around? | Vendors in downtown peninsula must be stationary. Vendors operating outside of downtown peninsula are permitted to roam. | Vendors locating on public property must be stationary. Vendors locating on private property can move around pending on consent from the property owners. |
| | Locating on private property allowed? | Yes if in downtown peninsula with proper zoning and property owners consent. No if outside of downtown peninsula. | Yes, with proper zoning and property owners consent. |
| | Locating on public property allowed? | Yes for both downtown and non-downtown peninsula vendors. | Yes, but only with a locational permit, in certain areas and consent of BIA, if applicable. |



| | Sub-components | Vancouver | Toronto |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Mobility | Are time limits on location imposed? | <p>7am to 2am for downtown peninsula vendors, extended to 4am if vending within Vancouver’s entertainment district.</p> <p>Vendors outside of the downtown peninsula may vend from 7am to 11pm and may only stay in a single location for 60 minutes if it’s not conducting business.</p> | No. |
| | Are geographical limitations imposed? | <p>Vendors in downtown peninsula cannot locate within existing BIAs or operate within 60 metres of a business selling a similar food product, concept, or theme.</p> <p>Vendors outside of downtown peninsula may not operate within 50 metres of a business selling a similar food product, concept, or theme. And on any street adjacent to or within one City block of a school between the hours of 8:00am and 5:00pm, on any school day; permits are not valid on or within the bounds of any park, park parking lot, beach or school grounds.</p> | <p>Moratorium on Designated Vending Area permits located in downtown core.</p> <p>All vendors may not sell within 25 metres of a business selling a similar food product, concept and theme, or from any entrance to or exit from a place of worship.</p> |

Variety

The level of variety in food trucks that is achieved by each city is evaluated by analyzing the limitations on the number of food trucks allowed to operate, and the

degree of freedom in creating menus. The level of variety is also linked to building social and cultural vitality of the city – reflecting the cultural diversity or history of a city and host nation.

Until 2010, Vancouver’s street food was limited to hot dogs, popcorn, roasted chestnuts and pre-packaged food, such as ice cream (Rockett, personal communication, 2013). In 2010, as part of a pilot project to test their viability, the City began extending the Mobile Food Vending and Street Food Vending permits that allowed for significantly expanded menu options (Rockett, personal communication, 2013). The City does not limit the amount of Mobile Food Vending permits it issues, and their menu options are only restricted by the minimum requirements imposed by the Vancouver Coastal Health to ensure sanitation and safety (Vancouver Coastal Health 2012 and City of Vancouver 2013c). As for the more popular stationary downtown Street Food Vending permits, only 17 permits were extended in the 2010 inaugural year of the program as not to saturate the market with gourmet street food (City of Vancouver, 2013b). Upon the success of the program, the City decided to issue additional permits (Rockett, personal communication, 2013). However, due to the amount of permit applicants (usually the City receives approximately a 100 per year), and the City’s desire to ensure the profitability of existing vendors, on average only 10-15 Street Food Vending permits are issued each year (Rockett, personal communication, 2013).



When applying for one of the allotted 10-15 annual Street Food Vending permits, food truck vendors must submit a detailed description of their business plan and proposed menu (City of Vancouver, 2013c). A panel of non-City staff judges that are experts in their respective field, rate the applications based on a point system with the top 10-15 rated applications receiving permits (City of Vancouver, 2013d). The 'menu' portion of the application is rated by professional nutritionists and chefs that base their score on the menu's sustainability measures and considerations, use of local ingredients, uniqueness of food, along with its nutritional value (City of Vancouver, 2013d). When completing their proposal, Vancouver's potential downtown food truck vendors do not have to adhere to any specific menu restrictions aside from the minimum requirements set by the Vancouver Coastal Health for sanitary purposes (Vancouver Coastal Health, 2012). However, to ensure a greater chance for success, applicants' menus must adhere to the grading specifications, which may impact their menu proposal (Vancouver Coastal Health, 2012).

By contrast, Toronto, does not impose any restrictions on the number of Refreshment Vehicle Owner Business licenses, as well as the number of Designated Vending Area permits the City issues (Thornback, personal communication, 2013). Similarly to Vancouver, Toronto's food trucks must adhere to Public Health Inspection protocols set out by the City of Toronto. Aside from this minor, but necessary regulation, Toronto's food truck menus are not limited and experience most of the



freedoms associated with bricks-and-mortar restaurant menus (Callahan, personal communication, 2013).

Table B: Summary of Findings for the Variety of Food Trucks in Vancouver and Toronto

| | Sub-components | Vancouver | Toronto |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|--|----------------|
| Variety | Is the number of food trucks limited? | Downtown peninsula permits are limited to 10-15 each year. No limit on permits for vending outside of downtown peninsula. | No. |
| | Are menu options restricted? | Downtown peninsula permits are in part chosen by a point system that evaluates menus based on their based on sustainability measures and considerations, use of local ingredients, uniqueness of food and nutritional value (how it reflects Canada’s nutritional guidelines). No restrictions for vendors outside of downtown peninsula. | No. |

Viability

The viability of food truck enterprises in each respective city was evaluated by comparing the food truck specific permits and licenses required in each city, the approximate cost of these permits and licenses, as well as any substantial additional fees that might impact the viability of food trucks. A complete and detailed table of

the required permits, licenses and additional expenses is presented in the Appendix.

This evaluation of viability links to the understanding of food trucks as contributing to the economic vitality of a city.

As with any new or used vehicle, food truck vehicle prices vary, but fully customized trucks can usually be acquired for approximately \$30,000 (Mund, personal communication, 2013). In Vancouver, once the truck is purchased, the vendor must obtain a business license, referred to as the Mobile Food Vending license at an annual cost of \$125 per year (City of Vancouver, 2013e). Subsequently, a Food Service Permit for the vehicle must also be purchased. The permit costs \$75 annually and is only given if the food truck passes health inspection standards set out by the Vancouver Coastal Health authority (Vancouver Coastal Health, 2012). Next, a food-handling certificate, known as the FoodSafe Certificate in British Columbia, must be secured. The FoodSafe Certificate is usually received after completing several hours of food handling training and costs approximately \$110 (envirofood.net, Course Schedule, accessed April 8, 2013). Prior to obtaining a vending license, the food truck owner must provide proof of liability insurance, which ranges in annual price from \$600 to \$4,000, depending on the size of the unit and menu (Rockett, personal communication, 2013). Once the food truck has provided the business license, vehicle health permit, food handler certificate and proof of liability insurance, the vendor must secure the Mobile Food Vending (\$324.28 per year) and/or the Street Food Vending permit (\$1202.08 per year) (City of Vancouver 2013a and City of Vancouver 2013b). As



previously mentioned, the Street Food Vending permit is restricted to highly sought after stationary downtown locations, and therefore, procures a higher cost.

In Toronto, a food truck business license is referred to as the Refreshment Vehicle Owner Business license and the cost is \$1,053.02 for the initial year, \$705.26 for subsequent years (City of Toronto, 2012). In addition to the business license, a Toronto food truck driver must have a special food truck driver license, referred to as the Refreshment Vehicle Driver license; it costs \$342.52, and \$253.49 for each renewal (City of Toronto, 2012). All food trucks, regardless of whether they are vending on a designated public property location or on private property, must possess the Refreshment Owner Business license as well as at least one Refreshment Vehicle Driver license. Similarly to Vancouver, Toronto food trucks are subject to health inspection by Toronto Public Health at an annual cost of \$169.50 (City of Toronto, 2013), as well as Food Handler Certification, approximately \$65 for each certificate (canadianfoodsafetytraining.com, Home, Retrieved April 8, 2013). Toronto liability insurance policies procure similar fluctuations in price as in Vancouver, but unlike Vancouver's food trucks, vendors in Toronto require a propane license from a third party at a yearly cost of \$50 prior to seeking vending license (Thornback, personal communication, 2013).

For Toronto food truck vendors that want to vend on public property, they must secure the additional Designated Vending Area permit at an annual cost of \$6,335.63 (Thornback, personal communication, 2012). The Designated Vending Area



permit allocates a stationary spot on a designated location on public property. Potential vendors cannot hold more than one Designated Vending Area permit at a time, and must also compensate the City for all costs associated with the removal a parking metre from a designated area, in addition to the opportunity cost of removing the parking metre (City of Toronto, 1998). Food truck vendors that will only operate on private property are not required to purchase the Designated Vending Area permit, but may incur additional fees to be paid to the private property's owner as part of an agreement for the right to vend on their property (Callahan, personal communication, 2013). These fees vary considerably depending on the location, time and previous business agreements with the property owners (Callahan, personal communication, 2013).

A major difference in viability between Vancouver and Toronto food trucks is Vancouver's insistence on requiring food trucks to locate in a licensed commissary when not operating. As previously mentioned, commissaries are commercial kitchens and large garages where food trucks can stock up on ingredients and service their vehicle in off hours. The purpose of the commissaries is to ensure sanitary and safety guidelines for food trucks and are inspected by the Vancouver Coastal Health authority on a regular basis (Vancouver Coastal Health, 2012). Commissaries are privately owned and their food truck spaces are usually rented out on a monthly basis at an average price of \$1,000 (Mund, personal communication, 2013). Toronto food trucks do not require commissaries and thus, are not subject to additional costs



associated with commissaries. During non-working hours, Toronto’s food trucks may park essentially anywhere (Callahan, personal communication, 2013).

Table C: Summary of Findings for the Viability of Food Trucks in Vancouver and Toronto

| | Sub-components | Vancouver | Toronto |
|------------------|--|--|---|
| Viability | What are the permits/documents required? | Mobile Food Vending license, food service permit, FoodSafe certificate, liability insurance, Mobile Food Vending Permit and/or Street Food Vending Permit. | Refreshment Vehicle Owner Business license, Toronto Public Health inspection, food handler certificate, propane license, liability insurance, Refreshment Vehicle Driver License and Designated Vending Area Permit (optional). |
| | Approximate total cost of permits/documents? | \$1,234.28 for Mobile Food Vending permit. \$2,112.08 for Street Food Vending permit. | \$2,280,04 without Designated Vending Area permit. \$8,615.67 with Designated Vending Area permit. |
| | Other associated fees? | Parking meter expenses. | Renting out space on private property |
| | Commissary required? | Yes. | No. |



6. Discussion

Vancouver and Toronto's views regarding the value of food trucks can be understood when referring to the title of the City bureau responsible for regulating food trucks in each city. In Vancouver, this bureau is referred to as the Street Activities department. The title indicates a positive perception of food truck contributions, which has been reflected in Vancouver's recent attempts to de-regulate their food truck vending bylaws in an attempt to encourage the establishment of food truck enterprises. Toronto's food truck regulating City bureau is titled the Municipal Licensing and Standards division, a name that not only reflects the City's repressive and outdated food truck bylaws, but also emphasizes standardization, rather than diversity of food truck vending.

Mobility

Both Vancouver and Toronto have different food truck bylaws for downtown vendors. Vancouver's bylaws for non-downtown food trucks are simple and effective as it allows the trucks to freely roam around their designated areas in search of a market with few restrictions. Food trucks are not conferred any special designated parking spots to vend, instead, they are subject to the same rules as private vehicles, much like the food trucks in Los Angeles. In Toronto, this situation is much different, as food trucks must apply for a Designated Vending Area permit that limits them to a single location outside of the downtown core. By limiting the trucks to a single



location, the City is oppressing food truck mobility and their efficacy in serving the market and contributing to a city's economic vitality.

In terms of vending in coveted downtown cores, Vancouver's model restricts roaming, requiring food trucks to choose a single location to vend on. The literature review states that a primary contribution of food trucks is its efficient use of space and social vitality brought upon by their ability to occupy underused property and roam around a city in search of a market, something that the Los Angeles and Portland food truck models were quite successful at. However, when Vancouver's downtown density and vibrancy is taken into account, these bylaws serve to minimize the negative externalities associated with pedestrian overcrowding, traffic congestion and noise pollution that might be created due to food truck movement. A positive for Vancouver's food truck vendors is that they have the option of possessing both the Mobile Food Vending permit, as well as a Street Food Vending permit at the same time. This gives them the option of roaming outside of the downtown area, as well as locating in a single location in the downtown core if they so choose. The recent initiative by Vancouver to allow vending on private property is an attempt to mimic the Portland's food truck pods, but it is too early to evaluate the success of Vancouver's pods.

Vending in Toronto's downtown core is problematic for emerging food trucks due to the moratorium. Although the bylaws allow for vending on private property, it is particularly difficult to find underused property in the downtown area (Callahan,



personal communication, 2013). Thus, any sort of food truck vending revival in downtown Toronto is reliant on the City allowing for public property vending.

A shared theme for both cities is the role of BIAs in limiting the presence of food trucks in each city. The opposition of food trucks from established bricks-and-mortar restaurants is well documented in the literature review, but it does not propagate the influential role of BIAs in food truck vending, particularly in Vancouver and Toronto. In Vancouver's downtown peninsula, food trucks may not apply for a Street Food Vending location permit within any existing BIA, while Toronto requires written consent from a BIA prior to vending within its boundaries. This is due to the fact that bricks-and-mortar restaurants are important and vocal BIA members. Outspoken critics of food trucks oppose their presence near bricks-and-mortar restaurants because they don't view them as fair competition. They point to the fact that food trucks have less over-head costs associated with starting business, and they don't pay property taxes. In the opinion of Alan Rockett, the Street Activities Coordinator for the City of Vancouver, this is not a fair comparison, as food trucks cater to a vastly different dining market and their finances are subject to an array of misconceptions. Food trucks cater to the fast food grab-and-go market, while bricks-and-mortar restaurants provide slow food option, where customers can sit down and enjoy a meal in an indoor setting. Although food trucks may have lower over-head costs, their monthly base of operations cost can be considerably high when the total number of licenses, permits and the commissary rent is taken into account.



Additionally, food trucks suffer financially in rainy and cold weather (of which both Vancouver and Toronto are susceptible to) and they forego huge revenue services, such as alcohol sales, that the vendors are not permitted to provide (Rockett, personal communication, 2013).

Nonetheless, bricks-and-mortar restaurants hold a lot of leverage in local decision-making. According to Toronto food truck vendor Elizabeth Callahan, bricks-and-mortar restaurants have existed in Vancouver and Toronto for a much longer period and have become much more organized than food trucks, which have just recently gained popularity and a following (personal communication, 2013). As a result, bricks-and-mortar restaurants have been able to accumulate considerable influence within BIAs and amongst City councilors, which has been reflected in Vancouver and Toronto's food truck bylaws.

Variety

The literature review acknowledges the potential contributions to culture that can be created by diversifying street food menus. A simple explanation as to why Los Angeles and Portland were able to create strong and vibrant food truck markets with menus and meals that reflected their city's culture, was there insistence on not regulating the amount of food truck and their menus. In these instances, only the most popular food trucks were able to thrive, and their menus, which have organically evolved to be unique, have become synonymous with their respective cities.

Conversely, one of the most popular explanations for Toronto's A La Cart program's



failure was its insistence on regulating the menu and ingredients, thus impeding culinary entrepreneurship and hindering variety.

Vancouver limits its food truck variety by restricting the number Street Food Vending permits. Successful permit applicants are chosen by a panel of judges that rate the food based on sustainability, use of local ingredients, uniqueness and nutritional value. In doing so, the City imposes the food truck menu options and tries to artificially impose cultural aspects on food truck menus, rather than letting the market decide which menus should thrive and reflect Vancouver's culture. For instance, if Japadog's menu, Vancouver's famous example of street food entrepreneurship, was subject to the same rating system that is currently imposed, there is a strong possibility that they would not have been granted a permit, and the Japadog would not have become synonymous with Vancouver culture.

Similarly to Los Angeles and Portland, the City of Toronto does not restrict the number of food truck permits and related menus. Although this is a positive aspect, the sheer number of aforementioned mobility restrictions has had a substantial impact on the number of food truck enterprises in the city (Callahan, personal communication, 2013). As a consequence, it has been difficult for Toronto to create a food truck culture and organically develop any food truck menu options that reflect the city's diverse culture.



Viability

An analysis of economic viability seeks to evaluate whether or not food truck enterprises in Vancouver and Toronto are given the best possible opportunity to succeed. To assure the economic viability of food trucks, cities must reach a balance between essential regulations that legitimize food truck enterprises, and unnecessary restrictions that negatively affect their viability.

At an approximately monthly cost of \$1,000, Vancouver's requirement for each food truck to have an inspected commissary is one of the costliest expenses for food truck vendors (Mund, personal communication, 2013). The necessity of commissaries has been debated, especially when considering the fact that Portland's famous food truck policies do not require such an expense. Yet, the purpose of commissaries is to ensure food handling safety and sanitation, and they have played an important role in changing people's perceptions regarding the sanitation of food truck cuisine. The commissary requirement has been extended to all types of commercial food preparation enterprises, such as hot-dog stands and professional caterers.

Interestingly, the City currently treats commercial hot-dog stands in the same manner as food trucks, requiring both of them to be physically parked inside a commissary in non-operating hours (Mund, personal communication, 2013). Sarb Mund, a Vancouver food truck vendor, argues food trucks are more advanced cooking machinery than hot-dog stands, and their sanitation does not require shelter from inclement weather. In his opinion, food trucks should not be required to park inside a



commissary. Thus, the City's regulation that food trucks must be parked inside the commissary is outdated, and it serves as an unnecessary expense as food truck vendors must rent more room in commissaries and incur higher costs.

Toronto's moratorium on vending in the downtown core wards of 20, 27 and 28 has restricted public property vending to the outskirts of the downtown core. Aside from being less profitable vending markets when compared to the high pedestrian traffic and vibrancy of downtown streets, vendors are also subject to spending in excess of six thousand dollars on the Designated Vending Area stationary permits. Toronto's food trucks that vend on public property are predisposed to the same issues that many of Boston's food trucks have endured. They are reliant on the viability of a single specific location in areas that have less demand.

The moratorium, coupled with the mandatory one year stationary location for public property vending creates a detriment in the economic viability of food truck in Toronto. Therefore, many food truck vendors choose to forego the expensive Designated Vending Area permit in favour of vending on private property (Callahan, personal communication, 2013). Although not prone to the expensive Designated Vending Area permit, private property vendors must seek out their own partnerships and agreements with property owners for vending space. According to Elizabeth Callahan, the process is time consuming and frustrating, and representative of the lack of support from the municipal government (personal communication, 2013).



7. Recommendations

In the previous chapter, Vancouver and Toronto food truck bylaws were analyzed based on the literature review, precedent cases and interviews with municipal officials and vendors. The following are a series of recommendations intended for policy makers in Vancouver and Toronto, with aspirations of improving the mobility, variety and economic viability of food trucks enterprises in their respective cities.

1. End moratorium on downtown vending permits by allowing a limited number of stationary vendors in the downtown core.

The City of Toronto has not granted Designated Vending Area permits in its downtown wards since 2002 (Thornback, personal communication, 2013). The downtown moratorium has prevented food truck vending on the city's most vibrant locations, creating barriers to food truck mobility and viability. In order to create a street food culture in Toronto, the City of Toronto must begin granting Designated Vending Area permits in downtown locations and accord food truck enterprises a fair opportunity to succeed by not limiting them geographically, and allowing them to vend in the most economically viable locations.

Once the City of Toronto begins accepting downtown permits, it may face considerable opposition from bricks-and-mortar restaurants and a substantial influx of downtown food vendors. This is a similar problem that Vancouver faced when attempting to introduce food trucks to its downtown core, but has managed to



address. To combat this problem, the City of Vancouver has only granted 10-15 downtown-vending permits annually based on applicants chances of success (Rockett, personal communication, 2013). The incremental approach to downtown vending permits has avoided anarchic conditions in downtown street food vending that would have angered bricks-and-mortar restaurants, as well as saturated the food truck market, creating favourable conditions for the economic viability of food truck enterprises.

2. Allow vendors to possess multiple locational permits.

Currently, downtown food truck vending in both Vancouver and Toronto requires a permit that authorizes vending in a single, allocated public property location per year. As a consequence, food trucks are reliant on the economic viability of that particular single location. In addition, because food trucks with these permits are stationed at a single location for the duration of the year, they practically function as bricks-and-mortar restaurants; their wheels and mobility serve no purpose in this regard.

Granting food trucks multiple public property location permits would enable them to circulate between the permitted site locations. Such endeavors would enable food trucks to become relatively more mobile, and ensure greater variety for food truck patrons.



3. Integrate food truck enterprises with existing BIAs.

The perception of food trucks as direct competitors to bricks-and-mortar restaurants must be overcome. Food trucks should be perceived as legitimate businesses that contribute to the shopping experience in a BIA. Food truck integration into BIAs would alleviate geographical restrictions of desired food truck locations, allowing for greater mobility, as well as viability for food trucks.

In Toronto, food trucks that have a Designated Vending Area permit location within a BIA should be integrated into the BIA by making their membership mandatory. They should be allowed to contribute and participate in BIA decision-making, just like the bricks-and-mortar businesses within the BIA. In Vancouver, Street Food Vending permit locations should not be restricted to areas outside of established downtown BIAs. Instead, food trucks should be able to reach an agreement with a BIA in regards to vending within its boundaries and the possible BIA membership for the food truck enterprise should be encouraged.

4. Commissaries should be mandatory, but their demands should be relaxed.

Los Angeles's food trucks had sustained popularity and relevance throughout the twentieth century, despite widespread concerns regarding their unsanitary nature, because of the County's insistence on making commissaries mandatory for all food trucks. Commissaries legitimized food trucks as sanitary businesses and provided a level of reassurance for food truck patrons. To maintain the popularity of food trucks,



and to attract new patrons, Vancouver should continue to make commissaries mandatory, while Toronto should institute the requirement of commissaries.

Despite their importance, certain aspects of commissary requirements can afford to be relaxed in order to decrease their financial impact. Commissary requirements for food trucks should be reviewed and analyzed to ascertain whether current requirements are necessary for the sanitation of food trucks, and how these requirements can be relaxed to reduce renting costs.

5. Vending permit point system should be graded based solely on business plans, not on menus.

Vancouver has limited the number of permits that it grants for downtown locations. Currently, permits are granted based on a points system that evaluates each applicant's business plan and menu content based on sustainability measures, uniqueness and nutritional value. To encourage variety in food truck menus, the success of a food truck vending permit application should not be influenced by the content of the proposed menu. The best chance for a street food meal to become culturally significant is for the public to exhibit sufficient demand for it, not by a jury of experts to deem it as culturally significant.

The risk involved with this particular recommendation is that food trucks will resort to selling greasy and unhealthy foods such as hot dogs and pretzels. Naturally, in an open market system, such results may be inevitable. However, food trucks require low start-up costs, generating opportunity for entrepreneurship and creativity.



Food truck enterprises that exert entrepreneurship and experiment with menus and recipes will create ample demand, and have the potential to organically achieve economic viability, and perhaps cultural significance for its city.



8. Conclusion

Far from being just 'meals on wheels', food trucks contribute many important social, cultural, as well as economic functions to the health of cities. Despite their growing popularity and positive contributions to cities, food trucks may still be perceived as unsanitary and unfair competition by bricks-and-mortar restaurants. As a result of the dualistic nature of food trucks, Canadian municipalities have developed differing bylaws pertaining to food trucks. Two cities, Vancouver and Toronto, have implemented widely varying bylaws that exemplify their diverging approaches to achieving a successful balance between regulation and encouragement of food truck vending.

The research question for this report attempts to understand how bylaws in Vancouver and Toronto can enhance the mobility, variety and economic viability of food truck enterprises. The report analyzed city bylaws related to food truck vending in Vancouver and Toronto with a specific focus on the extent of food truck mobility, their ability to offer variety in their menus, and their economic viability, associated with license fees and permit expenditures. Bylaw analysis was supplemented with information gained from interviews with vendors and policy makers, and compared with popular precedents in multiple North American cities. Ultimately, a series of recommendations intended for Vancouver and Toronto municipal policy makers was provided for the improvement of mobility, variety and viability of food truck enterprises.



New directions for future research could examine the influence corporate chain restaurants have had on the food truck culture and local economic development. The rise of food truck culture in the twenty-first century has largely been a grass-roots movement that allowed creative chefs with an entrepreneurialism spirit to thrive. The popularity of food trucks has prompted corporate chains, such as *Taco Bell* and *Jack in the Box*, to enter the industry (Beato, 2012). The corporate chains view food trucks as great advertising tools, virtually as moving billboards for their product, and with low food truck start-up costs, the expenses for large corporations are relatively minuscule (Beato, 2012). Research can be conducted on how corporate chains have impacted the food truck market, and to what extent their capacity has allowed or hindered local entrepreneurialism and originality to succeed.



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Appendix

First Year Start-Up Costs for Vancouver Food Trucks

| | Vancouver | |
|-----------------------------|--|---|
| | Non-downtown Mobile Vendors | Stationary Downtown Vendors |
| Customized Food Truck | ~ \$30,000 (Mund, personal communication, 2013) | |
| Mobile Food Vending License | \$125 (City of Vancouver, 2013e) | |
| Food Service Permit | \$75 (Vancouver Coastal Health, 2012) | |
| FoodSafe Certificate | \$110 (envirofood.net, Course Schedule, accessed April 8, 2013) | |
| Liability Insurance | \$600* (Rockett, personal communication, 2013) | |
| Mobile Food Vending Permit | \$324.28 (City of Vancouver 2013a) | |
| Street Food Vending Permit | | \$1,202.08 (City of Vancouver 2013b) |
| Commissary | ~\$12,000 (Mund, personal communication, 2013) | |
| Total | ~ \$43,234.28 | ~ \$44,112.08 |

* Assuming the cheapest liability insurance is attained.



First Year Start-Up Costs for Toronto Food Trucks

| | Toronto | |
|--|---|---|
| | Private Property Vendors | Public Property Vendors |
| Customized Food Truck | ~ 30,000 (Mund, personal communication, 2013) | |
| Refreshment Vehicle Owner Business License | \$1,053.02 (City of Toronto, 2012) | |
| Toronto Public Health Inspection | \$169.50 (City of Toronto, 2013) | |
| Food Handler Certificate | \$65 (canadianfoodsafetytraining.com, Home, Retrieved April 8, 2013) | |
| Propane License | \$50 (Thornback, personal communication, 2013) | |
| Liability Insurance | \$600* (Rockett, personal communication, 2013) | |
| Refreshment Vehicle Driver License | \$342.52 (City of Toronto, 2012) | |
| Designated Vending Area Permit | | \$6,335.63 (Thornback, personal communication, 2013) |
| Total | \$32,280.04 | \$38,615.67 |

* Assuming the cheapest liability insurance is attained.

