

## **2026 Code Cleanup Subcommittee – Food Trucks and Food Courts**

The Subcommittee met on October 6, 2026, to discuss the regulatory framework for mobile food units, including food trucks and potential food truck courts. The group revisited how food trucks came to be included within the temporary use category and how the current limitations—particularly the rule permitting multiple annual permits but allowing only one truck to operate at a time—have created challenges for both vendors and property owners. Staff and members noted that several commercial properties, such as those along Harris Street, 5th Street, and the Cosner lot, are interested in using their sites for interim food truck activity during redevelopment planning. The current code, however, restricts their ability to accommodate more than one vendor at a time, creating inequities and confusion among operators.

### **Review of Ongoing Discussion**

Participants considered whether the scope of regulation should focus on the trucks themselves, the sites where they operate, or both. Some members emphasized that the Comprehensive Plan supports expanding neighborhood amenities and questioned whether the City should broaden the definition beyond food trucks to include carts and other mobile commercial units. Others noted that introducing retail-style uses into residential districts without community engagement could be problematic.

The group also discussed inconsistencies in how permits are obtained and administered, especially when sites change ownership. Consideration was given to whether the property owner should hold the permit rather than each individual food truck, shifting responsibility to the host site and creating a clearer process for vendor participation. Members also reflected on examples from other localities—such as Virginia Beach, Richmond, and Austin—where food courts or similar models offer shared infrastructure like restrooms and seating but may trigger more stringent code requirements.

In examining the temporary use permit structure, the group agreed that food trucks operate differently today than when the ordinance was first crafted. Some now stay in one place for extended periods, making the traditional understanding of a short-term mobile use less applicable. The conversation also highlighted the need to distinguish between temporary food truck operations and more permanent, multi-vendor courts, which may require deeper regulatory consideration.

### **Clarifications and Needed Adjustments**

Members identified core areas requiring clarification, including the definition of “temporary,” the number of trucks allowed per site, and the duration of operation. The group acknowledged that the current one-per-lot limit and the broader restrictions in Section 7 of the temporary use regulations are overly restrictive and out of step with Council’s original intent. There was interest in removing or

modifying the cap, revising language to allow multiple trucks, and creating flexibility for food trucks to operate alongside other temporary uses.

Infrastructure requirements such as seating, waste management, utilities, and generator use were also discussed. The Subcommittee noted that more intensive setups increase site impacts and may warrant additional review. Members debated whether a Special Use Permit could serve as a tool for more complex or sensitive locations, though some expressed concern that this may create unnecessary burdens for small operators.

The conversation further explored how to avoid situations where long-term operations occur under temporary permits. Distinguishing between truly temporary food-truck events and sustained food-court-type activity emerged as a central need. Drafting clearer language to reflect this distinction was identified as a priority.

## **Process and Next Steps**

Staff will prepare a draft amendment for review at an upcoming work session. The revisions will outline potential changes to the temporary food truck provisions, including adjustments to permit structure, operational limits, and exemptions for multi-truck sites. Members agreed that while some immediate changes may serve as short-term solutions, broader updates will likely require future code cycles to fully address the increasing demand for food truck courts and mobile food operations in the city.

## **General Observations**

The meeting served primarily as a technical discussion and status update rather than a decision-making session. Members emphasized the need to balance flexibility, economic opportunity, and neighborhood compatibility, acknowledging that food trucks provide valuable services and activation but also require clear, predictable regulatory frameworks. The distinction between temporary and permanent uses, the role of property owners in permitting, and the need to avoid unintended long-term operations were recurring themes that will guide future revisions.

## **Attendees**

Matt Alfele  
Read Brodhead  
Craig Fabio  
Ross Harness  
Jeff Werner

Ben Kobay  
Carl Schwarz  
Dannan O'Connell  
Missy Creasy  
  
Oak Bradshaw