

How to Obtain a Permit for a Mobile Food Truck

INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Mobile Food Trucks

Mobile food trucks are motorized vehicles from which food or drink (prepared on-site or pre-packaged) is sold or served to the public, whether consumed on-site or elsewhere. They are retail food facilities and health-regulated businesses subject to San Diego Municipal Code (SDMC) [§42.0101](#) [PDF](#) and Land Development Code (LDC) [§141.0612](#) [PDF](#).

Other types of commercial service or vending from vehicles are not provided for by citywide zoning and are subject to the prohibitions and regulations in SDMC [§54.0105](#) [PDF](#).

Approvals Required

- A. Mobile food truck operators shall obtain a [Public Health Permit](#) [PDF](#) from the County of San Diego (San Diego County Code - Title 6, Division 1).
- B. Mobile food truck operators shall maintain a valid [Business Tax Certificate](#) issued by the City Treasurer. (Non-profits are exempt).
- C. Most operations are exempt from a City permit. However, property owner authorization is required for any mobile food truck activity on private property, regardless of whether or not a permit is required. Per SDMC [§141.0612\(f\)](#) [PDF](#), no City permit is required for the following:
 - Operations within the public right of way in accordance with SDMC [§141.0612](#) [PDF](#).
 - Operations in industrial zones or commercial office zones.
 - Operations on the property of a school, university, hospital, or religious facility with the written consent of the property owner or authorized school official.
 - Operations in RM-3, RM-4, and RM-5 zones in association with a multiple-unit development with 16 or more dwelling units with the written consent of the property owner or authorized leasing office.
 - Operations serving an active construction site.
 - Catering of a private event as an offsite delivery service or in accordance with the limitations in SDMC [§141.0612\(d\)](#) [PDF](#)
- D. A Mobile Food Truck Permit issued by the Development Services Department (DSD) is required for mobile food truck operations on private property in certain areas, except where the mobile food truck operations are exempt from a City permit by SDMC [§141.0612\(f\)](#) [PDF](#). One permit can cover multiple trucks on a single property.
- E. A Special Events Permit issued by the Special Events Director is required for any mobile food truck operations that would result in the assembly of 75 people or more on public property. (See SDMC [§22.4004](#) [PDF](#)).

Additional Permit Options

- A Temporary Use Permit may be requested for a seasonal or limited-time event (maximum of two events per year) in a location where the use would not be permitted per the underlying zone.
- A Neighborhood Use Permit may be requested for approval to deviate from the requirements in SDMC [§141.0612](#) [PDF](#).

Locations

1. **Downtown**
Mobile food trucks are permitted throughout most of the Downtown area. On-street mobile food truck operations are exempt from the requirement for a permit. Daily operations are not permitted within the special character districts of the Gaslamp Quarter and the Little Italy Neighborhood Center, as shown on the [Downtown Mobile Food Truck Map](#) [PDF](#), unless authorized as part of a special area. For questions about sites within the Downtown area, please contact the [Urban Division](#).
2. **Parking Impact Overlay Zone**
Mobile food trucks are not permitted in the public right of away within the Parking Impact Overlay Zone as described in [§132.0802](#) [PDF](#), which refers to property located within the beach area and the campus impact area as shown on [Map Numbers C-731 and C-795](#) [PDF](#), filed in the office of the City Clerk.
3. **Planned Districts**
In accordance with SDMC [§151.0401](#) [PDF](#), mobile food trucks may be approved in accordance with the citywide zone (SDMC [Chapter 13](#)) that most closely meets the purpose and intent of the applicable planned district zone in terms of permitted uses and intensity of those uses.

Submittal Requirements

This section identifies the documents and plans that are required:

- A. **Applications**
Provide one copy of the [Mobile Food Truck Permit Application \(DS-210\)](#) [PDF](#).
- B. **Vicinity Map**
A vicinity map specifies the location of a proposed project in relation to major streets in the area. This map is not required to be drawn to scale, but it should be proportional. Show at least two major cross streets and all other roadways leading to the site. A north arrow is also required. See Figure 1, for example.
- C. **Site Plan**
A dimensioned site plan drawing showing the general layout of the proposed mobile food truck area. This plan must be legible and drawn to scale. The site plan and vicinity map must be shown on a sheet not smaller than 11" x 17" in size. For an example of a site plan, see Figure 2. The site plan shall include all the following:
 - The general layout and dimensions of the mobile food truck area.
 - Street, curb, sidewalk and property lines with dimensions.
 - Building (s) footprint with tenant space labeled with square footage/use type.
 - Sufficient detail to demonstrate that the vehicle and pedestrian circulation within parking areas are not blocked, diminished, or in any way altered as a result of the mobile food truck operation area.
 - Sufficient detail to identify a level, paved area of a minimum dimension of 35 feet by 15 feet for each mobile food truck that is proposed to operate at the same time on the property. The area shall not include any parking spaces that are reserved, encumbered, or designated to satisfy the off-street parking requirement of a business or activity that would operate simultaneously as the mobile food truck.
 - Location on the site where the food truck(s) will be parked.
 - Name, address and phone number of the property owner.
 - Street address of the proposed food truck site.
 - The legal description of the food truck site and Assessor's Parcel Number (APN). The [County Assessor's Office](#) (619-236-3771) can provide this information.
 - North arrow.
 - Drawing scale.

Signage

- No signage other than that exhibited on or inside the mobile food truck may be displayed.
- Mobile food trucks are required to post the County certification sticker and a notice with a three-inch font minimum stating, "To report a violation, call City of San Diego Code Enforcement at 619-236-5500."

Electrical Connection

A mobile food truck operating on private property may utilize an electrical connection to maintain power as needed to maintain food storage in accordance with the California Retail Food Code health standards. However, the connection shall be made in a manner that does not create a trip hazard or other public safety hazard.

Operations Must be Self-contained in the Vehicle

No furniture, umbrellas, generators, objects or structures may be placed outside the mobile food truck. Such development may only be permitted by operating in a location on private property where no Mobile Food Truck Permit is required (i.e., industrial zones or on school property) or by obtaining a Neighborhood Development Permit that specifically provides for such development.

Alcoholic Beverage

No sales or service of alcohol shall be allowed by mobile food trucks.

Mobile Food Truck Permit Fees

The following fees are required to be paid annually. For your convenience, DSD offers online payments. Payment may also be made in person by cash, check, debit card, Visa or MasterCard. Checks shall be in the exact amount, drawn on U.S. banks and made payable to the "City Treasurer." Due to space constraints, we are unable to store submitted plans awaiting fee payment.

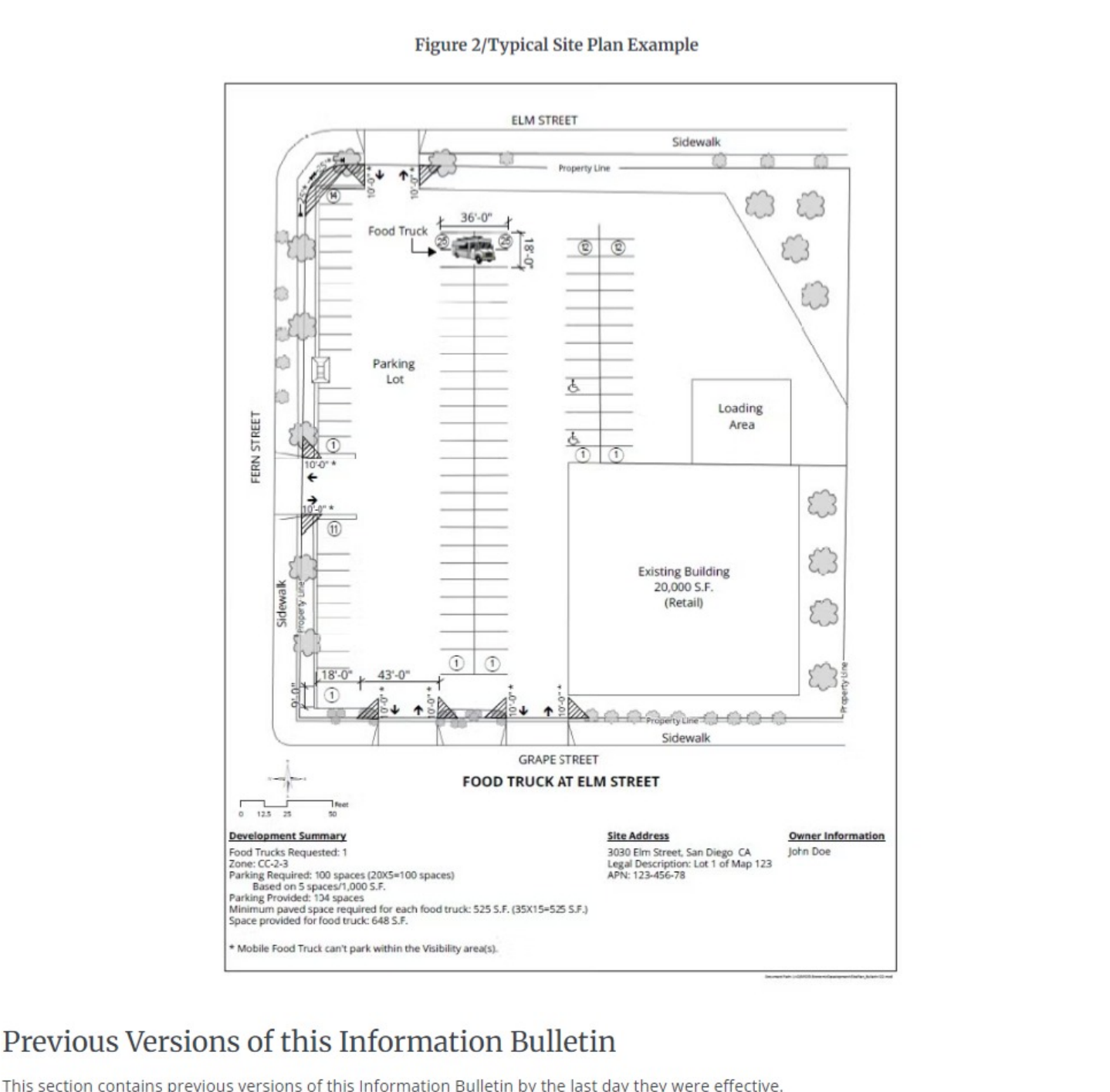
 **Plan check fees and some administrative fees are non-refundable.** For additional refund information, See the Refund Policy noted within [Refund Application Form DS-721](#).

The fee for a Mobile Food Truck Permit will vary based on the complexity of the site context and the time necessary for staff review. All fees are based on the adopted fee schedule as it currently exists or as may be amended.

General Plan Maintenance (GPM)	
GPM Fee.....	\$737.00
Mapping Fee	
This fee is charged at submittal when there are plans, drawings, maps or other geographical documents utilized for project review.	
Mapping Fee.....	\$11.34
Mobile Food Truck Plan Check Fee	
Plan Check Fee.....	\$658.53

Site Information

Information regarding a particular lot may be viewed on the [Zoning and Parcel Information Portal](#).



Previous Versions of this Information Bulletin

This section contains previous versions of this Information Bulletin by the last day they were effective.

- [2025-05-02 I IB-148](#) [PDF](#)
- [2024-06-30 I IB-148](#) [PDF](#)