



**AGENCY:** City Council  
**MEETING DATE:** July 22, 2024  
**DEPARTMENT:** Community Development  
**PRESENTED BY:** Sarah Peters  
**EMAIL ADDRESS:** speters@fortbragg.com

## AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

### **TITLE:**

**Receive Report and Provide Direction to Staff on Mobile Vehicle Vending Location Standards**

### **ISSUE:**

Mobile Vehicle Vending (MVV) permits allow the use of on-street curb parking for food trucks during daytime and evening hours. The City considers mobile vending to be a positive commercial activity that can provide opportunities for budding chefs and restaurant owners and add vibrancy and increased foot traffic in commercial areas as well as convenient, quick and tasty food options for consumers. The City of Fort Bragg has experienced an uptick in the number of people interested in operating a food truck within City Limits. There are currently five food trucks with active mobile vending permits, and several others have expressed interest in vending in recent weeks. At the same time, there have been complaints from existing business owners about food trucks vending in close proximity to their brick and mortar businesses. As approval of mobile vending vehicle permits is under the purview of the Community Development Director, staff is seeking clarification and direction on optimal mobile vehicle vending location standards and dedicated congregate vending.

### **LOCATION STANDARDS:**

#### **Background:**

The City of Fort Bragg currently allows mobile vehicle vending in commercial and industrial zoning districts except that they are not permitted in the public right-of-way on Main Street, in the public right-of-way in Light or Heavy Industrial zones, or within Parks and Open Space zoning districts unless as part of a Limited Term Permit. Over the past several months staff have received multiple complaints from brick and mortar business owners about the following items which they feel detract from their own businesses:

- Increased noise from the generators parked nearby.
- Generator fumes wafting into shops creating odor issues and the inability to comfortably have doors open and inviting to potential customers during nice weather.
- Food trucks that take up two to three spaces, including the food truck itself, the tow vehicle, and often a separate operator vehicle.
- Blocked visibility from food trucks parked directly in front of a shop, creating situations where shop owner and staff are forced to look out on the side of a truck all day.
- The ability of a nearby food truck to sell similar food items as a business that has all the expenses of a brick and mortar business downtown.

At the December 13, 2023 Planning Commission meeting, staff requested input from Commissioners on MVV location preferences. The following areas were generally considered acceptable options, as they would be likely to offer enough visibility to provide adequate business, while not interfering with existing businesses or with the “quiet enjoyment” of residences:

- Adjacent to vacant parcels, such as at Franklin and Redwood and Spruce and Main
- 400 block of S. Franklin near Rite Aid
- 600 block of S. Franklin near Safeway
- 200 block of E. Alder fronting Purity Market parking lot

The following location suggestions would require either code amendments or parking and traffic flow modifications:

- Laurel Street east of Tall Guy Brewing, within the diagonal parking spaces to the north side of Laurel and possible removal of vehicular access to this block
- Fronting Bainbridge Park – a currently prohibited location

Commissioners also expressed support for an area where multiple MVV’s could vend, such as in a parking lot or other vacant lot dedicated to mobile vending. They suggested fewer allowable MVV locations to reduce likelihood of conflict. In particular, they were not in favor of allowing food trucks in these locations:

- The 500 block of N. Franklin Street, due to all the residences on this block
- The area further down North Franklin across from Thompson Gas
- The mid 200 block of E. Pine Street
- Core Central Business District areas such as the 300 block of Franklin Street and the 100 block of Laurel Street

At the March 26, 2024 Community Development Committee (CDC) meeting, staff presented a discussion item on the MVV location issue. CDC members directed staff to bring Planning Commission’s suggestions forward to the full council for discussion. They highlighted the idea of a centralized location for food trucks modeled after other jurisdictions where the street is closed to through vehicle traffic and only open to pedestrian traffic and food trucks. They specifically recommended Council consideration be given to closing East Laurel Street at Franklin Street to the alley behind Tall Guy, and using this short half block as a centralized location for mobile vending.

The next section of this report summarizes this suggestion as well as two others for consideration.

### **Closure of East Laurel Street:**

This plan would include street closure of Laurel from Franklin to the alley behind City Hall and Tall Guy Brewing (See Figure 1 below). Food trucks would be allowed to operate on either side of the street based on their design and the direction their doors open, with picnic tables set up in the middle of the street. The loss of public parking could be mitigated by purchasing a vacant lot, such as the one across from City Hall, for additional parking.

**Figure 1 – 200 block of E. Laurel St.**



### **Mobile Vendor Operator Feedback:**

Staff reached out to current, active mobile vendors to find out if they would want to utilize a congregate mobile vending location and received input from three operators that they would definitely be interested and would want to be included – especially for the East Laurel Street location.

### **Staff/Agency Feedback:**

A request for comments was sent to Engineering, Police, and Fire department staff representatives as well as to Consultant Marie Jones (MJC). Staff did not receive any concerns from PD, and Fire Marshall Steve Wells' only stated issue was that consideration should be given to the possibility of emergency responders needing access. Others expressed concerns about full closure of that block for the following reasons:

- Since acquisition and development of a parking lot would likely take more than a year from start to finish, loss of parking could impact ease of access to City Hall and downtown shops in the interim.
- If East Laurel closed on Wednesdays during Farmers' Market, the already poor circulation during that time would be exacerbated by east bound vehicles on Laurel having only one outlet (north onto Franklin). Additionally, Franklin Street between Laurel and Redwood would need to be closed since there would be no egress for northbound vehicles.
- Closing this block entirely would increase traffic in the alley where pavement and sewer lines are already in poor condition which would increase deterioration there.
- An MTA bus stop is located at the north edge of the public parking lot on Laurel Street. The bus route includes a west to east approach on Laurel from Main. With Laurel closed at Franklin, the bus stop would likely have to be moved and the route altered.

A counter suggestion was offered to dedicate just one side of this block to mobile vending, on either the north side or the south side of the street, such as depicted in Figure 2 below. This would prevent having to close the street to through traffic, but still provide space for food trucks parked parallel to the sidewalk as well as a picnic table or two.

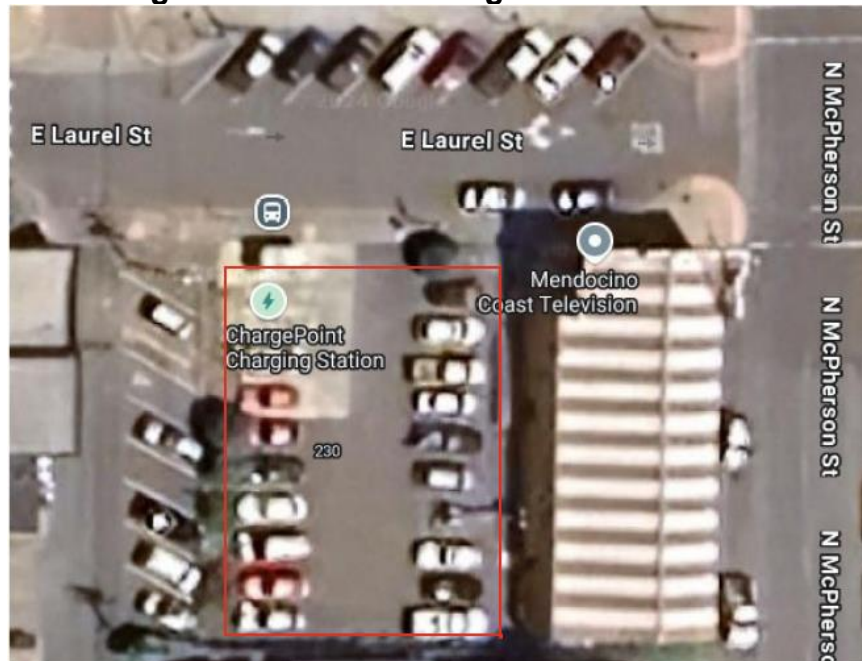
**Figure 2 – E. Laurel South Side of Street**



**East Laurel Public Parking Lot:**

Another option for congregate mobile vending in this general vicinity is to turn the public parking lot on East Laurel Street into a dedicated mobile vending site. See Figure 3 below. This would maintain existing on-street parking and lessen impacts on the alley. It could serve as a gathering space with the addition of picnic tables and umbrellas.

**Figure 3 – Public Parking Lot E. Laurel St.**





**Bainbridge Park:**

The mobile vending option next to Bainbridge park (See Figure 4) suggested at the Planning Commission meeting has since been echoed by others during informal discussions. This seems like a good and natural fit, with existing picnic tables in the park, pleasant grassy areas to enjoy lunch, a library and playground in the immediate vicinity and no other food establishments closeby. But there are challenges related to the zoning and proximity to residences. The Municipal Code currently does not allow food trucks in locations zoned for Parks and Open Space or in residential zones, and this park is surrounded on four sides by residentially zoned neighborhoods. Additionally, per Municipal Code 10.20.155(H)(1)(a)(4), *“The location(s) will not interfere in the quiet enjoyment of residential units located within 300 feet of the proposed location(s).”* Even if food trucks were only allowed on the north side of the park, it would be difficult to meet the 300 ft distance requirement in this area.

**Figure 4 – Bainbridge Park**



**SUMMARY:**

The following section briefly recaps three of the many alternatives along with their strengths and weaknesses:

- 1. Congregate mobile vending site on E. Laurel from the Franklin and Laurel intersection to the west side of alley behind the gym and Tall Guy. Some of the “cons” could be mitigated by limiting mobile vending to the south side of E. Laurel Street.**

PRO'S	CONS
Provides centralized location for mobile vending.	Greater congestion and circulation issues in this busy intersection, especially on Wednesdays.
Removes issues of trucks parking in front of (most) brick and mortar businesses and some of the problems associated with that.	*Several MVV's rely on generators housed in tow vehicles. This increases the needed space and would reduce the number of trucks that could fit in this one location (see note below).

Provides food trucks with proximity to core of downtown.	Removal of several parking spaces in the Central Business District. Limits access to public parking lot on Laurel Street to entry via alley.
With addition of picnic tables and string lights, this area could serve as a pilot "Streatery" and community gathering place.	Staff on the South end of City Hall would be subjected to generator noise and fumes on a daily basis.
	MTA bus route uses Laurel for bus stop at Laurel and McPherson.

\*NOTE: A suggestion was made that to solve the generator issue, food trucks be allowed to plug into existing streetlight outlets. The prospects of this are poor for a variety of reasons, but could be explored further with Public Works/Engineering staff.

## 2. Conversion of public parking lot on E. Laurel St. to mobile vending hub.

PRO'S	CONS
Provides centralized location for mobile vending.	Removes existing parking lot in CBD.
Removes issues of trucks parking in front of (most) brick and mortar businesses and some of the problems associated with that.	Possible impacts to future business at old Footlighters building, i.e. generator noise, etc.
Still provides food trucks with proximity to core of downtown.	City has two EV charging stations in this lot that would need to remain accessible.
With addition of picnic tables and string lights, this area could serve as a community gathering place.	

## 3. Code amendment to allow mobile vending at Bainbridge Park.

PRO'S	CONS
Provides centralized location for mobile vending.	Further from the core of downtown.
Removes issues of trucks parking in front of (most) brick and mortar businesses and some of the problems associated with that.	Requires code amendment to allow mobile vending in this location.
There is already significant community activity here, existing picnic tables and a nice space to eat.	The park is surrounded on four sides by residential zones; where mobile vending is currently prohibited.
There is often plenty of available parking here.	

## **CONCLUSION:**

There may be no perfect existing options for dedicated mobile vending in which all stakeholders are satisfied, yet the City recognizes mobile vending as an important part of a vibrant and flourishing community. Staff seeks greater clarity regarding the wishes of our legislative body in determining the best path forward for mobile vending within the City of Fort Bragg. This will enable us to offer business friendly support to both mobile vending vehicle operators and 'brick and mortar' businesses as well as to potentially create pleasant spaces in which both visitors and members of the community can come together and enjoy great food.

**RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

Discuss and provide direction on whether or not staff should do one or more of the following:

1. Craft an MVV ordinance amendment limiting standalone MVV's in certain areas within the core of downtown, congruent with Planning Commission feedback or other considerations.
2. Pursue creation of a dedicated mobile vending location on East Laurel Street that is closed to vehicular traffic, consistent with Planning Commission and Community Development Committee feedback.
3. Pursue acquisition of one or more vacant lots that could be dedicated to mobile vending and/or to a replacement parking lot.
4. Pursue dedicated mobile vehicle vending sites on the 200 block of East Alder Street at the south end of Purity Market, and/or on both sides of the 400 block of North Franklin Street.

**ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS:**

1. Discuss and provide staff with direction to seek additional information and schedule another meeting and/or public hearing for review.
2. Provide other direction to staff.

**OUTLOOK:**

Should Council recommend an ordinance amendment, staff will draft a revised ordinance incorporating Council discussion and direction. This ordinance will be taken to Planning Commission for a recommendation, and back to City Council for adoption.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Ordinance No. 945-2019

**NOTIFICATION:**

1. "Notify Me" Subscriber Lists: Fort Bragg Downtown Businesses, Economic Development Planning