



Streamlining Food Business Permitting

Health, Housing and Human Services Committee King County Council September 11, 2025

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TOPICS COVERED

- Proviso
- Food Safety Program overview
- Current landscape
- Permitting challenges
- Update on initiatives to reduce barriers



FOOD SAFETY PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Mission: Ensure food safety measures are in place to protect the public from foodborne illness

We accomplish this objective by:



Completing
plan reviews



Conducting
regular
inspections



Providing
food safety
trainings



Responding to
complaints



Taking
enforcement
actions

CURRENT LANDSCAPE

Permitted Vending

- 12,500 permanent food businesses
- ~800 mobile food units
- ~3,500 temporary food permits
- 50 Farmers Markets



Unpermitted Vending

- Increasing trend locally and nationally
- Mainly street food vendors selling cut fruit and food cooked on site
- Limited regulatory enforcement tools
- Increased frustration among permitted street vendors
- Difficult to trace foodborne illnesses
- Increased media/public attention



UNPERMITTED VENDING IS A FOOD SAFETY RISK



Lack of access to plumbed restrooms



No sink/water for handwashing



Lack of temperature controls
(keeping food hot/cold)



Food preparation in
unapproved home kitchens



Unsafe heat sources could cause fire
or explosions



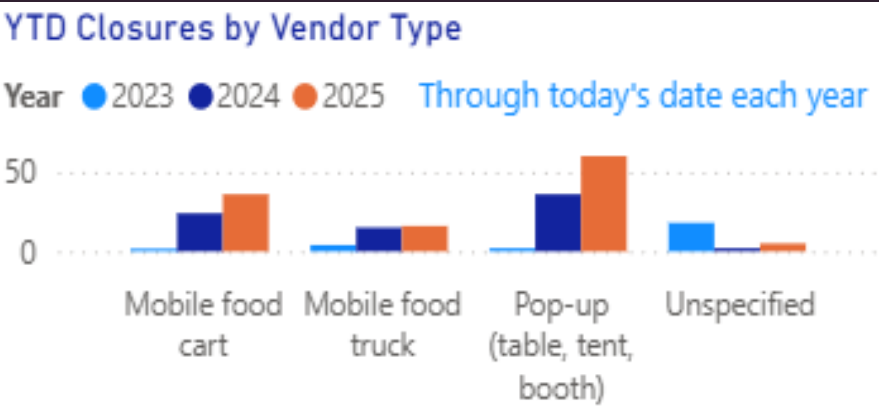
No oversight for excluding ill workers

UNPERMITTED VENDING TRENDS

AS OF 8/22/2025

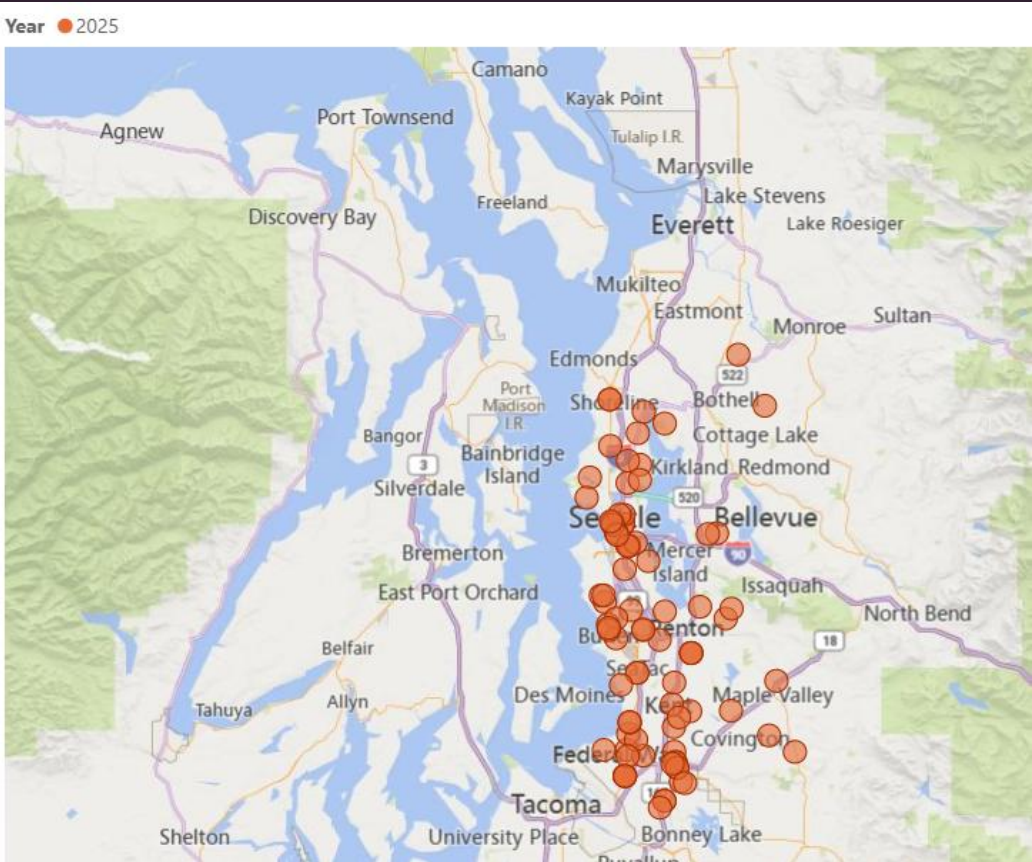
2023

27 closures total



2024

109 closures total



2025

132 closures so far this year

City	2025 Count
AUBURN	8
BELLEVUE	1
BLACK DIAMOND	2
BURIEN	9
Covington	1
DES MOINES	1
FEDERAL WAY	21
KENMORE	1
KENT	5
MAPLE VALLEY	1
RENTON	6
SEATAC	2
SEATTLE	67
SHORELINE	1
TUKWILA	4
WHITE CENTER	1
WOODINVILLE	1
Total	132



FOOD PERMITTING CHALLENGES

KNOWLEDGE GAPS

Difficulty understanding the permitting process

FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

- Cost of obtaining a mobile unit
- Cost of obtaining a permit
- Cost of accessing a commissary kitchen

LIMITED ACCESS TO COMMISSARY

- Limited availability
- Cost of access

LIMITED PERMITTING OPTIONS

Food Code does not allow “pop-up” vending

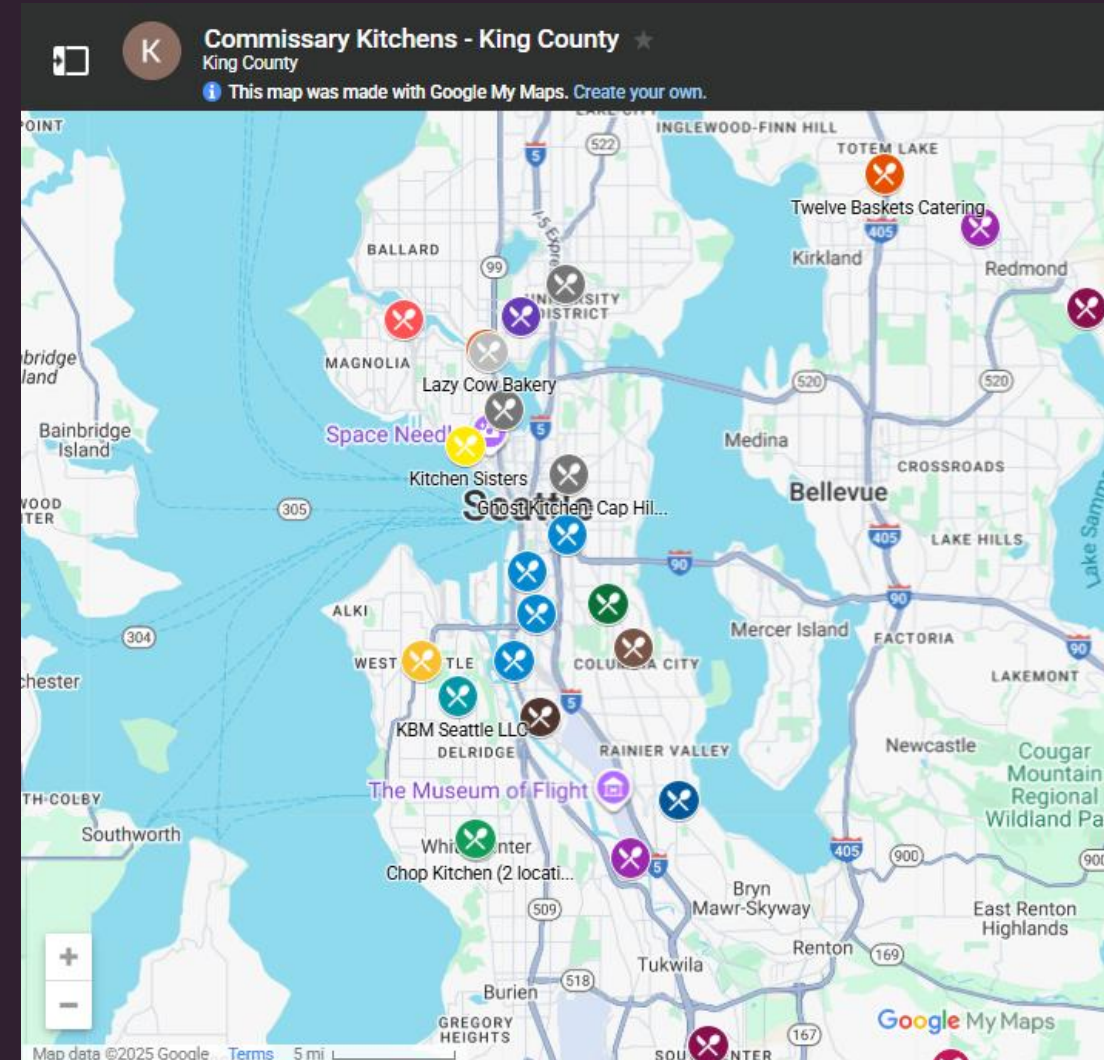
EFFORTS TO CLOSE KNOWLEDGE/INFORMATION GAPS

- Community Based Organizations: EHS contracts with 3 community-based organizations to conduct outreach to street food vendors and help them navigate the permitting process
 - El Centro de la Raza
 - Business Impact Northwest/Growing Contigo
 - Alimentando al Pueblo
- Trained the CBOs (completed July 2025)
- CBOs are now scheduling outreach events and providing 1:1 support to vendors



IMPROVING ACCESS TO COMMISSARY KITCHENS

- Published Request for Applications on June 20th; application period closed August 1st
- 11 organizations selected:
 - 5 commercial commissaries
 - 4 restaurants
 - 2 community organizations
- Currently establishing contracts (October 1st start date); aiming to support 50 new vendors by providing 6-month commissary vouchers
- Will disburse up to \$300k to improve commissary affordability and accessibility
- Will publish an updated database and map of commissary kitchens in September



REDUCING FINANCIAL BARRIERS

- **Reduced Initial Permitting Fee:** Will offer a one-time 50% off plan review and first-year permit fee for new street food vendors with carts selling low-risk foods (e.g., cut fruit, shaved ice)
- Drafted an operational plan
- Next steps: Database changes and staff training
- Will launch fee reduction in November 2025

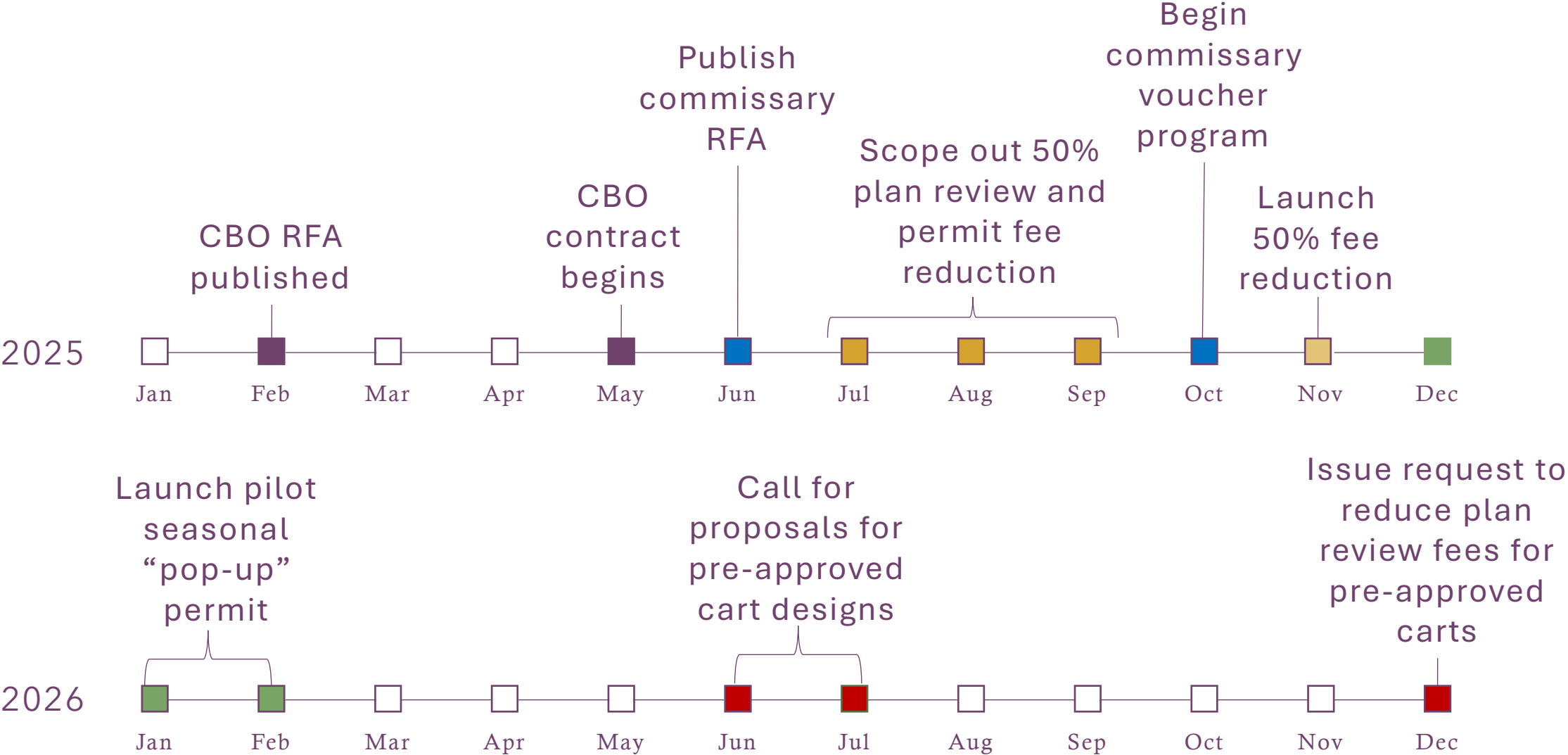


INCREASING PERMITTING OPTIONS

- **Seasonal Pop-up Permit:** Pilot a seasonal pop-up permit for street vendors to sell low-risk foods without having to be at a temporary event/farmers market
- Will begin pilot in Q1 2026
- **Code Review Workgroup:** Established a code revision workgroup in July 2025; may be able to identify additional barriers we can lower



2-YEAR ACTION PLAN





Thank you!