

Policy Proposal- Expand produce merchant and peddler licenses

Fruits and vegetables can be the ideal healthy snack food for people on the go, and sidewalk vendors can be the ideal source for convenient snacks. But Chicago does not allow vendors to sell ready-to-eat produce, and produce vendors are barred from many accessible locations. With a few simple changes to existing produce vendor licenses, Chicago can open up opportunities for vendors to succeed and give Chicagoans access to healthy snacks where they live, shop, and work.

Now

- Produce merchants
 - Can sell only raw, uncut plant products
 - Sell from stands that stay in place all day
 - Must spend at least half their time in areas underserved by grocery stores
 - Apply for one of only 30 sidewalk permits for the whole city
 - Need approval from four separate departments for a sidewalk permit
 - Pay a \$250 license fee
- Peddlers
 - Can sell only raw, uncut produce and no other food
 - Sell from carts or baskets while on the go
 - Are banned from large swaths of the city
 - Pay a \$100 license fee

Problem

Vendors cannot legally sell most ready-to-eat produce and healthy snacks on the sidewalk. Legal produce vendors struggle to survive, because they cannot sell where it is most convenient for customers, and they cannot sell the pre-cut produce that customers want. The boundaries of no-peddling zones are indecipherable and ban produce peddlers from large areas, including areas underserved by grocery stores.

Compare

Oakland created a license to allow *fruteros* to sell cut produce from carts.

Proposal

- Expand produce selection
 - Allow produce vendors to sell pre-cut produce, like mangoes, pineapple, and carrot sticks.
 - Allow produce vendors to sell dried, roasted, or baked produce that is prepackaged and non-perishable, like raisins, apple chips, peanut butter dips, or trail mix.
 - Allow peddlers to sell bottled water.
 - Change the definition of “prepackaged and non-perishable food” to suggest healthy options
- *Expand produce vendors’ reach*
 - Eliminate the cap on public way permits for produce stands.
 - Make public way permits easier to get, especially in underserved neighborhoods.
 - Eliminate no-peddling zones for food peddlers, especially in underserved areas and near schools.

Impact

Chicagoans could buy healthy fruits and vegetables to snack on as they travel to and from school or work or fun. Produce vendors could build successful businesses. Healthy food would be a feature of Chicago’s public spaces. The city would have no additional monitoring to do and could reduce its workload for public way permits.