



August 22, 2022

Long Beach City Council

RE: City of Long Beach Food Truck Regulations (Item R-28)

Dear Mayor Garcia and Honorable Members of the City Council,

A decade-plus ago when food trucks were a novelty and exciting to have in town for an event, it was the type of guaranteed draw to a business district. However, over time, and especially after a tough two years due to COVID, many local businesses have started to complain about food trucks setting up at will (in our district specifically) and competing unfairly with our brick and mortar restaurants. Even more so in business improvement districts who not only pay rent, taxes, insurance, payroll, utilities, but also pay into the assessment of the business district. There are approximately 64 restaurants of all types in our district competing for local consumer dollars and in the post-pandemic world, any unfair competition

Over the last two years, we have seen an increase of food trucks parked and operating all over the city with a proliferation in downtown. However, regularly parked at 46th and Atlantic, a city-owner parking area next to a Bixby Knolls retail center, are anywhere from 5-10 food trucks. (This particular area is also home to the Thursday Harbor Area Farmers Market.) We have seen single trucks parked sometimes next to or across the street from one of our restaurants. The food trucks may be attractive to some as a quick grab-and-go alternative, but they have drawn complaints from local residents about the amount of trash, grease or other stains on sidewalks and streets, and other debris left behind. More importantly are the complaints of BKBIA restaurants asking how these trucks are allowed to operate there on a consistent basis, many of which may not have a Long Beach business license or health permit and follow any type of regulation that brick and mortars are handcuffed by in operating.

Brick and mortar businesses not only had to follow strict health guidelines during the 2020-2021, but still feel the watchful eye of city departments for even the thought of operating outside of their space. Open Streets was a great program to allow more flexibility for restaurants to open with parklet, sidewalk, or parking lot dining, but there is no opportunity for a business to set up on the sidewalk and operate with any flexibility for fear of citation from health department or business licensing. Thusly, businesses can feel threatened or left wondering the "how" and "why" this type of food operation can happen so easily and without any consequence to that operator if

Could/should we see businesses close and operate in reverse by closing their current locations and purchasing a food truck rather than investing in business corridors?



Other issues for consideration:

- Ongoing trash left behind from patrons or the trucks themselves
- A discovery of rodent infestation in areas regularly used by food trucks due to trash and leftover food
- Grease and other stains on sidewalk and streets
- Parking spaces taken
- Where are the operators using the toilet during operating in stand alone areas?
- Are the trucks paying the parking meters? Is there any enforcement for this?
- Is there enforcement for health permits, business licenses, seller's permits?
- Does the city receive any type of sales tax revenue from food trucks?

The BKBIA has often dissuaded its business members from hiring food trucks to park in front of their location, intended to draw foot traffic to the business. Instead, we encourage all of our membership to collaborate and support one another by arranging for catering or food purchases from other BKBIA members.

What are the solutions? As much as we believe in the free market place, we are not in a "normal" type of operating environment and many businesses are still trying to keep their doors open. In addition, businesses are facing an increase in food costs, labor costs, and national inflation.

Business operators who have been under highest of stresses are hyper-sensitive to this issue are looking for possible solutions such as "designated zones or areas" for food trucks to gather (creating a "there" there), increased enforcement from city agencies, and even the possibility of food truck operators paying the assessment to a BID when operating within BID boundaries.

We look forward to continuing this conversation and coming to a positive resolve.

Sincerely,

Blair Cohn
Executive Director