

RESEARCH PROJECTS

ACADEMIC RESEARCH

A number of studies have been made over the last 15 years, documenting the political efforts to regulate street vending in L.A., suggesting future policies, or researching the practice of street vending in Los Angeles. For additional academic studies on street vending and the informal economy, see back.

DRISCOLL, Grace Healey, Ph.D., on the Street: A Study of the Development of Informal Vending Practices. University of Southern California, Ph.D. Thesis, 2001. For more information, please contact: driscolg@usc.edu

CANNON, Eric Carlos, Master Thesis: Street Vending in Los Angeles, 2002. For more information, please contact: eric@ericcannon.com

COMBES, J. Anthony, Master Thesis: The Market and Political Communities, 2001. For more information, please contact: jcombes@ucla.edu

DEAN, Michael, Master Thesis: The Street Vendors of Los Angeles, 1997. For more information, please contact: dean@ucla.edu

SHRILA, Paul, "Street Vending: A Study of the Informal Economy in Los Angeles." Ph.D. Thesis, 2001. For more information, please contact: shrilap@ucla.edu

MAPPING L.A. (L.A.T.T.C.) & SPECIAL SERVICES FOR GROUPS

For the past 10-15 years, L.A. Trade Tech College's Department of Architecture and Environmental Design has been running a program called Mapping L.A., which investigates and documents community empowerment through design and technology.

In collaboration with Special Services for Groups and Latino Urban Forum, Mapping L.A. (L.A.T.T.C.) has been running the project "Custom Mobile Commerce" in collaboration with Special Services for Groups and Latino Urban Forum. The project gathers street vendor stories, by ethnographic research of street vending in East L.A., Lower East Side, and college students from L.A. Trade Tech and Rosemead High School) in conducting interviews, documenting the process and producing the final work. In the framework of this project, Mapping L.A. has been running a summer class at L.A.T.T.C. in 2005 that serves as a part of the urban project. It combined ethnographic research of street vending with GIS mapping and a design proposal. The final project is exhibited at Gallery 722, an art gallery managed by James Rojas in downtown L.A. in December 2005.

L.A. Trade Tech College (L.A.T.T.C.)
1400 West Imperial Blvd. 2
Los Angeles, CA 90005-4028
Phone: (323) 796-7000
Web: www.lattc.edu

LATINO URBAN FORUM

Latino Urban Forum is an activist organization concerned with Latino issues in Los Angeles. It has around 50 members, 30 of which are core members. Their agenda is discussed at weekly meetings.

They are involved with a project "Custom Mobile Commerce" in collaboration with L.A.T.T.C. - Mapping L.A. and Special Services for Groups. The project focuses on gathering stories of street vendors in East L.A., Lower East Side, and college students from L.A. Trade Tech and Rosemead High School) in conducting interviews, documenting the process and producing the final work. The project is exhibited at Gallery 722, an art gallery managed by James Rojas in downtown L.A. in December 2005.

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Web: www.lattc.edu

WHO LEGISLATES?

STATE

STATE OF CALIFORNIA BOARD OF EQUALIZATION

The Board of Equalization issues sales permits. They are generally required in order to "sell or lease merchandise, vehicles, or other tangible personal property in California." This however, allows one to sell or lease items. Many vendors apply for a state sales permit, not realizing the does not at all allow them to sell on the street.

Customer Support
Board of Equalization
1500 North Main Street
Sacramento, CA 95833
Phone: (916) 227-1111
Web: www.sos.ca.gov

L.A. COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

The L.A. County Health Department is responsible for the regulation concerning mobile food carts. This is regulated in the CUPRR, or California Uniform Retail Food Facilities Law (see back of map), which describes the requirements concerning the construction and operation of the vehicles. Each owner is required to have a legitimate cart and a personal permit. For a cart to be legitimate, it needs to be stored at night at a commercial address. It is also needed to be inspected. If it is not marked accordingly with a sticker in L.A. County (which costs \$500), there are regulations approximately 2000 carts, which includes hot cream carts, 2000 trucks, 500 produce vehicles, and 500 ice cream trucks.

The Health Department supplies permits for street vending vehicles for \$200, but does not specify nor control where vendors can take place. Consequently, many vendors - not knowing that such a permit is useless unless they are able to secure a private vending spot - encounter a huge barrier when sales licenses from despite their health permit. The Health Department oversees permits from warning the vendors about this situation.

County of Los Angeles
Department of Health Services
1000 Civic Center Blvd., 10th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90012
Phone: (213) 473-1500
Web: www.lacounty.gov

COUNTY

M.T.A.

The Metropolitan Transport Authority, which runs L.A.'s public transit system, has established a program for vendors in its privately owned property around subway stations. This initiative started in 2004 with a collaboration between Street Vending Association and the M.T.A. The goal of the program was a mix of other opportunities to help vendors and relieving the spaces around M.T.A. subway stations. In 2005, when the program had been fully established, its management shifted from the Planning Department to the Health Department, which is mainly involved with issuing M.T.A. permits for commercial enterprises. The program is now called "Entrepreneurial Program for Start-Up Business."

There is a whole range of requirements for the vendors to enter into the program. The vendors need a current sales permit (which is obtainable from California, State), an L.A. County Health personal permit and sticker for the cart. For vendors who have a food handler's certificate, which one can obtain after training in a certified training school at the expense of the vendor. The vendors also need to obtain a safety training course run by M.T.A. fee of cost. The vendors sign a contract with M.T.A. and pay a yearly administration fee of \$3000. They also need an ID card or driver's license, and an insurance certificate for general liability. Finally, the carts are all inspected by M.T.A. who take into account previous repairs, and they cannot move once assigned.

At present, the start-up fees amount to a total of around \$3000. As a result of the high threshold to enter the program, this initiative is not very successful. In the year 2005, at the time of my research, there were 13 locations at M.T.A. subway stations where vendors were allowed to set up in the morning with their own tables and remove everything at night. M.T.A. provides no utilities.

Current Management
Metropolitan Transportation Authority
1000 North Main Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012
Phone: (213) 922-2223

CITY

L.A. CITY COUNCIL

Before 1990, street vending in Los Angeles was generally outlawed, as stated in Section 42.00 B of the Los Angeles Municipal Code. That year, the L.A. city council passed a landmark ordinance that allowed street vending in certain areas of the city. This ordinance was passed in 1990, and it allowed street vending in certain areas of the city. This ordinance was passed in 1990, and it allowed street vending in certain areas of the city. This ordinance was passed in 1990, and it allowed street vending in certain areas of the city.

Currently, there are two official vending districts, the MacArthur Park district and the San Pedro district. These districts however, are only created in principle, and their operation depends on 1. An organization that is able to manage the district, and 2. The necessary funding source. Currently, none of the two official districts is operational and there are no legal vendors in the city. The city is currently in the process of creating a new vending district, but in reality, it is a lengthy and difficult process which requires several additional funding.

Business Planning
The City of Los Angeles
1000 Civic Center Blvd., 10th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90012
Phone: (213) 473-1500
Web: www.lacounty.gov

L.A. CITY COUNCIL - DISTRICT 1

This district, characterized by a prohibition of street vending and also serving as the home base of the Street Vending Association, has been particularly prominent. In the late 1980s, police and criminal harassment of the vendors instigated efforts to legalize vending. After years of political organization and activism, the city council passed a landmark ordinance in 1990, which allowed street vending in certain areas of the city. This ordinance was passed in 1990, and it allowed street vending in certain areas of the city. This ordinance was passed in 1990, and it allowed street vending in certain areas of the city.

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City Council - District 1
Council Member: Arlene Duncan
1000 Civic Center Blvd., 10th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90012
Phone: (213) 473-1500
Web: www.lacounty.gov

L.A. CITY COUNCIL - DISTRICT 11

District 11 has been involved with governing the public activities on the Venice Beach boardwalk. Street vending on this famous boardwalk is connected to the "free speech zone" that was established there about 30 years ago. The zone is regulated by Section 42.15 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC), which, under pressure from property owners and other interest groups, the city government has attempted to adjust the regulation of these practices. In 2004, a new amendment to the municipal code was made, which tries to discourage unlicensed commercial vending without hampering the area's free speech character (see back of map).

To prohibit commercial vending and avoid "free speech" to be used as a reason for commercial business, the 2004 ordinance prescribes the merchandise that can be sold. Its "ideological message" needs to be inextricably linked to the product itself. The ordinance further regulates vending activities through a bureaucratic lottery system of designated spaces on the boardwalk.

City Council - District 11
Council Member: Robert Spitzer
1000 Civic Center Blvd., 10th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90012
Phone: (213) 473-1500
Web: www.lacounty.gov

L.A. CITY COUNCIL - DISTRICT 11

City Council - District 11
Council Member: Robert Spitzer
1000 Civic Center Blvd., 10th Floor
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STREET VENDING ASSOCIATION

In the late 1980s, street vendors began organizing to legalize their activity in Los Angeles. The only major U.S. city that had outlawed such practices. Due to a rise in Latino American immigration in the 1980s, the street vending in Los Angeles increased, as many immigrants struggled to make a daily living through street vending. Thousands of vendors moved across the city, and many vendors were harassed by police and other enforcement agencies. The Street Vending Association was organized in 1988, and it has since been a major force in advocating for vendors' rights. The group was successful in lobbying the city government to pass an ordinance in 1994, but due to a complex interplay of factors, the ordinance was not fully implemented until 2005. The Southern California Library holds the archive of the association. A limited collection of documents, including press testimonials, reports, articles, clippings, notes, newsletters, financial statements and proposals.

L.A. Address (1996-1999)
1000 Civic Center Blvd., 10th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90012
Phone: (213) 796-7000
Web: www.streetvending.org

WHO ADVOCATES FOR VENDORS' RIGHTS TODAY?

STREET VENDING ASSOCIATION

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Web: www.streetvending.org

PRIVATE COMPANIES OFFERING SERVICES TO VENDORS

COMMISSARIES

Commissaries are commercial enterprises that provide storage space and cleaning services for cart owners. The monthly cost is usually around \$100 to \$200. Some commissaries also provide and sell carts, usually in stainless steel for about \$2000-\$3000. They also usually because it is a legal requirement for cart owners that they store the carts at night and have a storage space. This requirement is regulated and controlled by the L.A. County Health Department. There are about 15 commissaries in L.A. County with a large concentration in Downtown and East L.A. For a list of commissaries in L.A. County, see back of map.

ICE CREAM CART COMPANIES

Ice cream cart companies or "Patisseries" are private companies that rent out ice cream carts on a daily basis. Individuals, usually men who have a weekday job but need to make some extra money, come to take out a cart when they want to, but usually in the weekends, when more families are on the street. They all pre-organized properties that are provided by the company, which buys them in bulk. The vendors return the cart the same day and keep around 40-50% of the money they made. The name, address and contact information of these companies can be found on the actual ice cream carts.

PRIVATE VENDING COMPANIES

On certain parking lots at the entrance of big malls, outdoor food vending is organized by larger companies that have official contracts with the property owner or management. Since this kind of vending takes place on private property, rule enforcement is done by the Department of Building and Safety as well as the L.A. County Health Department.

An example I spotted was at Home Depot on Wilshire Boulevard, where hot dog vending is organized by a company that as a result of its contract with the mall owner or management, has paid around \$1000 to \$2000 monthly rent per location. The company manages each vending cart, which includes a legal license, and operates at 15 different malls in L.A. and O.C. The company has its own commissary.

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NGO'S SUPPORTING IMMIGRANTS

UCLA LABOR CENTER

The UCLA Labor Center has been involved in setting up day labor sites all over Los Angeles, and continues to manage them. Victor Flores, the main organizer of the day labor program, is interested in a legalized organization of street vending, but so far (November 2005) no official support program has been set up.

UCLA Labor Center
1000 University Ave., 10th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90024
Phone: (213) 482-1124 ext. 209
Web: www.ucla.edu

CAREZEN

CAREZEN, or Central American Resource Center, is a non-profit organization, established in 1982. It has been particularly prominent in legal services and advocacy, 2. youth and family education, and 3. civic participation and economic organization. In the early 1990s, it has been involved with the Street Vendor Association and the M.T.A. in their efforts to legalize street vending. Since A.V.A.'s dissolution in 1995, it has ceased its support for the political organization of street vending, while continuing its programs for supporting individual immigrants, including vendors.

CAREZEN
1000 University Ave., 10th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90024
Phone: (213) 482-1124 ext. 209
Web: www.carezen.org

CHIRLA

The Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA) is a non-profit organization, established in 1986. It has been particularly prominent in legal services and advocacy, 2. youth and family education, and 3. civic participation and economic organization. In the early 1990s, it has been involved with the Street Vendor Association and the M.T.A. in their efforts to legalize street vending. Since A.V.A.'s dissolution in 1995, it has ceased its support for the political organization of street vending, while continuing its programs for supporting individual immigrants, including vendors.

CHIRLA
1000 University Ave., 10th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90024
Phone: (213) 482-1124 ext. 209
Web: www.chirla.org

L.A. POLICE DEPARTMENT

For L.A.P.D., street vending is only a minor issue in a multitude of more important tasks, for which it tends to be understaffed. The department is responsible against street vending, but a labor intensive and thus expensive operation. Vendors can only be cited one a time, and the process taking them into custody and holding overnight, is a lengthy one that requires between 4 and 8 hours of police work. Occasionally, however, L.A.P.D. collaborates in pre-emptive enforcement targeting street vending, working together with other city agencies (such as PRCE, L.A. County Health, etc.).

The MacArthur Park area is subject of a focus project by the L.A.P.D. - the "Awarded Corridor Project" - and is selected by the Chief of Police as part of the "Safe City Initiative". This initiative involves the investment of more police forces in the area, and the more intense enforcement of vending regulations.

L.A.P.D. Office of the Chief of Police
100 North Main Street, 10th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90012
Phone: (213) 482-3200
Web: www.lapd.com

L.A.P.D. Report Division
100 North Main Street, 10th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90012
Phone: (213) 482-3200
Web: www.lapd.com

BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS

Business Improvement Districts (e.g. Sunset Strip, Downtown L.A., Fashion District) have their own private security forces, who also enforce on street vending. An example is the Fashion District in downtown L.A., where manufacturing generated a large amount of low-income workers. Because there are very few vendors in the area, it is a popular street vending place. However, since the area has been made into a "BID" zone, there has been considerably more enforcement of street vendors.

WHO ENFORCES?

STREET VENDING ASSOCIATION

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Phone: (213) 796-7000
Web: www.streetvending.org

MACARTHUR PARK

I.U.R.D. - MAMA'S HOT TAMALES

The Institute for Urban Research and Development is the non-profit organization that has been founded by the City Council of Los Angeles. It has been particularly prominent in legal services and advocacy, 2. youth and family education, and 3. civic participation and economic organization. In the early 1990s, it has been involved with the Street Vendor Association and the M.T.A. in their efforts to legalize street vending. Since A.V.A.'s dissolution in 1995, it has ceased its support for the political organization of street vending, while continuing its programs for supporting individual immigrants, including vendors.

I.U.R.D. - MAMA'S HOT TAMALES
1000 University Ave., 10th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90024
Phone: (213) 482-1124 ext. 209
Web: www.iurd.org

MACARTHUR PARK

MacArthur Park is a neighborhood in Los Angeles, California. It is known for its historic architecture, including the MacArthur Park Tower, and its cultural significance. The area has a rich history and is a popular destination for tourists and residents alike.

VENICE BEACH BOARDWALK ASSOCIATION

The Venice Beach Boardwalk Association is a non-profit organization that advocates for the rights of street vendors in Los Angeles. It was founded in 1988 and has since been a major force in advocating for vendors' rights. The group was successful in lobbying the city government to pass an ordinance in 1994, but due to a complex interplay of factors, the ordinance was not fully implemented until 2005. The Southern California Library holds the archive of the association. A limited collection of documents, including press testimonials, reports, articles, clippings, notes, newsletters, financial statements and proposals.

Venice Beach Boardwalk Association
1000 Civic Center Blvd., 10th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90012
Phone: (213) 796-7000
Web: www.vbba.org

IS COMMISSIONED TO MANAGE VENDING BY

IS PROVIDED FUNDING BY

LOBBIES AGAINST VENDING AT

COMMISSIONED TO MANAGE VENDING BY



STREET VENDING IN L.A.

A GRAPHICAL GUIDE TO LOCAL POLITICS AND ORGANIZATION

Street vending is an important part of the everyday landscape of Los Angeles. Over the last 20 years, the city has seen an increasing number of vendors on its streets, largely fueled by Latino immigration. On their daily commute, Angelinos buy fresh seasonal fruit from their carts, at the city's ever-busy intersections. With their eye-catching parasols fruit cart vendors offer royally sized bags of freshly cut fruit, while the city's favorite street food is without doubt the amazing variety of tamales, corn dough pasties with spicy meat filling wrapped in banana leaves. Street vendors in Los Angeles present the best options for a cheap and healthy lunch. On weekends, Angelinos and tourists alike to Venice Beach, to experience the funky atmosphere of the boardwalk, where artists sell their art, political messages, and merchandise. Los Angeles is a thriving city and the ambience of street vending expresses this most vividly.

No legal vending

Yet, up to this day, the city government does not officially allow these activities. Whereas New York has more than 10,000 legal vendors on its streets, Los Angeles - despite 20 years of effort to establish a legal framework regulating vending - still outlaws vending. It is thereby the only major U.S. city to do so. Despite the many attempts over the last decades, by non-profit organizations, activist groups and other advocates, the importance of vending for the city is still not acknowledged. Only in two particular areas of the city, street vending has become a limited model for official urban politics: at MacArthur Park and on the Venice Beach boardwalk.

MacArthur Park

Around MacArthur Park, an area with a large Latino immigrant population, has been particularly prominent. In the late 1980s, police and criminal harassment of the vendors instigated efforts to legalize vending. After years of political organization and activism, the city council passed a landmark ordinance in 1990, which allowed street vending in certain areas of the city. This ordinance was passed in 1990, and it allowed street vending in certain areas of the city. This ordinance was passed in 1990, and it allowed street vending in certain areas of the city.

became to maintain the boardwalk as a free speech zone - well protected by the First Amendment - while discouraging unlicensed commercial vending. This has resulted in a bureaucratic lottery system of designated spaces on the boardwalk (see 2). The Department of Recreation and Parks has been appointed to coordinate this lottery system.

In order to join this lottery system, the vendors are required to purchase a license permit for \$25. Currently more than 600 persons have signed up for a permit. There are 118 spots for general application and an additional 36 reserved for "priority" vendors only. The permits are issued on a weekly basis, and there are separate lotteries for weekday and weekend use. The lottery takes place on Tuesday mornings at 8:30 am, in the presence of the permit holders. The permits are issued on a weekly basis, and there are separate lotteries for weekday and weekend use. The lottery takes place on Tuesday mornings at 8:30 am, in the presence of the permit holders. The permits are issued on a weekly basis, and there are separate lotteries for weekday and weekend use. The lottery takes place on Tuesday mornings at 8:30 am, in the presence of the permit holders.

Change L.A.

The goal of this map is to build networks and to bring together the institutions involved with street vending; to create a platform for discussion that allows us to ultimately change the unfortunate situation of street vending in Los Angeles. Aware of the challenges of regularizing street vending, I advocate for the enormous potential of street

gained some insights into the current situation of street vendors. This map is a way to pass on these insights. As suggested by its title, the intention is to clarify the complicated structure of institutions involved with legislating, enforcing, and supporting street vending. There are a lot of agencies, organizations and institutions that in one way or another operate on the urban practice of street vending, but there is as yet no initiative that deals coherently with all these forces.

vending in Los Angeles, and hope to stimulate recognition of street vending as a valuable asset to urban life. Let us take this opportunity to make Angelinos aware of the importance and joys of street vending for urban life in their city! So that Los Angeles is no longer the only major city in this country that outlaws street vending. So that it can thrive and be proud of itself, its excellent street food and its exciting urban atmosphere!

Project funded by Harvard University, Graduate School of Design. Supervisor: Margaret Crawford, Professor in Urban Design and Planning Theory, Research and Project Management. Many thanks to the Street Vending Association and the M.T.A. for their support and information. I have made every effort to ensure the information contained is correct and up to date at the time of publication. I am very interested in any comments and suggestions you might have about it. Please contact: Margot Gopert by email: margotg@harvard.edu