



METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY

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MAYOR**

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Dear Members of the Metro Traffic and Parking Commission:

I am here today to talk briefly about the issue of sidewalk vending. I want to thank you for launching a process for reviewing and updating Metro's current sidewalk vending regulations. As you undertake that process, I want to share with you what I am hearing from concerned residents, business owners and visitors to Nashville.

As downtown Nashville's foot traffic has multiplied in recent years, so too has the number of sidewalk vendors. Vending has gone from being a marginal convenience to passersby to a substantial blight for both pedestrians and brick-and-mortar businesses.

Sidewalk vendors use public right-of-way to operate their private businesses. Our city's public right-of-way is a precious resource; our downtown sidewalks are used by tens of thousands of people every day. The proliferation of sidewalk vending stands has clogged up our sidewalks, impeding movement of pedestrians.

In conversations with downtown business owners, I have heard repeated complaints about the disruptive effect that vendors have on their businesses. Our public safety professionals have warned about the safety risks posed by multiple propane tanks, generators, and the selling of intoxicants. Residents and visitors alike have decried the sale of items that are less than family friendly.

We have reached a point where sidewalk vending has become a net negative for quality of life and the business landscape in Nashville. We are working on multiple fronts to make Nashville cleaner and safer city, and I need your help to clean up street vending. To fully represent the community, I ask that you slightly increase the size of your working group to include additional stakeholders.

I urge you to extend the zone in which sidewalk vending is prohibited, as well as eliminate the exceptions where vending is currently allowed within that zone. Our police need clear and straightforward regulations to enforce. I am proposing a prohibition of street vending between Union Street and Korean Veterans Boulevard, spanning from the Cumberland River to 8th Avenue. Please also consider enhanced penalties for noncompliance, so that our police are

empowered to address this issue. I encourage you to consider a limited carveout in the new regulations to grant exceptions to nonprofit entities on a case-by-case basis.

As we take action to clean up our downtown, I would also encourage this body to think beyond the boundaries I have spelled out. As our visitor foot traffic expands to other neighborhoods, so too will sidewalk vending. We need a strategy for addressing this concern before it becomes a detriment to neighborhoods like Midtown, the Gulch, 12th South, Wedgewood-Houston, East Nashville, or Germantown.

Sidewalk vending has a disruptive effect on downtown residents, office tenants, business owners and our hospitality industry. We need to clean up this safety and quality of life issue before it gets worse.

Thank you for your tireless work on this issue in service of neighbors across Nashville.

Sincerely,



John Cooper
Mayor