



After Years of Regulatory Uncertainty, Mobile Boutique Owners Receive New Permanent Licenses

New city rules make room for innovative mobile businesses that sell clothes, art, jewelry, and more.



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CHICAGO—Five years ago, Juana Ryan started a mobile art gallery selling her own work and works from other Chicago artists—[StellaLily](#). Her innovative idea, however, did not fit neatly into the city’s regulatory scheme.

After more than a year of confusion about how to operate legally, Juana and other mobile boutiques were eventually provided an emerging business permit in 2016. That temporary state of affairs finally ended with the city issuing the first permanent licenses that finally provide Juana and other entrepreneurs the certainty they need to keep working in the Windy City.

“It has been a very long road to becoming legal in Chicago, but now I can hit the streets with confidence,” said Juana. “I love Chicago and never wanted to go anywhere else, but the frustration of this process was almost too much. I hope that in the future Chicago government will be nimbler when entrepreneurs approach them with bold new ideas.”

Mother-and-daughter business partners Jera and Joslyn Slaughter and their mobile clothing outlet, [Shop the Thrifty Fashionista](#), also received a license. The Slaughters started with a brick and mortar clothing store but were inspired to purchase a truck after seeing news reports about other entrepreneurs taking their business mobile.

“The city is our home, and we’re glad that a permanent license means we can keep working the streets of Chicago,” said Jera. “Our customers love that we can come to them and they’ll be glad to hear that we can continue serving them close to where they work and live.”

The Institute for Justice Clinic on Entrepreneurship at the University Chicago (IJ Clinic) worked closely with mobile boutique owners and other allies to build support: first for the emerging business permit and then for the permanent license.

The IJ Clinic offers free legal assistance to low income entrepreneurs, helping them to navigate the legal and regulatory processes to get their business off the ground.

“The Windy City is full of entrepreneurs with great ideas and we want to encourage city government to make sure entrepreneurs are free to launch their businesses in Chicago,” said IJ Clinic Director Beth Gregor.

“The emerging business permit offers some flexibility and should be used temporarily, but we hope that the city can then move quickly to establish the regulatory stability that can help good ideas thrive.”