O'Hare Concessions (ORDer Up!): Analysis of the Latest Update

Public information as of October 28, 2026 | gotbconsulting.com

Source: Crain's Chicago Business, "O'Hare's massive restaurant and retail shake-up nears decision time" (Oct. 27, 2026).

Labels: *Verified* = from a public source listed at the end. *Estimate* = our own math or read. *Unverified* = not confirmed by any public source.

1. Bottom line

- Awards for the O'Hare Terminal 1 and Terminal 3 restaurant and retail program are close, but no winners are public yet.
- The City says contracts could reach City Council in 30 to 45 days.
- **Estimate:** that points to about Nov. 26 to Dec. 12. The most likely full Council meeting in that window is Dec. 9. The Council date is our estimate, not a posted date.
- This schedule has slipped before. Plan for more slippage.

2. What changed

- On Oct. 27, Aviation Commissioner Mike McMurray told aldermen at the budget hearing he expects the consultant team's award recommendations "any day." *(Verified, Crain's)*
- After that, the Department of Aviation negotiates contracts. It hopes to send them to Council within 30 to 45 days. *(Verified, Crain's)*
- **Estimate:** 30 to 45 days from Oct. 27-28 lands about Nov. 26 to Dec. 12, 2026.
- The Council has a full meeting posted for Dec. 9, 2026. That falls in the window. *(Verified, Councilmatic)*
- We did not find a regular November full-Council date. There is a Nov. 2 special meeting, but it is on an unrelated pension item.
- Treat Dec. 9 as the most likely target. It is an estimate, not a commitment.
- Earlier slip: in Feb. 2026 the City expected to start awarding by the end of March. That did not happen. *(Verified, Crain's via LinkedIn)*

3. How big is this

- The solicitation covered 21 packages: 13 food and beverage, 7 retail, 1 duty free. Terminals 1 and 3. *(Verified, flychicago.com)*
- The City's 2024 release counted 112 locations and 146,000+ square feet. Crain's now says 110.
- We use **about 110 locations** until the City confirms a final count.
- Proposals: 167. That is about 8 per package. *(Estimate: a simple average. Real counts vary by package, and some bidders likely filed on several packages.)*
- HMSHost and Hudson held the previous contracts. Splitting the work into 21 packages could mean more new and smaller airport operators, and more joint ventures, all mobilizing at once. *(Estimate)*

- Set-asides in the City's release: 10% of space reserved for small businesses, and a 32% ACDBE target on covered packages. The largest packages carry an incubator commitment at four locations. *(Verified)*
- Who is scoring: per McMurray, a law firm, Unison Consulting, and committees of local and outside experts. Unison holds the Aviation Department's concessions-management contract through 3/31/2028. *(Verified)*
- Council attention: Ald. Beale (9th) called the program "very lucrative" and said he is "just trying to make sure there's no outside influence." *(Verified, Crain's)*
- Timing after award: the City has said new concessions could open in phases starting in 2027. *(Verified)*

4. What to watch next

1. The award announcement, with names by package. Not public as of Oct. 28.
2. Council Aviation Committee agenda. It met Oct. 13 on other concession items.
3. The full-Council agenda for Dec. 8-9. Ordinances usually post on the City Clerk's calendar before the meeting.
4. Protests or challenges from losing bidders. We found no public report of any. *(Unverified)*
5. Negotiation outcomes: rent terms, capital investment, phasing, and any changes to ACDBE partners.
6. ACDBE detail. The only public figure we verified is the 32% target. We did not find package-level ACDBE commitments for the selected teams. At the Oct. 2025 budget hearing, aldermen asked about ACDBE recertification and whether ACDBE partners on pending proposals could be removed. We did not review the answers.

5. Sources

- Crain's Chicago Business, Oct. 27, 2026
- City of Chicago release (2024): https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/mayor/press_room/press_releases/2024/september/ConcessionsBidsOHare.html
- ORDer Up! program page: https://www.flychicago.com/ORDerUp/
- City Council calendar: https://chicago.councilmatic.org/event/city-council-057a3d24c1a2/
- Aviation Committee, Oct. 13: https://www.muyni.com/meetings/chicago-il-committee-on-aviation-2026-10-13
- Unison contract record: https://webapps1.chicago.gov/vcsearch/city/contracts/221178
- Feb. 2026 schedule (Crain's via LinkedIn): https://www.linkedin.com/posts/crainsdetroit_chicago-received-more-than-100-bids-for-concessions-activity-7426354793872273408-E796
- Oct. 2025 budget hearing index: https://www.chicagopolitics.org/meeting/2901D28F-C69F-F011-B4CB-001DD8001AAF?t=10420

This analysis reflects public information as of Oct. 28, 2026. It is not legal advice. Dates for Council action are estimates until the City posts an agenda.