

Policy overview and recommendations for City of Toronto support for farmers' markets

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Introduction

As a working group of neighbourhood-based farmers markets in Toronto Parks we are striving to support local farmers, increase access for city residents to healthy food, and enhance our communities. Farmers' markets in the city have been successful with varying rules and relationships with Parks & Recreation staff. As outlined in the City of Toronto's Food and Hunger Action Committee Report *Tending the Garden* (2003) the city's support for farmers markets requires a revised strategy that is adapted to the diversity of both public spaces and community needs.

We seek to bring our collective experience to the process of developing a policy that works for farmers and communities. With the reality of climate change and the increasing interest in environmentally responsible initiatives for cities, farmers' markets in Toronto, and across North America, are entering an exciting time of growth and experimentation. In order to create a sustainable food system for everyone, Toronto should encourage different market models and visions that reflect the diversity of our city.

POLICY OVERVIEW

The benefits of farmers' markets

Farmers' markets across Toronto are bringing fresh, local seasonal food to the city. Markets are a hive of activity. Neighbours say hello, swap recipes and gardening tips. Kids bite into the season's first strawberries. And farmers introduce you to new tastes you won't find in the supermarket.

Reduced food miles (the distance food travels from farm to plate) contribute to a healthier environment. Local businesses benefit as more people shop in the vicinity of the market on market days. Farmers benefit as markets provide a direct sales outlet which helps to preserve our farmland.

Markets bring people of diverse cultures together and become community gathering places. They are places for education about healthy eating and encourage increased fruit and vegetable consumption. Markets enhance quality of life (the organizer of the Weston Farmers Market shared stories of customers who moved to the area to be close to the market). Markets encourage greater physical activity since most draw a substantial amount of their customers from within walking distance. Farmers' markets can also incubate small businesses and contribute to economic development in a neighbourhood.

Farmers' markets contribute to the goals outlined in *Our Common Ground* (2004), the strategic vision for City of Toronto Parks and Recreation; to maximize their effectiveness they also require support. City support should include policy that supports farmers' markets in parks. These policies should not define the specifics of market operation and vendor mix, but instead focus on supporting farmers' markets as vibrant public spaces where communities can come together in a friendly, social atmosphere and access fresh, healthy food.

Financial Implications

Full support of parks-based markets would have minimal financial implications for the City of Toronto. The most significant on-going support would be to have on-site Parks or Recreation staff available to unlock washrooms and storage facilities and to ensure access to power as well as being available to troubleshoot alongside the market manager/market organizers. Individual markets may require one-time improvements to lighting or increased numbers of recycling and compost receptacles or benches. We estimate that markets requiring the most support would cost the city a maximum of \$2500 annually or an average of \$50 a week per market. Full partnerships with market organizers will give Toronto Parks and Recreation free neighbourhood-specific publicity as well as fostering relationships between diverse community members and the city facilities designed to serve them.

Successful farmers' markets are community-driven

Each farmers' market needs to be developed in consultation with the community it serves. This has been done successfully in various ways: collecting signatures, organizing one-time markets and noting how they are received, announcing the topic in community newsletters and posting notices with contact information, or simply holding a running conversation with park users to gauge support.

Market organizers will communicate regularly and work in partnership with local Parks and Recreation staff and the City Councillor for the area. Other stakeholders in the community will also be informed about the market during its planning stages.

Ongoing and open communication determines any modifications necessary to the market operating regulations so that the market best meets the needs of the community. Markets should apply to the Parks department using a standardized form that includes information on the market vision and management details.

Defining a farmers' market

Each farmers' market should be a unique combination of farmers and other vendors that best meet the needs of the community, including diverse multicultural groups. Some markets will want only organic produce to be sold. Others will want a mixture of farmers selling produce, meats, cheeses and flowers along with small city-based food businesses selling prepared foods, and other vendors selling handmade crafts. While most markets will be seasonal, some will operate year-round. Where there is a local link, fair-trade connections to global farmers may also be an appropriate part of a market for products such as coffee which cannot be grown locally.

Also broad is the category of who should be considered a farmer. For example, around the world urban agriculture is producing healthy food in community gardens, on rooftops and abandoned lots – many consider these growers farmers. Or how should foragers

who harvest wild foods (such as fiddleheads, mushrooms and greens) be categorized? Policy thus should not define a farmer or percentage of “farmers” that constitutes a real farmers’ market but instead allow each individual market the flexibility to define food producers, both primary and secondary, urban and rural, who can participate.

Guidelines and operating rules and regulations are attached which provide examples of possible market models.

Food safety

A positive relationship with our Public Health department is an asset to all markets. Toronto Public Health has developed guidelines that outline standards for safe handling for all types of food (fruits, vegetables, meat products, prepared foods), and Health Units are currently offering “Food Safety Matters” presentations to ensure that market vendors are well-educated about all food safety issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CITY FARMERS’ MARKET GUIDELINES

a. Requirements of permit applicants:

- 1) The desired date, time and location for the market
- 2) A viable vendor list (which could include anything from a list of twenty potential vendors to a plan for a good food market)
- 3) A contact person
- 4) Community support - The permit applicant needs to have determined that there is community support for the market before applying for a permit. This has been done successfully in various ways: collecting signatures, organizing one-time markets and noting how they are received, announcing the topic in community newsletters and posting notices with contact information or simply holding a running conversation with park users to gauge support.
- 5) A clear request stating what will be required from the city (for example access to electricity, washrooms, storage space for market signs and extra vendor tables, indoor space for a year-round market, staff support).

Please note that requirements 2 and 4 only apply to permit applications for new markets.

b. Suggestions to permit applicants:

- 1) To contact those involved with other markets in the city (contacts provided with this form) for help and advice.

- 2) To contact their local public health official and familiarize themselves with public health requirements for markets.
- 3) As an act of courtesy, to inform the local BIA and any existing markets in their own as well as adjoining wards of their intention to start a new market.

c. City contributions to Farmers' Markets

Based on the city's stated intention to foster food access and community engagement through markets.

- 1) Partnership permits (ideally a three way partnership with local Parks, Recreation and market manager/group starting a new market)
- 2) Neighbourhood markets holding partnership permits should be included in the city's insurance coverage
- 3) Parks and/or Recreation commit to providing the market with access to: power, washrooms and running water, benches, picnic tables, mats to throw over extension cords, alterations to lighting, garbage, recycling, compost, and all necessary on-site storage and staff support that they are reasonably able to provide.
- 4) To provide recycling and compost facilities easily accessible to the market (generally markets do not generate significant quantities of garbage)
- 5) To collaborate with all departments to ensure parking for market vendors and enable viable parking for customers (neighbourhood markets do not generally require extensive parking for customers - most people get there through other means). If parking for vendors on Parks property is advisable, restrictions to parking on turf should only apply during specific weather conditions (for example, the city's special events permit restricts vehicles in parks only during poor or wet conditions).

d. Market guidelines

Market guidelines should reflect the particular needs of the community and the farmers involved. Some markets will want only organic produce to be sold. Others will want a mixture of farmers selling produce, meats, cheeses and flowers along with small city-based food businesses selling prepared foods, and other vendors selling handmade soaps or other crafts.

Please see the appendix for a sampling of existing guidelines that have worked well, which provide some possible models.

While the guidelines must be appropriate for the particular needs of the farmers and the

community involved with each market, there are two requirements of all farmers' markets:

- 1) Farmers' market vendors who sell non food items like soaps, seedlings, crafts etc, must self-produce what they are selling.
- 2) Transparency: Farmers' Markets must provide information to customers, if asked, about the geographical origin of products, the labour practices involved, and any type of certification that may apply (eg/ organic, greenbelt, free range, grain fed, grass fed, wild, local, foreign, fair trade). The market manager may choose to post this information or share it as part of a Market News distribution and vendors or market managers may choose to include this information at the stands.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CITY PROCESS RELATING TO FARMERS' MARKETS

Changes to policy and protocol that concern farmers' markets should be developed in collaboration with existing farmers' market organizers, farmers, and Parks and Recreation and other pertinent departments or groups. This collaboration should encompass the entire process, not just the final consultation. When developing policy, it is important to include the people who have the most demonstrated experience on the subject.

APPENDIX: SAMPLE FARMERS' MARKET GUIDELINES

The following guidelines may be revised for the 2007 outdoor season.

i). Riverdale Farm Farmers' Market (2006)

Rules and Regulations -2006

1. Location The Riverdale Farmers' Market is Located in Riverdale Park East flanking the pathway directly west of Simpson House.
2. Hours In the year 2006 the Market will be open from 3:00 PM to 7:00 PM each Tuesday (May 9th to October 31st). Vendors may enter the park for setup at 2:00. Vehicles are not permitted in Riverdale Park. Vendors must arrive on time to ensure that their stall is open for business promptly at 3:00. Vendors must not sell before 3:00. Stalls must remain open until 7:00 PM unless sold out.
3. Application and Selection Process Participation in the Riverdale Farmers' Market is by Invitation of the Manager. The Market is producer-based; therefore, only applicants offering goods for sale which they have produced themselves will be considered. Absolutely no resellers or peddlers will be allowed in the Market. However a producer may sell additional produce grown by a relative, a neighbour farmer or an approved association. The additional produce will be limited to 25% of the vendor's product line. The intent of this exception is to increase the diversity of fresh produce offered to the customers. Absolutely no terminal purchases or imported produce will be allowed. The Market Management will visit the farms and businesses of vendors.

All vendors must have an application form on file with the Farmers' Market Manager to be considered for space rental. Seasonal and other long term vendors should have their applications and fees (cheques) to 327 Carlton Street at first market (See fee schedule below). Vendors are to provide their own tables and shelter. Preference will be given to current long term vendors.

All products being sold in the Market will comply with applicable Provincial and Federal regulations regarding labelling, measuring, safety etc. Compliance with these regulations is the responsibility of the individual donor. If you are a small manufacturer, to avoid complications when the Health Inspector calls please provide proof of health department inspected premises when application is submitted.

Producers shall sell only high quality, wholesome products at the market. Live animals cannot be sold at the Market.

In the year 2006 the Market Manager or her designate shall allocate vendor space as follows:

- Renewing seasonal vendors have first choice of the space they would

prefer.

- New seasonal vendors have second choice of the remaining spaces.
- Monthly vendors have third choice of the remaining spaces.
- The Manager will assign daily vendors on a first come basis.
- The final stall allocation will include an appropriate product mix and will be at the discretion of the manager.

Non profit organizations may be allocated one stall space for the purpose of fundraising or publicity. The organization might be limited to one yearly space allocation. The manager must approve all requests.

4. Fee Schedule Any fees collected by the Market are for the purpose of promoting and operating the Farmers' Market. All cheques are to be made payable to The Friends of Riverdale Farm. NSF cheques will be charged an administration fee of \$25.00.

The yearly membership fee will be \$25.00 and must be paid prior to setting up at the market. The following fees apply to a space with a 10 foot frontage.

The market fees for 2006 are \$25 per market or \$500 per season

The seasonal market fees may be paid in 2 instalments May 9th and August 1st

5. Participation in the Riverdale Farmers' Market is by Invitation of the Manager

Vendor Requirements

- A vendor must be familiar with the rules and regulations of the Riverdale Farm Farmers= Market and must comply with them fully.
- Prior to the first Market day vendors will supply the Market Manager with a list of items they will sell. (See application form)
- Vendors will post their names, farm location and products prominently on their stalls. Vendors are encouraged to personalize their stalls with stories and pictures and to share their farming background with their customers.
- Vendors must agree to bring an adequate supply of their primary product.
- Vendors agree to make their stall and products as attractive and as pleasing to the eye as they can.
- Vendors will adhere to the highest standards of quality, service and business.

- Subletting stalls is not permitted.
- Vendors shall honour Riverdale Farm Farmers' Market promotions, e.g. basket raffles, cooking demos and sampling programmes.
- Vendors agree not to practice distress pricing.
- Vendors shall maintain their stalls in a neat, clean and orderly fashion. Vendors must keep their own refuse in a suitable container at their stall and remove the refuse when they leave. Park garbage containers are for the use of the customers only.
- Smoking is not permitted at any vendors stall.
- All vendors must comply with the requirements set by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and local Health Units (labelling produce by type, quantity and price, cooling, sanitation, etc.)(This means that if you sell prepared food, you must show documentation as to the location of the kitchen the food was prepared in and it's Health Department inspection. Meat sellers must have documentation on the abattoir in which the animals were slaughtered.)
- Vendors are responsible for obtaining all necessary licenses, permits, inspections and certificates for the sale of their product.
- Compliance with both Provincial and Federal Sales Tax is the responsibility of the vendor.
- The Riverdale Farm Farmers' Market strives to be an Organic Market. All Vendors must be certified organic or in transition with the following exceptions: Farmers who participated in the first market season. Farmers who raise meat or poultry as part of their agricultural management system may sell them if they are free range and with minimum medication. Crops where the availability of organic product is limited. All produce must be clearly labelled.

Vendors who repeatedly violate any of these rules and regulations shall be informed in writing that their membership is under review and could be revoked. These are the rules established for 2006. There may need to be modifications in the year 2006. The market Management reserves the right to reassign stall locations based on the increase in vendors in the 2006 season to achieve the most appropriate product mix. The Farmers= Market Manager shall deal with any item of business not specifically covered by these rules.

Riverdale Market will be in its sixth season in 2006.

ii) Dufferin Grove Farmers' Market Guidelines (2006)

The market runs year-round.

It is a priority of the market to create direct links between the producers and consumers of local organic food. Therefore:

Vendors have to produce the majority of what they sell.

Products must be organic or it must be clear to customers that they are not organic (and with a good reason).

To support these requirements, vendors must be willing and able to verify the sources of their products and their production methods. This means that market managers or their representatives must be allowed access to the place a vendor's goods are produced, as well as to documents indicating the source of goods purchased for resale at the market. All reasonable efforts will be made to ensure that visits to farms/kitchens/workshops, etc. are arranged at times mutually agreed upon by the market organizers and the vendors involved.

For farmers, during the Ontario growing season, no more than 30% of a vendor's produce can come from other than their own farm (or land directly under their management).

Grower-priority: When a farmer has home-grown produce to sell, other vendors are not permitted to sell the same produce if they have not grown it unless they have the consent of the farmer who has brought home-grown. Direct communication between vendors is encouraged on an ongoing basis; whenever possible, a week ahead. Market organizers may also be asked to assist in ensuring that grower-vendors get priority.

Only those growers who meet this requirement to sell mainly their own products in season can import out of season.

As a small market, we try to avoid destructive competition. This means that vendors may be asked not to sell goods that are another vendor's mainstay. When two or more vendors wish to sell the same product, there should be direct discussion with the market manager or each other about whether this is acceptable to all, in advance so that vendors can plan accordingly.

All vendors must comply with the requirements of the Public Health Department.

A limited category of products that cannot be grown in Canada will be considered for sale at the market. Such products will only be considered if the vendor has substantial input in their preparation/creation. Wild foods will also be considered.

GMO [*Genetically Modified Organism*] ingredients in prepared foods are unacceptable.

Sales are not permitted before 2:30, in order that all vendors have reasonable set-up time.

Craft vendors are not eligible for participation in the market, but some crafts may be included where they are part of a vendor's production.

A demonstrated willingness on the part of all market participants to work cooperatively and resolve issues as they arise is essential.

All vendors must provide market management with full contact information, including mailing address, email (if used) and telephone number. Any changes in this information should be kept updated. In addition, we request that all vendors submit information for inclusion on the vendors list and notebook of the market web pages.

Certified organic vendors are asked to provide a copy of their certification papers to be kept on file.

Failure to comply with the above guidelines may result in market management requiring a vendor to withdraw from the market. The market managers reserve the right to decide who is admitted to the market as a vendor, and to refuse access to the market when a vendor has failed to comply with market guidelines.

We ask that all vendors read these guidelines carefully, sign and return a copy to the market manager as an indication of their willingness to work within them.

iii). Good Food Markets

Even though markets are popping up around the city, many communities do not have easy access to fresh, healthy food. And given the enormous cultural diversity of Toronto we also need to find a place for imported cultural foods that cannot be grown in Canada in order to make markets attractive to newcomers and immigrants. FoodShare has been funded by the City's Food Security Investment Program to pilot and develop innovative fresh food access projects through the Food Animators Project – one example are Good Food Markets.

Small, sometimes no more than a single stand. Good Food Markets start off as seasonal projects operating outside with some markets finding an indoor location and continuing all year

The goals are to sell high-quality, affordable fruits and vegetables and create public space. The markets feature seasonal, local produce that FoodShare purchases from local farmers and from the Ontario Food Terminal.

FoodShare works in partnership with community organizations to run Good Food Markets. The produce is delivered to local community organizations who are trained and supported to run the markets.

A network of Good Food Markets is being created to share resources, successes and challenges amongst community partners

iv). St Lawrence North Farmers Market

The following is an excerpt from the St. Lawrence Farmers Market Operating Regulations that outline the three vendor categories:

Category A is for farmers selling what they have produced (at least 70% in the growing season June through November, and at least 30% during the off season December through May). The criteria are:

- a) Grows or raises the product to be ordered for sale at the market for a minimum of 30 days; and
- b) The land and/or the facility used for producing the crop is owned and/or rents in the applicants name. The rental of the land must be a direct land owner/permit applicant transaction; and
- c) The size of the land and/or facility must be large enough to produce the required quantity of goods offered for sale at the market during the growing season; and
- d) The primary function of the land and/or facility must be farming.

Once a permit has been issued for a vendor in Category A the permit holder must meet and maintain certain tenancy requirements set down by the Application Review Committee; namely;

- a) 70% of the volume of goods offered for sale at the Market during the growing season (June through November) must be grown, raised or produced by the permit holder; and
- b) 30% of the volume of goods offered for sale at the Market during the off season (December through May) must be grown, raised or produced by the permit holder; and
- c) to retain Category A status in the off season the stallholder will only be permitted to sell those products that are grown in Ontario during the “growing season”. (The year is split into two seasons, the “growing season” which is June through November and the “off season” which is December through May) and;
- d) Imported products will be excluded during their equivalent Ontario growing season, unless the stallholder makes an application to the Application Review Committee for an exception due to crop destruction.

Category B applies to farmers or processors need to meet all of the eligibility for category A with the exception of the requirement that 70% of good sold must be self-

produced; AND purchase raw materials for further processing resulting in a product offered for sale at the market; AND own and/or rent a piece of land or workshop large enough to accommodate the processing of the quantity of goods sold at the market.

Category C applies to vendors who purchase goods and offer them for sale at the market without any further processing (must be complementary to category A vendors).
NOTE: In the 2005 St Lawrence Market North Farmers Market vendor list there were no category C vendors.