



# Farmers Market Sustainability — Obstacles and Strategies

---

A CONTRACT PROJECT FOR THE CITY OF SEATTLE



## CONTENTS

Executive Summary: Local Government Strategies to Support Farmers Markets .....	i
Introduction.....	1
Background + Project Rationale .....	1
Farmers Markets in Seattle.....	1
Why Support Farmers Markets?.....	2
Report Contents.....	2
Methodology .....	3
Process + Communication .....	3
Development of Key Deliverables.....	3
Current Farmers Market Policies in Seattle.....	4
Obstacles to Farmers Market Viability in Seattle .....	6
Strategies to Address Obstacles .....	8
Identifying Strategies to Address Obstacles .....	8
Discussion of Strategies .....	10
Best Practices Research .....	16
Conclusion .....	19
Appendices .....	19

## ACRONYM LIST

FAS	Seattle Department of Finance and Administrative Services
HSD	Seattle Human Services Department
DoN	Seattle Department of Neighborhoods
OED	Seattle Office of Economic Development
OSE	Seattle Office of Sustainability and Environment
Parks	Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation
DPD	Seattle Department of Planning and Development
PHSKC	Public Health – Seattle & King County
PSRC	Puget Sound Regional Council
SDOT	Seattle Department of Transportation
SPU	Seattle Public Utilities
WSLCB	Washington State Liquor Control Board





## Local Government Strategies to Support Farmers Markets

Through the work of organizers, civic leaders, local advocates and businesses, farmers and loyal shoppers, farmers markets have become important features of neighborhoods in the central Puget Sound region. Rooted in their communities, nearly 75 percent of Washington State farmers markets are private, non-profit entities created to support farmers and improve residents' access to fresh farm produce. Mirroring national trends, the number of farmers markets in Washington State has grown to over 160 unique farmers markets in nearly every county. In addition to the estimated annual vendor sales of \$50 million state-wide<sup>1</sup>, today's farmers markets foster wide-ranging public economic, agricultural, environmental, health, and social benefits.

### Farmers markets:

- Enable area residents to buy fresh-picked, fruits, vegetables, nuts, herbs, honey, meat, eggs and other products directly from Washington farms, enhancing their access to healthy foods.
- Educate shoppers about where farm products come from, how they are grown, and how to prepare them, building linkages between agricultural communities and urban and suburban residents.
- Provide sales that are critical to the sustainability of small-scale, diversified farm businesses and farmland, especially for women, immigrant, and beginning farmers.
- Establish a local market for products grown with environmentally-sound practices as well as limiting packaging, food waste, and food miles.
- Enliven downtown streetscapes and re-create vital commercial districts.
- Create community-gathering public spaces that enhance the social and economic fabric of communities.

## Challenges for Farmers Markets

The central Puget Sound region has seen the growth of markets over the last ten years, but farmers markets experience a range of challenges. Each year, farmers markets open as well as close. It's important for even established farmers markets to have public engagement and support if they are to realize fully their potential benefits to the public.

The support of local governments, public agencies, and tribes has been important in establishing farmers markets – 60 percent of farmers markets in the region operate on land owned by a city, transit agency or tribe. Stable locations and long-term financial stability for market operations are common barriers to long-term success. In 2010, 21 percent of farmers markets in the central Puget Sound region reported challenges with location, including having to move the market and other location challenges such as construction, parking, and finding a permanent site. Local governments can have a range of roles in supporting farmers market operations in their communities, including issues related to siting.

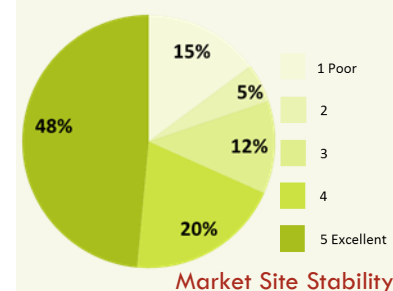
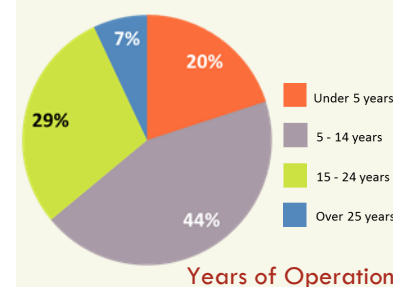
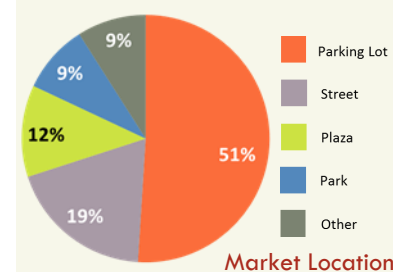
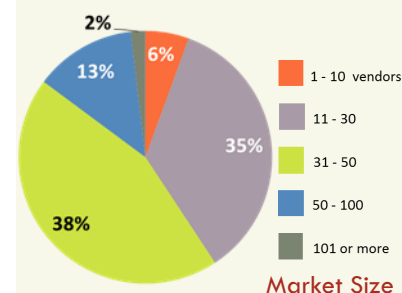
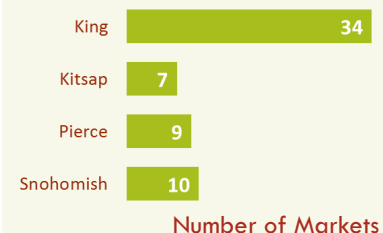
## A Range of Options to Support Farmers Markets

**Identify farmers markets as allowable uses.** Jurisdictions can make the process of siting farmers markets easier by identifying farmers markets as allowable uses in appropriate zones. This also presents an opportunity to create a robust definition of a farmers market (see sidebar).

**Provide clear guidance on how markets can locate on public land and start in your community.** Clarity on how to establish a farmers market on public land can make it easier to launch. For example, the USDA and GSA developed a report in 2009 addressing how to [locate farmers markets on federal property](#).

## Central Puget Sound 2013 Farmers Market Data Highlights

Sales	\$26,609,000
Vendors	3,163
Farm Vendors	1,362
Food Assistance Benefit Sales <sup>2</sup>	\$654,100
Donated Produce	123,965 lb



Source: Summary Report: Farmers Markets and The Experiences of Market Managers in Washington State (Washington State University, 2013); Washington State Farmers Market Association

**Plan for existing and new markets in development of property in prime market locations.** Farmers markets hosted in areas with strong development markets are at risk of displacement from redevelopment. Jurisdictions could encourage developer agreements that plan to accommodate existing markets.

**Communication and coordination between markets and city departments.** Given the unique role of farmers markets, communication between relevant county or municipal departments and market managers is vital to serving markets. Regular meetings, as well as establishing clear points of contact, can help build relationships and communication to support markets.

**Support a range of market sizes.** A large weekly farmers market may not be financially viable in all communities. Smaller markets, featuring fewer than 10 vendors, can help fulfill goals of community food access while providing more flexibility in siting and operations. Given the limited profitability of very small markets, appropriately scaled fees and permitting processes are important for allowing small markets to successfully locate.

**Provide financial support or sponsorship of markets.** Some jurisdictions, like the City of Seattle, have provided financial support in order to help build organizational capacity of independent farmers market organizations. Several jurisdictions and public entities like the Port of Tacoma have sponsored local markets as well.

**On market day, prep market sites.** For markets sited on public land, like parks and streets, several jurisdictions assist markets by clearing the space or enforcing parking restrictions before market set-up.

**Plan for existing and new markets in development of property in prime market locations.** Farmers markets hosted in areas with strong development markets are at risk of displacement from redevelopment. Jurisdictions could encourage developer agreements that plan to accommodate existing markets.

**Develop long-range strategy for market siting to identify what role the jurisdiction or agency wants to play.** Many farmers markets are operated by private non-profit organizations, but jurisdictions often interact with markets on permitting assistance, helping to secure locations, sponsoring markets or siting farmers markets. Developing a strategy in conjunction with farmers markets operators that considers long-term locations and facilities can help use city resources wisely.

**Support farmers market food assistance programs.** Some jurisdictions have launched programs that increase or match food assistance benefits used to purchase fresh food at farmers markets. These programs have been effective in both serving low-income customers and encouraging shopping at farmers markets. [Fresh Bucks](#), [Health Bucks](#), [Double Up Food Bucks](#), and [Market Bucks](#) are a few examples. Funding for such programs has come from a variety of sources, including city and county-managed funds.

**Partner on permanent space for markets.** Numerous cities across the country have partnered with farmers markets on providing permanent pavilion space. Jurisdictions can benefit from having markets as an anchor lease holder for an investment in a park pavilion. Markets benefit from the assurance of a permanent location with appropriate facilities. [Olympia](#) and [Bellingham](#) both provide examples of this kind of long-term arrangement. The [City of Carnation](#) also partnered with Sno-Valley Tilth to create a park pavilion space for its farmers market.

*More information on farmers market challenges and considerations for local government can be found in [Farmers Market Sustainability — Obstacles and Strategies](#) (PSRC, 2014)*

## What is a “farmers market”?

Some jurisdictions define what constitutes a “farmers market” to clearly differentiate these markets from fairs, festivals, flea markets, events with temporary vendors, and other businesses that may use the term “farmers market” or appear synonymous to the public. By defining a farmers market, jurisdictions can target policies and programs aimed at farmers markets more precisely and reduce confusion.

## Common components of a farmers market definition:

- The primary purpose of farmers markets is to connect local growers directly to consumers. Establishing a minimum number of farmers needed on market day/season or a minimum proportion of sales from producers are two ways of establishing a vendor mix that emphasizes farmers over resellers, crafters, and prepared foods.
- Markets are generally a temporary use, where vendors break down and set up each market day.
- Markets operate periodically (typically one or two days a week), generally for a defined season, although there are a growing number of year-round farmers markets as well.
- Washington State Farmers Market Alliance’s [Roots Guidelines](#) can be used to consider components of a definition.

## Characteristics of a Successful Market

- Freshness, quality, and variety of products direct from producers
- Location with high visibility to shopper traffic
- Professional management and financial planning
- Strong partnerships and community support
- Promotion through events and programs

[More information here](#)

<sup>1</sup> [Summary Report: Farmers Markets and the Experiences of Market Managers in Washington State](#) (Washington State University, 2013)

<sup>2</sup> Includes sales from Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Senior and Women, Infant and Children Farmers Market Nutrition Programs

# INTRODUCTION

## BACKGROUND + PROJECT RATIONALE

Farmers markets serve as important community gathering places, economic development opportunities, and connection points between food producers and consumers. While farmers markets can provide significant benefits, urban markets are often challenged by a complex regulatory environment and an urban landscape where it can be challenging to identify long-term, stable locations.

The City of Seattle has recognized these benefits and challenges and has actively worked to integrate farmers markets into city policy and directives. In 2009, the City of Seattle undertook a comprehensive permitting and fee reform project to better support farmers markets. Steps taken at that time included streamlining the City of Seattle permitting process for farmers markets and reducing fees for farmers markets in Seattle parks and on city-owned right-of-ways. In 2010, as part of a suite of updates to the land use code, farmers markets were defined as a multipurpose sales use, allowing them in Neighborhood Commercial (NC) and Commercial (C) zones (subject to size restrictions). Even with these achievements, local markets continue to experience obstacles to their operation, particularly in regards to stable locations.

This project aims to identify these persistent obstacles, as well as develop potential strategies to overcome them. The project was initiated by the City of Seattle for the Regional Food Policy Council. While the obstacles and strategies described in this report are particular to the context of farmers markets in Seattle, they are not unique to Seattle. The recommendations and best practices within this report have applicability for farmers markets throughout the region.

## FARMERS MARKETS IN SEATTLE

In 2013, there were 15 farmers markets across Seattle. Eleven of the markets operate seasonally, generally May through October, and four markets are open year-round.<sup>1</sup> The markets are organized and run by four different organizations. The Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance runs the Broadway, Columbia City, Lake City, Magnolia, Phinney, University District, and West Seattle markets. The Seattle Farmers Market Association operates the Ballard, Magnolia, and Wallingford markets. Pike Place Market operates four seasonal markets at Pike Place Market, Occidental Park, Seattle City Hall, and South Lake Union. Finally, the Queen Anne Farmers Market is an independent seasonal market run by the Queen Anne Neighbors for Responsible Growth. Seattle's farmers markets take place in parks, on closed streets, and on public and private property.

All of these Seattle markets are members of the Washington State Farmers Market Association<sup>2</sup>. Farmers markets eligible to participate in the city's farmers market program are defined through administrative rules as markets where:

70% of the market's vendors are from Washington State farms and businesses selling items from the following five categories listed below: fresh farm products; value added farm foods; dried flowers, crafted farm products; processed foods; and prepared foods.<sup>3</sup>

This definition is presently being reviewed by the city to strengthen the role of farmers in the vendor mix.

---

<sup>1</sup> [Washington State Farmers Market Association](#), 2013.

<sup>2</sup> The Virginia Mason Farmers Market, started in 2011, was not a member of the WSFMA in 2013.

<sup>3</sup> [Multi-Departmental Administrative Rules: Farmers Market Permitting Process - 2009 Pilot Program](#). City of Seattle, 2009.

## WHY SUPPORT FARMERS MARKETS?

Seattle has devoted significant resources to support farmers markets over the last 20 years. The city has chosen to do so because of the public benefits farmers markets provide. From the findings of fact in Seattle's 2009 Farmers Market Pilot Program Multi-departmental Administrative Rules:

1.2.2. The City has a substantial interest in identifying stable locations for farmers markets because they are extremely popular in the neighborhoods and provide valuable public benefits. The markets provide fresh regionally produced farm products directly to consumers who shop in neighborhood business districts. Other public benefits brought by these simple, popular markets include: improved access to high quality fresh fruits and vegetables; increased use of adjacent City property for desirable purposes such as pedestrian, park and recreational uses; a regular gathering place for people to interact in their neighborhood business districts; increased commerce for adjacent businesses due to greater pedestrian traffic on market days; and preservation of local farm land from redevelopment. Regional small farmers report that neighborhood farmers markets have become a vitally important source of revenue that enables them to keep their farms in production.<sup>4</sup>

Farmers markets create local jobs and provide low-cost “storefronts” for developing food businesses. They provide access to fresh produce for low-income shoppers and a source of fresh food for food banks.<sup>5</sup>

Farmers markets are operated by a variety of entities, including non-profit, for-profit, and public agencies. Many markets rely on multiple funding sources to return the full cost of administrating the market.<sup>6</sup> Because of the significant public benefits markets provide, many cities support farmers markets with reduced permit fees and rent, administrative support and, in some places, staffing. While market organizations are generally not able to support their operations on market revenue alone, they serve an important role in the food retail environment because the direct sales opportunities provided to individual farmers serve as important revenue source for local farmers and prepared food sellers.

## REPORT CONTENTS

This report provides a narrative account of the process undertaken through this project and describes Seattle's policy landscape in respect to farmers markets. It also presents the key obstacles to and strategies for farmers market viability, illustrated by relevant local and national best practices. The report concludes with specific recommendations for the City of Seattle.

Supporting elements detailing work processes, communications, comprehensive list of obstacles, and strategy are included in the appendices to this report.

---

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance, 2013. *Public Benefits of Farmers Markets*.

<sup>6</sup> [\*Summary Report: Farmers Markets and the Experiences of Market Managers in Washington State\*](#). Washington State University Small Farms Program, 2013.



## METHODOLOGY

### PROCESS + COMMUNICATION

The deliverables for this project were prepared with discussion and feedback from farmers market organizers, City of Seattle staff, and other stakeholders. The development of the obstacles list and the recommended strategies were crafted out of discussions with key stakeholders in a project working group. Meetings with and documents provided by City of Seattle staff helped develop an understanding of Seattle's current farmers market policy. These discussions, and how they contributed to this project, are described below.

Understanding of the particular obstacles and circumstances of farmers markets in Seattle drew heavily from a working group convened for this project. The members of this working group are listed in Appendix A. Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) staff assembled the working group through calls for participation to the Regional Food Policy Council. City of Seattle staff and Food Policy Council members identified key stakeholders in farmers market issues for the working group. Stakeholders were also asked to recommend other participants for the working group.

In August 2013, the working group met for the first of four monthly meetings. Participants represented the major Seattle farmers market operating organizations, farmers market advocacy groups, the Regional Food Policy Council, Washington State University Extension, the City of Seattle, Public Health-Seattle & King County, King County, and Pierce County. PSRC staff facilitated all four meetings. Seattle's Food Policy Advisor, as project manager, was present at all meetings.

The group's collective experience was essential in developing both the obstacles list and the recommended strategies. The group provided background context on the experience of farmers markets in Seattle and of the public benefits of farmers markets, directing staff to local and national research on the subjects. The working group reviewed and provided feedback drafts of key deliverables to the project. Meeting summaries for all four working group meetings are contained in Appendix B.

Focused meetings with City of Seattle staff helped develop an understanding of past and present Seattle policy and practices for farmers markets. Two meetings were held with the main departments interacting with farmers markets on a policy level: the Department of Transportation (SDOT), the Office of Economic Development (OED), the Department of Parks and Recreation (Parks), the Department of Planning and Development (DPD), and Public Health-Seattle & King County. City of Seattle staff provided information on Seattle's policies and actions for farmers markets. They also gave feedback on obstacles to the viability of farmers markets. Although it was not an anticipated outcome of these meetings, discussion with staff also generated potential strategies to address some of the obstacles.

The Regional Food Policy Council was engaged in review of the key deliverables of this report. The Council received updates on the project, and members were asked to provide feedback at each of their monthly meetings from September through December. The Council helped refine the obstacles list, identify potential strategies, and consider the wider regional applications of this work.

### DEVELOPMENT OF KEY DELIVERABLES

PSRC staff synthesized the communications described above into several key deliverables, including the list of perceived obstacles to farmers market viability, recommended strategies to address the obstacles, and the summary of current Seattle policies on farmers markets.

Development of the obstacles list was further aided by research on barriers to farmers market success and sustainability and a document prepared by the Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance detailing obstacles experienced by their organization. Obstacles gleaned from research were combined with the brainstormed list of obstacles generated by the working group to create the full obstacles list, included as Appendix D. This list includes all obstacles identified, regardless of whether they directly affect Seattle markets or whether there was a demonstrable role for local government.

The obstacles in the full list were categorized by whether they were seen as affected by municipal government action, and by their relevance to Seattle. Obstacles meeting both criteria were included in the refined obstacle list in the body of this report.

The refined obstacles list served as the jumping-off point for the development of recommended strategies. Strategies and recommendations were advanced only for obstacles on the refined list. Building from working group and Regional Food Policy Council input, staff researched best practices from other cities to develop creative and pragmatic strategies to the stated obstacles. The full list of strategies was screened, selecting only the strategies suited for municipal government action. The strategies list was further refined with working group and staff input, advancing recommended strategies that appeared particularly helpful in dissolving obstacles to farmers market viability.

## CURRENT FARMERS MARKET POLICIES IN SEATTLE

The city addresses farmers markets through multiple means, including adopted goals and policies, development regulations, permitting and fee rules, and staff-level coordination and assistance.

### GOALS AND POLICIES

Seattle's [Food Action Plan](#) has goals that address farmers market activities. Goal 3, focused on strengthening the local food economy, outlines three strategies that underscore the city's commitment to farmers markets:

Strategy 1: Support businesses that grow, distribute, process, and sell local and healthy food.

Strategy 2: Celebrate and enhance local food as an element of Seattle's economy and identity.

Strategy 3: Support farmers markets and small retailers that sell healthy and locally produced food.

The goal to provide healthy food for all promotes locating farmers markets within reach of residential areas, employment sites, or other gathering places.

Seattle's [comprehensive plan](#) also includes policies that supporting farmers markets as important components of the city's vision. These policies include:

UV10.5: Encourage the location of grocery stores, farmers markets, and community food gardens to support access to healthful food for all areas where people live.

ED11.5: Recognize the value of the local food system in sustaining the local economy and seek ways to expand this benefit by supporting our capacity to grow, process, distribute, and access local foods.

HDG3.5: Strive to provide access to healthy, affordable food to all households in the city.

HD13.6: Encourage local food production, processing, and distribution through the support of home and community gardens, farmers markets, community kitchens, and other collaborative initiatives to provide healthy foods, promote food security, and build community.

Including language that addresses farmers markets can help formalize their role in future city planning and policies.

## PERMITTING AND FEES

Seattle undertook a comprehensive permitting and fee reform project in 2009 to remove administrative and financial barriers for locating farmers markets on public sites. Market managers said the high cost of permits to use parks and close streets was a key barrier to locating markets in public spaces. Changes to the process included streamlining the City of Seattle permitting process for farmers markets and reducing fees for farmers markets in parks and on city-owned right-of-ways.

As part of this process, the city undertook yearly permit coordination meetings and regular permit coordination assistance from the Office of Economic Development (OED). An annual meeting is organized by OED in the winter that convenes all departments involved in the permitting process for farmers markets and the farmers market organizations themselves. Departments that have participated include SDOT, Parks, OED, and the Fire Department. This annual meeting brings the city and farmers market organizations together to discuss changes to permitting, orient new market managers to city regulations, and provide support in permit application review and submittal.

Beyond guiding how the city interacts and engages with farmers markets, the multidepartment administrative rules define an eligible farmers market. The city is currently refining the definition of a farmers market and reviewing policies about street use for markets.

The SDOT Traffic Division facilitates street closures on behalf of farmers markets. Parking is restricted during market operations, so markets also work with entities to ticket and tow parking violators. Towing is dependent on the Seattle Police Department and responsiveness of towing companies. The SDOT Street Use Division handles all street use permitting for farmers markets operating in the public right-of-way. The Parks and Recreation Events Office handles permitting for farmers markets located in parks. These divisions have direct contact with farmers market organizations and market managers during the permit process and as issues arise during the market season.

Markets are subject to public health inspections, which are handled by Public Health-Seattle & King County. A small team inspects all the farmers markets and coordinates among each other to provide consistent reviews. Public Health-Seattle & King County communicates regularly with health agencies in other counties. Local interpretation and administration of state health code varies between counties but the rules are consistent between county health departments. Fees, length of permits, and interpretation of the rules differs by county. Fees are based on the need to recover the cost of inspection.

## FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Historically, the city provided some funding to farmers market organizations. Starting in 2001, Seattle financed a ten-year plan for the Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance. The city provided Community Development Block Grant funding to the Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance to support economic development activities in low-income neighborhoods (Columbia City and the University District). This transitioned to general fund support to expand the organizational capacity of the Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance to develop markets in other neighborhoods as well. The funding plan included a gradual reduction in funding as the organization built their capacity and shifted over time to cover relocation costs. The Queen Anne Farmers Market has also received

funding from Department of Neighborhoods (DoN) grants and OED. Now that markets are more established, OED interactions have shifted to focus on relocation assistance and permitting.

### FRESH BUCKS

The City of Seattle also encourages shopping at farmers markets through the Fresh Bucks program, which incentivizes purchase of fresh produce by doubling the value of SNAP (food stamps) transactions (up to \$10). The City of Seattle piloted the Fresh Bucks program, in partnership with the Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance, in 2012 with funding from JPMorgan Chase and the Seattle Foundation. With continued funding from JPMorgan Chase and the Seattle Foundation, in addition to City General Fund support, the program expanded in 2013 from seven to 15 Seattle markets (all markets in Seattle). The program offers the benefits of bringing more shoppers to neighborhood farmers markets, as well as promoting healthy food and increasing food access for low-income shoppers.

## OBSTACLES TO FARMERS MARKET VIABILITY IN SEATTLE

Through discussions with the working group and local and national research on farmers markets’ challenges, a list of obstacles to the viability of farmers markets was developed. The obstacles were categorized into five issue areas: institutional support, market location and siting, consumer access, market organizational structure, and market business practices.

Once the initial list of obstacles was developed, PSRC staff screened each obstacle for applicability to the project. Each obstacle was judged on whether it was applicable to the City of Seattle context and whether local government intervention could help remedy the barrier. Only obstacles in the realm of government influence and relevant to Seattle were advanced to the final obstacle list to be further addressed by this project. Members of the Farmers Market Working Group further reviewed the final obstacles list for suitability based on the selection criteria. The full list of obstacles experienced by farmers markets is contained in Appendix D, while the list of obstacles addressed in the project is presented below.

### REFINED OBSTACLES LIST

Issue Area	Obstacle
<b>Institutional Support</b>	City has actively coordinated permitting but other issues are handled as they emerge, rather than anticipated in advance.
	Markets are handled as special events; markets operating in the public right-of-way don’t have priority over special event uses.*
	Perceived lack of ongoing political commitment from city government—lack of community and political understanding of market benefits.
	Costs of externalities experienced by markets: safety and security, social role of supporting small farmers.
	Externalities include need to ticket and tow cars and clear and secure the site on market day.
	Limited public financial and programmatic support for farmers markets, including collective marketing of farmers markets.
	Cumbersome permitting processes, regulations and fee structure. Agency interaction includes the Seattle Department of Transportation, Seattle Fire Department, Seattle Parks and Recreation, Public Health-Seattle & King County, and Washington Liquor Control Board.
Inconsistent regulations between jurisdictions creates confusion.	

	Ongoing displacement potential for some market locations due to potential new development.
<b>Market location and siting</b>	Identifying suitable locations for displaced markets—balancing optimal site location with risks of development.
	Transportation projects: road/transit construction that impacts market location, need to address vendor parking, loading, shopper access, and temporary market storage.
	Private development obstructing market operations by utilizing open space/lot locations, right-of-ways, curb cuts during construction and afterwards; development taking priority for street closure permits.
	Condo associations, businesses, individual neighbors blocking market access to streets, preventing display of market materials.
<b>Consumer Access</b>	Lack of community awareness of markets.
	Challenges providing access for low income and EBT shoppers.
	Perception that markets are unregulated/misconceptions about consumer safety.
<b>Market Organizational Structure</b>	Market manager and vendor confusion about food assistance program requirements and eligibility.
	Competing demand/oversaturation creates challenge for farmers.
<b>Market Design</b>	Limited staffing resources.
	Growing demand (increasing shoppers) while growing markets.
	Fast growth of markets not allowing time to adequately analyze what makes a successful market in each environment.

\* This policy is currently being updated.

The obstacles in the institutional support issue area center on how farmers markets interface with city government and how they can be further supported by city policy. The most concrete examples concern the burden farmers market managers perceive in navigating processes to permit each farmers market and practical matters requiring city services (garbage pickup, parking enforcement) in preparing market sites on market day. These obstacles add time, uncertainty and additional work to a market manager’s task list. Other obstacles concern the lack of codification and uncertain political commitment to farmers markets. Farmers market organizers felt that while they were presently supported by city administration, there was no guarantee that this support would remain in the event of institutional change. Market organizers also expressed concerns about temporary displacement by special events, which can be detrimental to revenues for seasonal markets and reduce visibility or create confusion among shoppers. While this remains an obstacle at this time, the City of Seattle is presently working with farmers market organizers to grant farmers markets priority over most other uses in right-of-ways. The final institutional obstacles identified were differing regulations for vendors that operate in multiple jurisdictions.

The market location and siting issue area presents obstacles relating to market displacement and a lack of long-term locations for farmers markets. Farmers markets face site insecurity for a number of reasons. Markets on private land, including parking and vacant lots, are subject to development pressure as Seattle continues to add density. Markets on public land, including the right-of-way, are subject to temporary displacement from special events and from construction and capital improvements. When neighboring development is planned to occur, the presence of a farmers market has not always been factored into construction sequencing or the final project design. While not all displacement can be avoided, the city can undertake strategies to prevent some displacement from occurring and to include farmers markets early in the planning process when displacement is necessary.

Obstacles in the consumer access issue area center on barriers in getting more customers to market. This includes both increasing broad-based consumer awareness and support for the markets, as well as increasing access to farmers markets for low-income shoppers who have challenges accessing affordable healthy food. As farmers markets are private sector entities in Seattle, the role of municipal government in these issues has been more limited. Building on the public benefits farmers markets offer, however, the city could be an effective partner in reducing barriers to consumer access. The obstacles in this issue area concern the difficulty of increasing consumer awareness and access of farmers markets, overcoming a limited budget for marketing, and attracting and providing access for low-income shoppers. Other obstacles concern combatting public perception that markets are unsafe or unregulated, and vendor and manager confusion over food assistance program requirements and eligibility.

The last two issue areas, market organizational structure and market design, present barriers that extend from how farmers markets choose to set up their business models and administrative practices. As with obstacles in the consumer access issue area, in Seattle, municipal government currently plays no direct role in market operations, but the working group identified some issue areas where municipal government could help address challenges. The rapid growth and potential oversaturation of markets creates challenges for farmers and individual markets, which should be considered alongside the benefits of opening new markets. Markets also continue to be challenged by limited staff resources.

## STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS OBSTACLES

### IDENTIFYING STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS OBSTACLES

As the obstacles list was discussed with the working group, the Regional Food Policy Council, and staff from the City of Seattle, the conversation quickly moved to potential strategies to address identified obstacles. These parties' practical experience was key in developing strategies that directly addressed many of the obstacles presented above, as was research on other cities' practices. The process for selecting strategies aimed to provide a robust set of strategies, taking into account short-term feasibility.

A universe of literature on best practices for farmers markets exists, but for this project it was imperative that the strategies presented were sensitive to the Seattle context and to the particular barriers uncovered. Thus, similar to the obstacles discussion, strategies were screened for their applicability to Seattle and the role of local government. Where applicable, the strategies build on existing city actions or refer to structures already present in city government.

While the strategies are not prioritized, a subset of the strategies are recommended for review and implementation. These are strategies the project working group felt would be most effective in addressing the barriers to farmers market viability. The following strategies list presents the recommended and other strategies to address the obstacles for farmers market viability in the preceding section. A full list of strategies proposed is contained in Appendix E.

Each strategy has been clarified and connected back to the obstacles list by showing the "objectives" each strives to accomplish. Departments relevant to or affected by the proposed strategy are listed in an adjacent column.

REFINED STRATEGIES LIST

	Strategies (Recommended)	Objectives	Relevant Departments
Institutional Support	<b>Establish a season's end meeting in October between permitting departments and market managers. Establish regular meeting between OED and the farmers markets to discuss further market and city coordination beyond permitting issues (implementing business planning, site issues). OED staff should attend quarterly King County farmers market manager meetings.</b>	Proactive coordination, institutional support, business development, develop compost and waste programs	OED, SDOT, Parks, DPD, DoN, OSE, SPU, PHSKC, Fire, FAS
	<b>Advance notification of project development on or near farmers market sites.</b>	Proactive coordination, anticipate displacement issues	OED, DPD, SDOT
	<b>Grant markets operating in the public right-of-way priority over special event uses. As part of this policy, include more permanent "no parking" signs at market locations.</b>	Avoid temporary displacement from special events. Better inform public of parking restrictions, reduce labor of placing temporary signage	SDOT, OED
	<b>Continue to reinforce the importance of farmers markets in city policy development.</b>	Establish long-term public policy case for supporting markets	OED, OSE
	Create site prep task forces for market days.	Proactively address preparation of sites in terms of safety and security, trash, parking and towing	
	Further dedicate staff time to working on farmers market issues.	Proactive coordination, demonstrate commitment to farmers markets	OED, OSE
	Encourage the inclusion of farmers markets in appropriate future funding mechanism/s.	Dedicated support of farmers markets, increase community awareness of farmers markets	
	<b>Convene SPD, SDOT and farmers markets organizations on parking and towing concerns.</b>	Identify opportunities for additional strategies to address specific parking concerns	OED, SDOT, SPD
Market location and siting	<b>Develop a long-term strategy for market locations</b> - Evaluate displacement risk for farmers markets - Identify characteristics that create market success, complete a neighborhood scale site analysis to identify optimal market locations.	Proactive coordination to anticipate market displacement and support development of new markets	OED, DPD, OSE, SDOT, Parks, DoN
	Incorporate appropriate farmers markets in Festival Street designation.	Support long-term siting of markets in streets	SDOT, OED
	<b>Give advance notice of project development on or near farmers market sites.</b>	Proactive coordination, anticipate displacement issues	DPD
	<b>Incorporate farmers markets in development agreements and covenants.</b>	Support preservation of existing sites	DPD, OED
	Identify farmers markets as public benefit in Seattle's incentive zoning program.	Support preservation of existing sites	DPD
	<b>Plan for market presence in street design projects.</b>	Coordinate with markets early if construction projects will impact market operations	SDOT
	<b>Plan for market presence in construction design phases.</b>	Coordinate with markets early if construction projects will impact market operations	DPD
	Clarify petition process for neighborhood approval or denial of farmers markets in right-of-way.	Information sharing to clarify standards	SDOT

Consumer Access	Provide support for collective marketing through existing marketing programs, such as Puget Sound Fresh.	Support collective marketing through existing programs	OED
	<b>Continue or enhance contribution to Fresh Bucks Program.</b>	Expand consumer base and food access at markets	OSE, HSD
	Develop incentives for markets in neighborhoods with limited food access (i.e., fee waivers, other financial incentives).	Expand opportunities for markets in more neighborhoods by developing incentives	DPD, OED, OSE
Market Design	<b>Explore models for smaller scale markets and develop appropriate definitions.</b>	Address other market types, expand opportunities to locate in neighborhoods not currently served by markets	DPD, OED
	Support business development for farmers market organizations—help implement business planning recommendations.	Encourage markets to achieve long-term business stability through implementing business planning recommendations	OED

## DISCUSSION OF STRATEGIES

Recommended strategies increase the level of institutional support for farmers markets at the City of Seattle, or make it more effective, and strive to increase communication between farmers market managers and city staff.

### INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

***Establish a season's end meeting in October between permitting departments and market managers. Establish regular meeting between OED and the farmers markets to discuss further market and city coordination beyond permitting issues (implementing business planning, site issues). OED staff should attend quarterly King County farmers market manager meetings. (Recommended Strategy)***

This practical strategy stems from both an idea at one of the working group meetings and from practices already in place at the City of Seattle. It builds from the annual meeting OED schedules with farmers market managers to coordinate applications and new market rules for the year. This strategy proposes an additional meeting at the end of market season between market managers and city departments. The purpose of this meeting would be to discuss the outcomes of the year's markets and to make improvements or move policy changes for the next season. It also suggests broadening the departmental staff at the meetings, including staff from Public Health-Seattle & King County, Department of Neighborhoods, Department of Planning and Development, Seattle Public Utilities, Office of Sustainability and the Environment, and Department of Finance and Administrative Services. Participants of the farmers market working group noted that there was recent concern about Seattle Public Utilities stipulations on stormwater and refuse and how farmers markets are inspected for compliance. The end of season meeting would present an additional opportunity for proactive coordination, beyond the winter meeting focused on permitting.

King County organizes a quarterly meeting of farmers market managers from across the county. It would be beneficial for staff from OED, as the de facto front door for farmers markets at the city, to attend this meeting to keep abreast of the issues markets face.

Responsibility for implementing this recommendation would fall to OED. This strategy increases the predictability of the operating environment for farmers markets and provides an additional mutually beneficial outlet for coordination between market managers and the city.



***Give advance notice of project development on or near farmers market sites (Recommended Strategy)***

In the spirit of increased communication and enhanced connection with city departments, the working group discussed how the city could provide farmers market organizations with more advance notice of impending development that could potentially displace a market. Adding farmers market organizations to the list of parties receiving notification of nearby land use proposals is recommended. Notification and coordination with markets on nearby capital projects would be ideally suited to a capital projects coordinator, if such a position is considered in the future. Implementing this recommendation would include updating procedures to include markets located within standard notification distance of impending construction or development projects. The departments directly engaged in major development projects, Planning and Development, Transportation, and Parks and Recreation, would most likely be responsible for this notification process. Additionally, a department or office that touches multiple development efforts could also be engaged (e.g., Law, Finance and Administrative Services). Beginning the notification process could build on existing interdepartmental efforts related to farmers markets (e.g., the annual meeting for market managers).

***Grant markets operating in the public right-of-way priority over special event uses. As part of this policy, include more permanent "no parking" signs at market locations (Recommended Strategy)***

A major concern of farmers markets operating on city streets and sidewalks has been the preemption of their weekly occurrence by occasional special events. Farmers market organizations noted that this has a detrimental effect on market and vendor revenues (in some cases cutting two weeks out of a market season) and in establishing and retaining regular customers. The suggestion that markets gain priority over other uses of the right-of-way is already being incorporated into the street use permit for farmers markets. This strategy also recommends that the priority use designation be accompanied by permanent "no parking" signs to better inform motorists, residents, and businesses of regular parking restrictions on market days.

***Continue to reinforce the importance of farmers markets in city policy development (Recommended Strategy)***

This strategy addresses the obstacle of ensuring continued political commitment to farmers markets within the City of Seattle. While city staff offered that they felt that the city had been committed to farmers markets for years and saw no evidence for this support to waver, this commitment could be further solidified by continuing to reinforce the public benefit and support for markets through plans and policy statements aimed to ensure long-term political commitment for markets.

***Convene SPD, SDOT and farmers markets organizations on parking and towing concerns (Recommended Strategy)***

***Create site prep task forces for market days***

These strategies are aimed specifically at alleviating the costs of externalities described by market managers preceding the opening of the market, e.g., trash pickup or engaging parking enforcement for towing. Building on the enhanced coordination advocated in a number of the other strategies, special consideration could be paid to trash removal, parking enforcement, and security at market sites prior to setup if the departments were made aware of the priority. Initiating a conversation with the Seattle Police Department and Seattle Public Utilities is also described in the first strategy in this section.

While parking scofflaws will likely persist, the working group specifically named parking and towing as issues that would benefit from devoted attention. This is an obstacle that could be addressed in a multi-part strategy. Other

suggestions in this area included permanent “no parking” signs for farmers markets and an additional market manager-city staff coordination meeting.

***Dedicate additional staff time to work on farmers market issues***

Seattle has made a concerted effort to provide a front door for farmers market affairs in OED. Several departments have staff acutely aware of farmers market issues and needs who devote time to addressing issues as they arise. Members of the working group felt that having additional staff time dedicated to farmers market issues could provide focused help in addressing issues described in this report and would demonstrate the city’s commitment to farmers markets in general.

***Encourage the inclusion of farmers markets in appropriate future funding mechanism***

Funding for the operation of farmers markets is generally in short supply, but a review of practices around the country shows that financial support for markets has been provided by some jurisdictions, including Seattle. Additional funding sources could allow for capital improvements to market sites, help secure permanent locations, and/or diversify the funding streams on which farmers markets operate. Farmers markets have a nexus with activities that have historically been the subject of dedicated levies, such as farmland preservation and parks. Should an appropriate direct revenue source be proposed, the City of Seattle, as well as farmers market advocates, could advocate for inclusion of farmers markets in future open space or conservation levies, or other dedicated funding sources.

## MARKET LOCATION AND SITING

***Develop long-term strategy for market locations***

While the farmers market landscape in Seattle is robust, long-running markets occasionally face pressure to relocate due to development. Markets also experience short-term disruptions from special events. Residents and workers in neighborhoods without farmers markets seek to have their own market, but struggle with making it happen. The variety of conditions that create a thriving traditional farmers market are difficult to come by or stimulate in all neighborhoods. The qualities of a successful market site may not be present in a given neighborhood, and the challenges in market administration, site impermanence, and business development are well documented.<sup>7</sup> The city would be well served to examine its role in managing market supply and demand, whether and how it should encourage the development of new neighborhood markets, focus efforts on sustaining the markets that exist, or tackle both. Smaller, alternative models for markets should be considered as a way to expand farmers market access for low-food access areas or areas that may not be able to support a full-sized market. This is addressed elsewhere in the report.

While Seattle’s farmers markets are private sector businesses and non-profits responsible for their own business practices, the city has invested resources in markets. Given that many farmers markets operate on public property and that the city has invested resources to help markets succeed, the city would be well served to coordinate with farmers markets and other relevant parties in developing a strategic vision for their long-term operation. Such a strategy could address permanent physical infrastructure and collaboration to secure sites for markets, as well as define the city’s role in working with the largely private farmers market organizations.

---

<sup>7</sup> For example, see: [\*When Things Don't Work: Some Insights into Why Farmers Markets Close\*](#). Oregon State University Extension Services, December 2006.

Through the project working group meetings, City of Seattle staff were asked what their ideal vision for farmers markets was. Developing a vision for farmers markets could extend from existing research and data on farmers markets in Seattle and King County and would involve scoping the existing and ideal characteristics for farmers markets as a group and individually. Using these characteristics, displacement risk and potential sites for new and existing markets could be determined, which could help markets find more site-secure locations that could offer increased amenities, such as permanent storage, in the future. The strategy could be so detailed as to examine individual neighborhood potential for siting a farmers market or develop a list of underserved neighborhoods with potential to host a seasonal market. The strategy could also investigate whether other, smaller models for markets could serve an unmet desire for farmers markets and a need for better food access in some areas. Overall, the strategy developed would strive to help strengthen market operations and increase site security, while ensuring that residents are able to access fresh produce easily in their neighborhoods.

### ***Incorporate appropriate farmers markets in Festival Street designation***

Festival streets are specific portions of right-of-way designated by the Seattle Department of Transportation that may be closed for pedestrian-focused events many times over a year. Currently, only three festival streets—one street and two alleys—have been designated by the city. Permits for events on festival streets are covered by a once-annual permit, so a permit is not required for each instance. Inclusion of farmers markets would support the place-making intent of Seattle’s Festival Street program and markets would benefit from long-term siting on designated right-of-way. Specifically incorporating farmers markets in the Festival Street program was brought up in meetings with Seattle staff and would impart some protection for farmers markets in the right-of-way. This designation may not be appropriate for all streets farmers markets operate on, however, and should not be pursued as a blanket strategy for all farmers markets.

### ***Incorporate farmers markets in development agreements and covenants (Recommended Strategy)***

Often, farmers markets hosted on underutilized privately-held land are at risk of displacement from redevelopment. Neighborhoods with farmers markets and strong development pressure can pursue making sites for farmers markets a part of private development plans. The city can advocate for covenants or developer agreements that stipulate the inclusion of space for a farmers market as a part of the development project or on a nearby site.

### ***Identify farmers markets as public benefit in Seattle's incentive zoning program***

The City of Seattle uses incentive zoning and density bonuses to encourage developers of mixed-use and multifamily developments to provide public benefits beyond what is required by development regulations. Currently developers may receive a height or floor area ratio bonus in exchange for the provision of affordable housing, open space or another community amenity. This strategy recommends that the incentive zoning statute be revised to name space explicitly for farmers markets as one amenity that could qualify a developer for the bonus.

Providing neighborhood open space is identified in the current incentive program and presents an opportunity to consider how this tool could be applied in some instances to secure long-term space for markets. Multi-use plazas have been built in cities across the nation that serve multiple purposes (parking, recreation space) beyond market day. While the implementation of incentive zoning is dependent on the market and developers’ plans, adding farmers market plaza spaces to the list of benefits raises the potential of their preservation or development. Naming these places explicitly in the ordinance could demonstrate commitment to stabilizing farmers market locations and provide an alternative means for achieving secure market locations.

Increasing the number of potential amenities qualifying for incentive zoning can mean trade-offs with other important public benefits, like affordable housing. Additionally, successful farmers markets are highly dependent on location; not every space will yield public benefits from a farmers market.

To avoid unintended, negative consequences from listing farmers markets as a public benefit in incentive zoning, the language would have to be carefully written to ensure developers received incentives only for spaces that offered the public benefit of a successful farmers market and not for speculative plazas or indoor space ignorant of the economics of farmers markets.

#### ***Plan for market presence in street design projects (Recommended Strategy)***

Farmers markets on public lands, in parks, and especially in the right-of-way, are at risk of displacement from infrastructure construction projects. This strategy recommends that, as these projects are phased, the access and egress needs of farmers markets are considered both during and after construction. Farmers market managers noted instances where this has been detrimental to farmers market in the past. Impacts can occur both during construction and afterward when amenities like curb cuts were not replaced, rendering a site inaccessible.

#### ***Plan for market presence in construction design phases (Recommended Strategy)***

Similarly to infrastructure projects, private development in close proximity to market operations can present challenges for markets. To the extent possible through the review of development plans and inspections, city staff could assure that the proper access is maintained for farmers market operations. The coordination required for this and the preceding strategy not only addresses the risk of displacement, but also demonstrates continued institutional support for farmers markets.

#### ***Clarify petition process for neighborhood approval or denial of farmers markets in right-of-way***

During the project working group meetings, the neighborhood approval process for farmers markets in the right-of-way were discussed. Should an event require a street to be closed to auto traffic, consent of neighboring residents and business is required for a permit to be issued. Participants noted that parts of the process are not clear, namely the threshold of approval or disapproval necessary to uphold or deny the permit. The city could provide more information to clarify this process for market managers.

### **CONSUMER ACCESS**

#### ***Provide support for collective marketing through existing marketing programs, such as Puget Sound Fresh***

One area where farmers market organizations indicated that more support would be helpful was increasing consumer awareness. Cities are limited in how they can lend support for any particular organization, but supporting a collective marketing campaign that covers the farms and organizations that sell throughout the city, like Puget Sound Fresh, can avoid preferential treatment while aiding farmers markets.

#### ***Continue or enhance contribution to Fresh Bucks Program (Recommended Strategy)***

The Fresh Bucks program, as discussed in the current practices section of this report, serves as a model program throughout the region for increasing low-income residents' access to fresh, locally produced produce. This report recommends the evaluation and continued funding for this successful program, as a strategy to increase consumer access.

***Develop incentives for markets in neighborhoods with limited food access (i.e., fee waivers, other financial incentives)***

Much attention has been paid to equitable access to fresh, local food and farmers markets as points of access for fresh produce in places without easy access to a grocery store. Presently, the business model of farmers markets is heavily dependent on vendor revenues and stall fees. Many markets barely break even or run at a loss because revenues do not exceed operation costs. In neighborhoods with limited access to fresh produce, financial incentives could be provided in the form of permit fee waivers or other support that reduces the cost of operation. This could help markets meet their bottom line, give residents access to healthier food, and help the city achieve its goal of healthy food for all.

**MARKET DESIGN**

***Explore models for smaller scale markets and develop appropriate definitions (Recommended Strategy)***

Seattle has a clear administrative definition of what constitutes a farmers market. This is an important policy step to ensure resources are directed towards activities that truly serve the aims of the policy. Conversations with the Regional Food Policy Council and farmers market organizations indicate that there is latent demand for more farmers markets, but the present model as defined will not succeed in all neighborhoods. This strategy recommends that Seattle investigate other market models, including smaller scale and mobile markets that may be better at serving neighborhoods with limited access to fresh produce or that will not generate revenue sufficient to host the market. Any new forms of farmers markets should be defined to be complementary to the network of existing markets.

***Support business development for farmers market organizations—help implement business planning recommendations***

While the city may not be able to provide direct assistance for marketing or operations, the OED and DoN may be able to help markets with business development planning and plan implementation. The city recently provided funding for the Queen Anne Farmers Market to develop a business plan. OED administers a portion of Seattle's community development block grants that could be used for business plans or implementation. As the centralized point of contact for farmers markets in Seattle, OED can direct organizations to resources for capital, planning, and further business development. A multi-departmental Citywide Business Advocacy Team also exists to help businesses navigate regulations and permitting and helps create custom strategies that require coordination across city departments.

The Department of Neighborhoods supports community projects and engagement through the Neighborhood Matching Fund (NMF). The NMF supports physical projects, community events, and planning efforts, and could be a valuable resource for a community or business group interested in the feasibility or preservation of a neighborhood farmers market.

## BEST PRACTICES RESEARCH

Best practices research focused on two central issues identified during this project: local government support of farmers markets and market site displacement. In many cases, the strategy has been intertwined—local governments have addressed market displacement and supported farmers markets through collaborative development of permanent sites. This section notes just a few such examples. Other public support of markets ranges from fully staffing and operating markets to less resource-intensive activities, such as providing privately-operated markets access to public land and supplying staff support to prepare the site on market day.

Also noted in this section are multiple definitions that have been developed to allow alternative models of farmers markets, as well as additional approaches to encourage new markets and protect existing markets.

### A RANGE OF CITY SUPPORT, INCLUDING DEVELOPING PERMANENT LOCATIONS

Many jurisdictions across the country and in the Puget Sound region support farmers markets directly by organizing and staffing farmers markets. Locally, the cities of [Issaquah](#), [Renton](#), [Steilacoom](#), [Kirkland](#), and [Auburn](#) coordinate their own farmers markets. Most of these markets are organized by parks departments and are supported by sponsorship from local business or other organizations. The Renton Farmers Market, for example, was spearheaded by volunteers, and the city continues to work with a volunteer group (Piazza Renton) to help operate the market.

**Kent.** While the City of Kent doesn't operate the market, the city supports the [Kent Farmers Market](#) in other ways. The Kent Parks and Recreation department helps set up the market by posting signage and preparing the Town Square Plaza site for the market. The market is operated by the Kent Lion's Club.

**Mercer Island.** The city has supported the [Mercer Island Farmers Market](#) through capital improvements in the park, including sink facilities. City staff also assist with signage and preparing the Mercerdale Park market site.

The **Charlottesville, VA** farmers market is operated by the non-profit [Market Central](#) but the land and some portion of funding is provided by the city. At one time, the city had the market manager on staff at the city's Department of Parks & Recreation. The city is currently working to create a permanent structure for the market.

[Nashville, TN](#) and [Scottsville, VA](#) funded or partially funded permanent structures for their markets. They also rent the pavilions for private events, bringing in extra income. [Bellingham](#) also built a pavilion that serves as the long-term indoor market site for the Bellingham Farmers Market. The building is also rented out for other uses.

**Detroit's [Eastern Market](#)** was built, owned and operated by the city until 2006 when a public-private entity was created to take over operation of the market.

[Olympia.](#) A permanent market site was developed with city and Port of Olympia cooperation. The facility, constructed on land leased from the Port of Olympia, is owned by the City of Olympia and operated by the market organization. A [master use agreement](#) specifies the relationship between the market and public parties. In the requirements of the master use agreement the lease stipulates that the market deposit 1 percent of its gross sales into a capital fund to be used for future market parking and potential expansion of the Olympia-owned market facilities. The market and the city jointly act as stewards of this fund.

[Muskegon, MI](#), negotiated a land-transfer that helped the non-profit operating their farmers market obtain a permanent site.

**Minneapolis, MN.** The Midtown Farmers Market provides an example of public sector collaboration to avoid displacement and secure a permanent location along the light rail corridor. The Midtown Farmers Market, which operated with a no-cost lease on Minneapolis Public Schools property adjacent to the Hiawatha Light Rail Line, was at risk of displacement from sale of the property.

The Minneapolis School District committed to include preservation of farmers market as a stipulation of sale of property. Hennepin County included the market preservation as part of its capital investment platform, requesting a \$1 million state capital appropriation to preserve the farmers market site. The request notes: “Matching funding would be sought for land acquisition and infrastructure improvements to create a permanent farmers market with civic space providing direct connections and access to the Lake Street Hiawatha LRT Station. Matching funds would support infrastructure improvements and demolition of existing buildings stimulating interest in the redevelopment of the remainder of the site for mixed use residential and commercial uses.” This example captures how multiple levels of government can coordinate to support farmers market viability. Additional information is available on the [Corcoran Neighborhood website](#).

#### USING MULTIPLE DEFINITIONS TO ENCOURAGE DIFFERENT TYPES OF MARKETS

Minneapolis, San Diego, Salt Lake City, and Vancouver, B.C. include definitions in their land use regulations that focus on accommodating smaller, alternative farmers markets.

**Minneapolis, MN.** The city defined “[mini-markets](#)” to encourage development of small, alternative markets. A mini-market is defined as “A type of farmers market, limited to five (5) or fewer market vendors, whose primary purpose is to improve access to locally grown agricultural products.” Such markets do not pay to renew permits and pay reduced zoning and health review fees.<sup>8</sup> The changes have been successful in allowing several new markets in the city.

**Vancouver, B.C.** The city defined “community food markets” (mini-markets) to serve underserved neighborhoods and developed a unified permit for these market types. Community food markets are defined as “mini farmers markets with fewer than 10 booths.” The city also identifies specific farmers market goals and actions in the [Vancouver Food Strategy](#).

**Salt Lake City, UT.** The city has developed a broad definition of farmers markets as “one or more vendors,” allowing considerable flexibility in the application of the term.

**San Diego, CA.** The City of San Diego has developed separate definitions for traditional farmers markets and farm stands. The city code specifies separate requirements for “daily markets” vs. “weekly markets.”

“Daily market” regulations:

- May operate seven days per week
- No parking required, and no required parking displaced
- Sales limited to unprocessed, non-value added crops
- May occupy an area no greater than 5’ x 16’ of commercial frontage

---

<sup>8</sup> [From the Ground Up: Land Use Policies to Protect and Promote Farmers’ Markets](#). ChangeLab Solutions, 2013.

- Permission of the property owner for market stands on private property
- May operate in the public right-of-way, between the curb and fronting property line, subject to some conditions

## OTHER PRACTICES

**Minneapolis, MN.** Plans for the Midtown Farmers Market were incorporated in the neighborhood plan. The Midtown Farmers Market was a specified component of the 2002 *Corcoran Midtown Revival Plan*, adopted as part of the Minneapolis Plan in 2002. The Midtown Farmers Market was launched the following year. The plan has been an important document in helping to articulate the interests of the neighborhood and establishing direction for the city.

**Hinesburg, VT.** The town incorporated farmers markets as an example of a public benefit in their incentive zoning program. The ordinance language specifies farmers markets as a public benefit potentially eligible for incentive zoning on a case-by-case basis. From the ordinance:

*“Density incentives should therefore be reserved for developments that provide particularly important and significant public spaces and/or infrastructure. Since community needs and priorities vary over time, the incentive level/number (on a scale of 1-3) for a particular project shall be determined by DRB in consultation with the Selectboard. Examples of project elements that might qualify include, but are not limited to: community/multigenerational center; town green; bandshell, amphitheater, or performance venue; farmers market area; recreation fields (preferably full size); community garden area.”*

**New York, NY.** The city provides clear [guidance](#) for developing new markets and designation of markets that offer nutrition workshops and promote EBT and Health Bucks. Stellar Farmers’ Markets, a program of the Health Department’s Physical Activity and Nutrition Program, aims to promote the benefits of a healthy diet and encourage New Yorkers to make use of local, fresh produce when preparing meals. Stellar Farmers Markets also promotes the use of EBT and Health Bucks at farmers markets to make purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables easier for low-income residents.

**Boston, MA.** Boston’s Fresh Fish Pilot Program 2013 Request for Proposals (RFP) awarded points for balance of vendor participation in small and large markets. Early in the process of identifying obstacles to viability, the Farmers Market Working Group discussed competition between markets and what small markets need to succeed. This RFP process provides an example of leveraging large markets to support small or struggling markets.

*“Service of Both Large and Neighborhood Markets: Share how you will operate in larger farmers markets (eg: Dewey Square) and neighborhood farmers markets (eg: Bowdoin-Geneva).*

- *Applicants who share how their business will effectively serve both large and neighborhood farmers markets will be eligible to be ranked as Excellent.*
- *Applicants who express a commitment to serve both large and neighborhood farmers markets will be eligible to be ranked as Good.*
- *Applicants who express a commitment to learning how to effectively serve both large and neighborhood farmers markets will be eligible to be ranked as Fair.*
- *Applicants who do not indicate a willingness to operate in both larger and neighborhood farmers markets will be eligible to be ranked as Poor.”*



## CONCLUSION

Farmers markets offer significant public benefit to the quality of life in Seattle, advancing many of the city's goals for community, economic viability, and sustainability. Seattle has recognized these benefits and has adapted policy and procedures to accommodate farmers markets' unique concerns and encourage their viability.

While Seattle has worked to address many barriers that farmers markets face, challenges remain. The work of this project was aimed to highlight these obstacles and offer potential strategies to overcome them. These recommendations are tailored to the unique operating environment of Seattle, but the obstacles and strategies discussed speak to issues and solutions that other cities with farmers markets grapple with. We hope this research is useful beyond the boundaries of Seattle. This effort speaks both to the importance of farmers markets and to the level of commitment Seattle has for farmers markets and the farms and businesses that they support.

## APPENDICES

- A. Farmers Market Working Group Membership List
- B. Farmers Market Working Group Meeting Summaries
- C. Full Obstacle List
- D. Full Strategies List
- E. References
- F. Annotated Bibliography of Farmers Market Reports

## Appendix A: Farmers Market Working Group Membership List

Working Group Members		
Brynn	Brady	Pierce County
Charlie	Cunniff	City of Seattle - Office of Economic Development
Chris	Curtis	Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance
Colleen	Donovan	WSU Small Farms Program
Becky	Elias	Public Health – Seattle & King County
Steve	Evans	King County
Ben	Franz-Knight	Pike Place Market
Brad	Gaolach	WSU Extension
Kate	Halstead	Sno-Valley Tilth
Karen	Kinney	Washington State Farmers Market Association
Judy	Kirkuff	Seattle Farmers Market Association
Sharon	Lerman	City of Seattle - Office of Sustainability and Environment
Julian	O'Reilly	Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance
Mark	Rowe	Seattle - King County Public Health
Karen	Selander	City of Seattle - Department of Neighborhoods
Phyllis	Shulman	City of Seattle - Office of Councilmember Conlin
Brennon	Staley	City of Seattle - Department of Planning and Development
Jill	Trohimovich	Public Health – Seattle & King County
Joel	Wachs	Washington State Farmers Market Association
Other Attendees and Interested Parties		
Melissa	Borsting	Carnation Farmers Market, Sno-Valley Tilth
Karen	Erickson	Snohomish Farmers Market
		Queen Anne Farmers Market
John	Rosselli	Darrington City Council
Carol	Marques	Citizen
PSRC Staff		
Liz	Underwood-Bultmann	Puget Sound Regional Council
Rebeccah	Maskin	Puget Sound Regional Council
Marina	King	Puget Sound Regional Council

## Appendix B: Farmers Market Working Group Meeting Summaries

**Summary Notes**

Friday, August 16, 2013, 11:00 am to 12:30 pm  
 Pike Place Market Goodwin Library

**Meeting Attendees**

Brynn Brady, Pierce County ( <i>via phone</i> )	Brad Gaolach, WSU Extension	Jill Trohimovich, Public Health Seattle-King Co.
Charlie Cuniff, Seattle OED	Kate Halstead, Sno-Valley Tilth	Max Zinkus, Seattle (intern)
Chris Curtis, NFMA	Karen Kinney, WSFMA	
Colleen Donovan, WSU Small Farms Program	Judy Kirkhuff, SFMA	<b>PSRC Staff</b>
Becky Elias, Public Health Seattle-King Co.	Sharon Lerman, Seattle OSE	Liz Underwood-Bultmann, PSRC - <i>facilitator</i>
Steve Evans, King County	Julian O’Reilly, FNMA	Marina King, PSRC
Ben Franz-Knight, Pike Place Market	Phyllis Shulman, Seattle City Council	Rebecca Maskin, PSRC

- 1) **Welcome & Introductions.** Liz Underwood-Bultmann (PSRC - *facilitator*) called the meeting to order at 11:05 a.m. Meeting attendees introduced themselves.
- 2) **Project Overview and Objectives.** Sharon Lerman (City of Seattle) and Liz Underwood-Bultmann (PSRC) provided background on the project and discussed objectives for the working group. Liz distributed the scope of work and preliminary project schedule to the group. The working group will meet four times over the contract period of September through the end of 2013. The roles of the working group are to help identify obstacles, identify solutions/best practices, and provide feedback on final contract deliverables produced by staff.

Sharon provided an overview of Seattle’s recent work on farmers markets. One goal of the city with this project is to better anticipate and address challenges for farmers markets in the city.

Overall, this project aims to identify:

- a) The key obstacles to the viability of farmers markets;
- b) National and international municipal best practices in addressing identified obstacles, including practices underway in Seattle and other Puget Sound jurisdictions;
- c) Tools that the City of Seattle and other local jurisdictions might use to stabilize farmers markets. While the focus of the contract is to identify strategies for the City of Seattle, it is our intent to identify barriers and opportunities that can be applicable to other jurisdictions in the central Puget Sound region.

- 3) **Existing Research and Relevant Reports.** The working group reviewed the preliminary list of reports (see **Attachment B**). Working group members were asked to review the list and suggest additional resources for staff to review. At the meeting, members suggested the following resources:
  - *Markets: Public and Private* by Arthur Goodwin. Ben can provide a scanned copy to staff.
  - Garry Stevenson/ Larry Lev at Oregon State University have numerous technical reports on farmers markets.
  - Colleen has a large bibliography of existing resources that she can share with PSRC staff.
- 4) **Obstacles to Farmers Market Viability**  
 General comments:
  - Several thought a definition of “farmers markets” would be valuable to put parameters around the project. Current definitions include a WSFMA definition and the administrative definition established by the City of Seattle. Establishing a codified definition was not considered an obstacle for Seattle

markets, but it may be important to define markets in other jurisdictions to maintain focus on farms and food.

- Working Group members emphasized the importance of describing the public benefits that farmers markets provide. This process provides an opportunity to address some issue for markets and make a case for ongoing policy support for markets.
- Issues with farmers market sites likely won't dissipate but a policy foundation could help direct city priorities.
- Identification of obstacles and challenges can include a broader set of issues, but the focus of project recommendations will be on the tools employed by local government. This group should aim to make recommendations about city roles and potential actions.
- Rural, suburban, and urban markets face very different challenges. Local differences in Seattle are generally not experienced by small markets.

Karen Kinney (WSFMA) shared results from a state-wide survey of markets on top challenges for markets. These include:

- Vendors – getting & keeping the right kind
- Customer base – getting enough & educating of food cost
- Market location
- Market management
- Market promotion and outreach
- Funding – paying for manager & outreach
- Community – educating and gaining support
- Food access – use of benefits at markets

The working group identified several obstacles to farmers market viability, generally grouped into five categories: institutional support from the city; market location and siting; other regulations, permits, and fees; market business practices; and consumer access. **The full list of obstacles is outlined in Attachment A (Obstacles to Farmers Market Viability).** Discussion on some of the obstacles and recommendations is outlined below.

#### *Institutional support from city*

- The group discussed what city department should be responsible for serving farmers markets. There are many factors at play in what department has responsibility including city needs, department orientation, skills and sustainable funding. It may help to clarify the city's approach in whether markets are treated as institutions, services, special events or an economic development sector. Working group members suggested researching other jurisdictions for examples of organizational structure within cities.

#### *Market location and siting*

- Maintaining permanent locations is very important to help consumers become regular shoppers and lessen burden on markets from displacement
- Many market sites are at risk of development – consider whether there is an opportunity to preserve open space for farmers markets neighborhood density increases.
- Identify any issues in market notification of pending development.
- Evaluate historical siting issues to evaluate how to anticipate relocation and disruption and any lessons learned from displacement.
- Allowing markets to site in the public right-of-way removes a barrier, but siting in public rights-of-way requires anticipating other challenges.
- The group should consider appropriate criteria for siting, though there will always be complexity of individual locations. An asset evaluation to identify appropriate market sites could provide useful information.

- Identify potential incentives for private property owners to preserve market space. Vancouver, B.C., for example, provides tax credits for community gardens. Consider if there are way to encourage preserving space for markets in existing programs, such as the Green Factor.

*Other Regulations, Permits, or Fees*

- Establishing a priority for street use, over parades/festivals/events.
- Recent Seattle changes to permitting and fees have been helpful.

*Market business practices*

- Farmers markets don't thrive financially because markets prioritize the social goods they provide. The farmers market model doesn't work well as a business but does work well for many individual vendors. Identify best business practices to help support markets, such as consumer education, outreach and market profitability.
- Farmers markets serve a role in incubating and supporting small/new farms – consider any additional financial or institutional support for serving this role. WSU is looking for funding to expand the business side of its farmers education program.
- Identify the functions markets perform and costs they absorb without reimbursement.

*Consumer access*

- Consumer outreach and education, including connecting with schools, is an important component to market success.

5) **Action Items**

- Working group members should identify other relevant reports not on the resource list (see **Attachment B** for the list).
- Staff will compile a list of obstacles identified at the meeting (see **Attachment A**). Working group members should follow-up with staff to add other obstacles or refine the list. Note: while the obstacles will be addressed again at the next meeting, it would be efficient to build on the list between meetings if there are major issues not included.
- Working group members should send staff a list of market benefits, which will be included in final project deliverables.
- PSRC staff will contact the group about scheduling future meetings. (**Completed** – meeting scheduled for 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesdays from 10:00 am – 12:00 noon.)

6) **Next Meeting:** Tuesday, September 24, 2013 – 10:00 am - 12:00 noon, Pike Place Market Elliott Bay Room

**Questions:** If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Liz Underwood-Bultmann at (206) 464-6174 or [LUnderwood-Bultmann@psrc.org](mailto:LUnderwood-Bultmann@psrc.org) or Rebeccah Maskin at (206) 464-5833 or [RMaskin@psrc.org](mailto:RMaskin@psrc.org).

## Attachment A - **Obstacles to Farmers Market Viability**

### **Institutional support from city**

- No single institutional home for farmers markets at city hall
- Markets treated or managed as special events, but require continuity, permanency
- Ongoing political commitment from city government
  - Lack of community and political understanding of market benefits.
- Unsupported costs covered by markets – safety and security, social role of supporting small farmers

### **Market location and siting**

- Ongoing displacement/risk of development at some market locations
- Identifying suitable new locations - balancing optimal site location with risks of development
- Financial and programmatic support of markets not commensurate with support for farmland preservation

### **Other regulations, permits, or fees**

- Markets operating in the public right-of-way don't have priority over other special event uses

### **Market business practices**

- Identifying a definition of farmers markets and maintaining focus on farms and food
- Ensuring sufficient vendors for markets
- Growing customer base
- Market promotion (in general and funds for)
- Retaining vendors in weaker markets
- Allowing new farmers entry, while supporting experienced vendors that are profitable
- Balancing social mission with market financial sustainability
- Manager and board turnover

### **Consumer access**

- Providing access for low income and EBT shoppers
- Community awareness of markets

Tuesday, September 24, 2013, 10:00 am to 12:00 noon  
Pike Place Elliott Bay Room Library

### Meeting Attendees

Brynn Brady, Pierce County  
Chris Curtis, NFMA  
Becky Elias, Public Health Seattle-King County  
Steve Evans, King County  
Colleen Donovan, WSU Small Farms Program (*phone*)  
Sharon Lerman, City of Seattle

Julian O'Reilley, NFMA  
Phyllis Shulman, City of Seattle  
Jill Trohimovich, Public Health Seattle-King County  
**PSRC staff**  
Liz Underwood-Bultmann - *facilitator*  
Marina King

- 1) Welcome and Introductions.** Liz Underwood-Bultmann (PSRC – *facilitator*) called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. There were around the room introductions.
- 2) Discussion: Obstacles to Farmers Market Viability.** Liz provided a handout with obstacles, which was developed based on conversation at the August 16<sup>th</sup> meeting. The list also contains obstacles provided by the Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance and other obstacles identified through a literature review. The list calls out items that are the focus on the project (affect Seattle markets and can be influenced by local government) and other obstacles that impede the sustainability urban farmers markets.

Working Group members made several suggestions to refine the list. These included changing the title of the first section from “Institutional Support from the City” to “Institutional Support.” The working group discussed providing additional detail around “cumbersome permitting processes.” The item should be broadened to describe the institutional interaction, fees, processes, and regulatory consistency.

Under the topic of Consumer Access, the working group suggested looking at collective marketing of farmers markets. Puget Sound Fresh is an example of this type of marketing that supports markets and is partially supported by public agencies (King County and the King Conservation District).

The group discussed the public policy case for farmers markets to support ongoing political commitment. Members suggested a one page data sheet and/or an info-graphic that could be provided to elected officials to tell the story of how markets are contributing to communities. Indicators or other monitoring could help support the policy case for farmers markets. It isn't clear if something like this has already been compiled by the city – PSRC will ask city staff when they meet with that group separately.

Municipal ordinances that prohibit “peddling of farm produce” should be removed, as it doesn't appear applicable in the Washington context. “Transit Infrastructure” development isn't just a problem around transit centers. Farmers Markets are dependent on street usage, so road work in general is a possible obstacle. Markets are held one day/week, and construction can have an impact on vendors and shoppers. The city could better involve farmers markets early when planning construction projects.

Several items were addressed under Market Business Practices. The group discussed the inherent revenue uncertainties in the farmers market business model. Markets have a public mission as well as an economic one, and it may be a matter of reframing the obstacles to acknowledge that markets operate based on a number of revenue streams. There are sustainable models but they rely on a mix of supports; vendor fees alone don't cover expenses for most markets. Rather than competition among markets, the obstacle should



be reframed as competing demand or oversaturation of markets. Members recommended consolidating several items under Market Business Practices to “Limited staffing resources.” Local governments can play a role in supporting markets through staffing – several jurisdictions in the central Puget Sound help staff markets.

- 3) Priorities and Next Steps.** At the next meeting, the working group will shift focus to discussing best practices and solutions for the issues identified. Liz stated that PSRC staff would be talking to the Regional Food Policy Council and then finalizing the list of obstacles by the next meeting. PSRC staff will schedule meetings with City of Seattle staff to talk about work that has already been done and begin a conversation about solutions. Colleen Donovan (WSU) has been working on a survey of market vendors and managers and will provide that report.
- 4) Adjourn.** The meeting adjourned at 11:35 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, November 5 from 10:30 am to 12:00 noon at the Seattle Municipal Tower.**

**Questions:** If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Liz Underwood-Bultmann at (206) 464-6174 or [LUnderwood-Bultmann@psrc.org](mailto:LUnderwood-Bultmann@psrc.org) or Rebeccah Maskin at (206) 464-5833 or [RMaskin@psrc.org](mailto:RMaskin@psrc.org).

**Regional Food Policy Council  
Farmers Market Project Working Group  
Summary Notes**

Tuesday, November 5, 2013, 10:30 am to 12:00 noon  
Seattle Municipal Tower, Room 1940, 700 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Seattle

**Meeting Attendees**

Brynn Brady, Pierce County  
Charlie Cunniff, City of Seattle OED  
Colleen Donovan, WSU Small Farms Program (*phone*)  
Becky Elias, Public Health Seattle-King County  
Steve Evans, King County  
Karen Kinney, WSFMA  
Sharon Lerman, City of Seattle  
Carol Marquess, Rainier Valley Food Bank  
Julian O'Reilly, NFMA

Councilmember John Rosselli, Town of Darrington  
Karen Selander, City of Seattle, DoN  
Phyllis Shulman, City of Seattle  
Jill Trohimovich, Public Health Seattle-King County  
Joel Wachs, WSFMA  
**PSRC staff**  
Rebecca Maskin - *facilitator*  
Marina King  
Liz Underwood-Bultmann

**1) Welcome and Introductions.** Rebecca Maskin (PSRC – *facilitator*) called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. There were around the room introductions.

**2) Discussion: Obstacles to Farmers Market Viability.**

Rebecca distributed the Obstacles list, updated to incorporate input from the Working Group and the Regional Food Policy Council, and including a list of potential solutions to the obstacles listed. The list had been narrowed to include only those items that will be the focus of discussion on solutions. Members suggested that due to the number of obstacles/solutions listed, the group might wish to select some strategies as priorities for early action and additional detail in the recommendations.

The obstacle “No single institutional home at city hall” was discussed. The group discussed what was meant by providing an “institutional home.” Charlie Cunniff, City of Seattle, stated that permit oversight and coordination resides with the Office of Economic Development, with input from other departments. Members suggested that a clear scope of what markets need and what OED could provide would be helpful, as well as a regular meeting between market organizations and OED. Members suggested that additional dedicated staff resources at the City would further address these issues. The King County meeting of farmers market managers includes Seattle markets, and could be a resource for additional market coordination. This meeting could also be used to better understand inconsistencies between jurisdictions such as signage and fees.

Under the category of “Market Location and Siting”, the inconsistencies of parking signage, ticketing and towing of violators was discussed. Partnerships between business improvement associations and chambers of commerce and farmers markets could potentially offset some market day preparation issues. A specific meeting between SDOT, SPD and farmers market organizations was suggested to address the parking sign/priority towing issues. Discussing displacement risk, adding farmers markets to notification of proposed land use actions should be added to the “solutions” column was suggested. City of Seattle staff mentioned that a capital projects staff person should be trained on awareness of the risk of new development on farmers markets. Members asked if there were best practices, nationally, regarding market location and permitting issues. Adding two more columns to the Obstacles list, “Relevant Departments” and “Next Steps,” was proposed.

Members recommended identifying the key characteristics of successful market locations and identifying the issues and opportunities of operating in the public right-of-way. The solutions should also include identifying site-specific issues for each market. Ideal location is also a case-by-case issue, dependent on individual markets and their neighborhood. The City of Seattle offers lower permitting fees for market use of the right-of-way in recognition of the benefits markets provide. City staff commented that being in a retail business of any kind in the city offers challenges, but the city government is committed to being supportive of markets.

Members stated that the benefits of farmers markets in neighborhoods should be documented to make the public policy case. Members stated that requirements for street use petitions to be confusing; the members thought the city could provide more clarity about petition requirements. There may be some latitude for administrative approval for siting farmers markets there would not require statutory treatments such as market overlay zones or “Festival Streets” codes. The concept of preserving right-of-way access during market operation was discussed. Farmers markets in other cities sometimes have a traffic control officer to allow safe, local access during market hours.

Regarding “community awareness of markets,” members commented that the WSFMA promotes farmers markets and could consider additional regional coordination. This is perhaps more efficient than the city focusing on collective marketing. The group discussed regional management of markets and the role of the WSFMA.

If a neighborhood has limited access to healthy food, a market is only one tool and it may not be the most effective tool. City staff stated that markets are regarded as private enterprises that the city provides a level of support for, but the city does not direct creating markets in particular neighborhoods. City staff noted that the city funds the Fresh Bucks program. Broader outreach and education could increase contributions to the program and to markets in general. The WSFMA is coordinating with the State Department of Health to support markets in low-income neighborhoods. There is state funding to support increasing EBT shopping at markets. This could be a synchronous funding opportunity for outreach and education. Additional outreach to state agencies on how beneficiaries of programs like WIC can use farmers markets might be helpful in attracting more low income shoppers to markets. Karen Kinney, WSFMA, mentioned that the organization’s annual conference will be at the end of January – examples from other markets can help broaden the discussion.

Councilmember John Rosselli, Town of Darrington, commented that it’s important to consider rural issues with farmers markets in terms of access for both farmers to larger markets and locating markets to serve rural residents.

**3) Priorities and Next Steps.**

Rebeccah requested any further feedback on the obstacles and solutions via e-mail, by Friday, November 22<sup>nd</sup>. The solutions list will be reviewed at the next meeting and members can decide whether an additional meeting is needed.

**4) Adjourn.** The meeting adjourned at 12:10 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for **Monday, December 2<sup>nd</sup> from 3:00 – 4:30 at PSRC.**

**Questions:** If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Liz Underwood-Bultmann at (206) 464-6174 or [LUnderwood-Bultmann@psrc.org](mailto:LUnderwood-Bultmann@psrc.org) or Rebeccah Maskin at (206) 464-5833 or [RMaskin@psrc.org](mailto:RMaskin@psrc.org).

Monday, December 2, 2013, 3:00 to 4:30 pm  
Central Meeting Room, PSRC

**Meeting Attendees**

Charlie Cunniff, City of Seattle OED (*phone*)  
Chris Curtis, NFMA  
Colleen Donovan, WSU Small Farms Program (*phone*)  
Becky Elias, Public Health Seattle-King County  
Steve Evans, King County  
Judy Kirkhuff, Seattle Farmers Market Association  
Sharon Lerman, City of Seattle  
Julian O'Reilly, NFMA

Karen Selander, City of Seattle DoN  
Jill Trohimovich, Public Health Seattle-King County  
Joel Wachs, WSFMA

**PSRC staff**

Rebecca Maskin - *facilitator*  
Marina King  
Liz Underwood-Bultmann

**1) Welcome and Introductions.**

**2) Discussion: Recommended Strategies to Overcome Obstacles.**

The group walked through the draft recommended solutions table. Comments on the recommendations list include:

**Agency coordination** – for the annual meeting, working group members suggested incorporating departments with oversight of wastewater and waste programs, in addition to encouraging OED to attend the quarterly King County farmers market meetings.

**Advance notification of development** – a staff position to coordinate capital projects was not included in the final city budget, but this can be achieved with current city processes. The notification distance should be the same as notification for property owners.

**Priority use in the right-of-way** – OED and market managers have been working on this recommendation. The term “other” should be removed from the recommendation – the report should be clear the farmers markets are not just another type of special event.

**Site prep task forces** – members suggested clarifying the activities associated with this recommendation, including street cleaning. The working group also discussed provision of restroom facilities to the public. Markets could apply for parks funding/grants to provide projects such as bathrooms in parks in the vicinity of markets. The neighborhood matching fund is another source of such funding.

**Dedicated city staff time** – the recommendation focuses on additional staff time for OED to work with farmers markets. This recommendation should describe what this staff work would consist of. Members suggested that a farmers market ombudsman who would help markets coordinate with all city departments would be ideal. OED has dedicated limited staffing to farmers market coordination, but additional staff time would be useful in addressing these issues. Clarifying or codifying the amount of staffing (for example 20% FTE) dedicated to farmers market work.

**Future funding mechanisms** – the working group recommended referencing the recommendation of including farmers markets in a potential farmland preservation funding more generally. Farmers market presence could be considered in Park's capital project investments.

**Permanent “No Parking” signs** – City of Seattle staff clarified that referencing specific farmers markets on city signs constitutes advertising and could not be done in the future. Members commented that these items should not be a priority recommendation, given that parking issues are addressed through priority use of the right of way. Some additional meeting or coordination could be effective for addressing approach to ticketing, towing and signage.

**Policy priority** – members suggested recommending the solution to reinforce the importance of farmers markets in city policy development.

**Develop long-term strategy for market locations** – is bolded as a recommended strategy because it is intended to address obstacles more holistically. The working group discussed concerns about the city deciding appropriate sites for a largely private activity. This is a larger conversation than can be encompassed with this project.

**Consumer access** – the recommendations on collective marketing should be broader to cite Puget Sound Fresh as an example and that other initiatives may be appropriate to fund to achieve this objective.

Smaller scale models – move the phrase “underserved neighborhoods” into the objectives, and description of this recommendation, and out of the recommendation language.

PSRC staff said that member comments would be incorporated and a final draft would be sent to members.

**3) Discussion: Report Outline and Best Practices.**

Liz Underwood-Bultmann (PSRC) reviewed the outline for the final report. She asked for comments on the outline after members have reviewed it on their own. She stated that staff are developing a best practices list by reviewing national examples, particularly how cities have institutionally supported markets. Additional examples from group members would be helpful.

**4) Adjourn.** The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m. This was the final meeting of the committee.

**Questions:** If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Rebecca Maskin at (206) 464-5833 or [RMaskin@psrc.org](mailto:RMaskin@psrc.org) or Liz Underwood-Bultmann at (206) 464-6174 or [LUnderwood-Bultmann@psrc.org](mailto:LUnderwood-Bultmann@psrc.org).

Appendix C: Farmers Market Working Group  
Obstacles to Farmers Market Viability

Focus Areas - Farmers Market Obstacles

Issue Area	Obstacle	Source	Seattle Issue?	Local Gov't Role?
Institutional Support	City has actively coordinated permitting, but other issues are handled as they emerge, rather than anticipated in advance.	FM Working Group	x	x
	Markets are handled at as special events - markets operating in the public right-of-way don't have priority over other special event uses*	FM Working Group	x	x
	Ongoing political commitment from city government - lack of community and political understanding of market benefits.	FM Working Group	x	x
	Costs of externalities experienced by markets – safety and security, social role of supporting small farmers:			
	Externalities include need to ticket and tow cars, and clear and secure the site on market day and other days of the week.	NFMA list	x	x
	Limited public financial and programmatic support for farmers markets, including collective marketing of farmers markets	FM Working Group	x	x
	Cumbersome permitting processes, regulations and fee structure. Agency interaction includes the Seattle Department of Transportation, Seattle Fire Department, Seattle Parks and Recreation, Seattle/King County Health Department, and Washington Liquor Control Board.	FM Working Group	x	x
	Inconsistent regulations between jurisdictions creates confusion.	FM Working Group	x	x
Market location and siting	Ongoing displacement/potential for development for some market locations	FM Working Group	x	x
	Identifying suitable locations for displaced markets - balancing optimal site location with risks of development	FM Working Group	x	x
	Transit Infrastructure: road construction that impacts market location, vendor parking, loading, shopper access, and market storage	NFMA list	x	x
	Development utilizing open space/lot locations, right of ways, curb cuts during construction and afterwards; development taking priority for street closure permits	NFMA list	x	x
	Condo associations, businesses, individual neighbors blocking market access to streets, preventing display of market materials	NFMA list	x	x
Consumer Access	Community awareness of markets - expanding the shopper base through collective marketing	FM Working Group	x	x
	Providing access for low income and EBT shoppers	FM Working Group	x	x
	Perception that markets are unregulated/misconceptions about consumer safety	FM Working Group	x	x
	Market manager and vendors confusion about food assistance program requirements and eligibility	3	x	x
Market Organizational Structure	Competing demand/oversaturation creates challenge for farmers	4	x	x
	Limited staffing resources	5	x	x
Market Design	Growing demand (enough shoppers) while growing markets	FM Working Group	x	x
	Fast growth of markets, has not provided time to adequately analyze what makes a successful market in each environment	4	x	x

## Other Issues Impacting Farmers Markets

Issue Area	Obstacle	Source	Seattle Issue?	Local Gov't Role?
<b>Institutional Support</b>	Farmers markets not defined in allowed uses/zoning	1		x
<b>Consumer Access</b>	Perception that farmers market prices are higher	4	x	
<b>Market Organizational Structure</b>	Identifying a definition of farmers markets that maintains focus on farms and food	FM Working Group		x
	Retaining vendors in weaker markets- everyone wants a stall at popular markets (Seattle markets)	FM Working Group	?	
	Allowing new farmers entry, while supporting experienced vendors that make money	FM Working Group	x	
	Balancing social mission with market financial sustainability	FM Working Group	x	
	Stall fees don't sustain the market- the business model for FMs is unsustainable. In Seattle, the larger markets support the smaller, less-profitable ones.	FM Working Group	x	
	What makes a market successful doesn't create a sustainable business model	FM Working Group	x	
	Manager and board turnover	FM Working Group	x	
	Inadequate management training for managers	4	x	
	Maintaining volunteer network	FM Working Group	x	
<b>Market Design</b>	Ensuring sufficient vendors for markets	FM Working Group	?	
	Developing how large the "local" area is	2		
	Whether "Carrying" the products of another producer is allowed	2		
	How to enforce market rules and penalties	2		
	Fees: flat vs. % of sales	2		
	Vendor integrity - difficult to verify vendor claims	4		
	Farmers lacking direct-marketing skills (attractive displays, helpful employees)	4	x	
	Farm inspections by market managers	2	?	
	Profitability of farmers markets for farmers as a whole	FM Working Group		
	Physical access to vendors - logistically, attracting vendors, attracting quality vendors	FM Working Group		
	Food safety reporting burden on smaller farms	4	x	

### Sources

FM Working Group **Farmers Market Working Group meeting** - August 16, 2013 - See summary of August 16 meeting

NFMA list **Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance list** of issues that affect the financial sustainability of urban markets - See agenda for September 24 meeting

- 1 **Establishing Land Use Protections for Farmers Markets**  
[http://changelabsolutions.org/sites/default/files/documents/Establishing\\_Land\\_Use\\_Protections\\_for\\_Farmers\\_Markets\\_FINAL\\_WEB\\_20091203.pdf](http://changelabsolutions.org/sites/default/files/documents/Establishing_Land_Use_Protections_for_Farmers_Markets_FINAL_WEB_20091203.pdf)
- 2 **Farmers' Markets Rules, Regulations, and Opportunities**  
<http://agmarketing.extension.psu.edu/ComFarmMkt/PDFs/farmmrkruleregandopp.pdf>
- 3 **Farmers Market Access Project, Expanding Nutrition Assistance Programs at WA Farmers Markets**  
<http://your.kingcounty.gov/dnrp/library/water-and-land/agriculture/farmers-markets/201211-FMAP-Report.pdf>
- 4 **King County Farmers Market Report**  
<http://your.kingcounty.gov/dnrp/library/water-and-land/agriculture/farmers-markets/farmers-market-report-final.pdf>
- 5 **When Things Don't Work: Some Insights into Why Farmers Markets Close**  
[http://smallfarms.oregonstate.edu/sites/default/files/small-farms-tech-report/eesc\\_1073.pdf](http://smallfarms.oregonstate.edu/sites/default/files/small-farms-tech-report/eesc_1073.pdf)

\* Seattle's policy is currently under revision to include Farmers Markets as priority uses

	Recommendations (Bold = Higher Priority)	Objective	Relevant Departments
Institutional Support	<b>Establish a season's end meeting in October between permitting departments and market managers. Establish regular meeting between OED and the FMs to discuss further market and city coordination beyond permitting issues (implementing business planning, site issues). OED staff should attend quarterly King County farmers market manager meeting.</b>	Proactive coordination, institutional support, business development, develop waste programs	OED, SDOT, Parks, DPD, DoN, OSE, SPU, Public Health, Fire, FAS
	<b>Advance notification of project development on or near farmers market sites</b>	Proactive coordination, anticipate displacement issues	OED, DPD, SDOT
	<b>Grant markets operating in the public right-of-way priority over special event uses. As part of this policy, include more permanent "no parking" signs at market locations</b>	Avoid temporary displacement from special events. Better inform public of parking restrictions, reduce labor of placing temporary signage	SDOT, OED
	<b>Continue to reinforce the importance of farmers markets in city policy development</b>	Establish long-term public policy case for supporting markets	OED, OSE
	Create site prep task forces for market days	Proactively address preparation of sites in terms of safety and security, trash, parking and towing	
	Further dedicate staff time to working on farmers market issues	Proactive coordination, demonstrate commitment to farmers markets	OED, OSE
	Encourage the inclusion of farmers markets in appropriate future funding mechanism/s	Dedicated support of farmers markets, increase community awareness of farmers markets	
	<b>Convene SPD, SDOT and farmers markets organizations on parking and towing concerns.</b>	Identify opportunities for additional strategies to address specific parking concerns	OED, SDOT, SPD
Market location and siting	<b>Develop long-term strategy for market locations</b> - Evaluate displacement risk for FMs - Identify characteristics that create market success, complete a neighborhood scale site analysis to identify optimal market locations.	Proactive coordination to anticipate market displacement and support development of new markets	OED, DPD, OSE, SDOT, Parks, DoN
	Incorporate appropriate farmers markets in Festival Street designation.	Support long-term siting of markets in streets	SDOT, OED
	<b>Advanced notification of project development on or near farmers market sites.</b>	Proactive coordination, anticipate displacement issues	DPD
	<b>Incorporate farmers markets in development agreements and covenants.</b>	Support preservation of existing sites	DPD, OED
	Identify farmers markets as public benefit in Seattle's incentive zoning program.	Support preservation of existing sites	DPD
	<b>Consider market presence in street design projects.</b>	Coordinate with markets early if construction projects will impact market operations	SDOT
	<b>Consider market presence in construction design phases.</b>	Coordinate with markets early if construction projects will impact market operations	DPD
Clarify petition process for neighborhood approval or denial of farmers markets in right-of-way.	Information sharing to clarify standards	SDOT	
Consumer Access	Provide support for collective marketing through existing marketing programs, such as Puget Sound Fresh.	Support collective marketing through existing programs	OED
	<b>Continue or enhance contribution to Fresh Bucks Program.</b>	Expand consumer base and food access at markets	OSE, HSD
	Develop incentives for markets in neighborhoods with limited food access (i.e. fee waivers, other financial incentives).	Expand opportunities for markets in more neighborhoods by developing incentives	DPD, OED, OSE
Market Design	<b>Explore models for smaller scale markets and develop appropriate definitions.</b>	Address other market types, expand opportunities to locate in neighborhoods not currently served by markets	DPD, OED
	Support business development for market organizations - help implement business planning recommendations.	Encourage markets to achieve long-term business stability through implementing business planning recommendations	OED

**No city recommendation at this time**

Institutional Support	Connect farmers markets with chambers of commerce and business improvement areas/districts	Build local support and assistance in addressing site-specific concerns like trash pick-up	
	Community-based collective financing of FMs from property owners that benefit from their presence	Develop stable funding	
	Use multi-jurisdictional farmers markets meetings to disseminate information on differing regulations between jurisdictions	Address regional inconsistencies for vendors	
	Regional coordination/management of FMs and participating vendors.	Support smaller markets by leveraging with larger markets	
Market location and siting	Farmers Market overlay/development regulations to permit markets	Allow easier siting of markets. *Zoning to support farmers markets not seem to be significant issue in Seattle, but approach may be beneficial for other jurisdictions*	
	Identify creative solutions to preserve private and local access during markets	Site-specific	
Consumer Access	Regional management to economize training and understanding and consolidate this knowledge to one place	To build knowledge and capacity about food assistance program requirements and eligibility	
	Increase health department visibility at markets, include on marketing materials	Address any concerns that markets are less regulated than other food purveyors	
Market Organizational Structure	Regional management/coordination of FMs and participating vendors	Leverage large markets to support smaller markets	
	Regional management could benefit knowledge/skill issues through trainings for issues where the city may not have leverage	Address limited staffing for markets throughout the region	



## Appendix E: References

[Establishing Land Use Protections for Farmers Markets.](#) ChangeLab Solutions, 2009.

[Farmers' Markets Rules, Regulations, and Opportunities.](#) National AgLaw Center, June 2002.

[Farmers Market Access Project, Expanding Nutrition Assistance Programs at WA Farmers Markets.](#) Farmers Market Access Project Advisory Committee, 2012.

[From the Ground Up: Land Use Policies to Protect and Promote Farmers' Markets.](#) ChangeLab Solutions, 2013.

[King County Farmers Market Report.](#) King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks, February 2010.

[Multi-Departmental Administrative Rules: Farmers Market Permitting Process - 2009 Pilot Program.](#) City of Seattle, 2009.

*Public Benefits of Farmers Markets.* Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance – Personal Correspondence, 2013.

[Summary Report: Farmers Markets and the Experiences of Market Managers in Washington State.](#) Washington State University Small Farms Program, 2013.

[Washington State Farmers Market Association,](#) 2013.

[When Things Don't Work: Some Insights into Why Farmers Markets Close.](#) Oregon State University Extension Services, December 2006.

Appendix F: Annotated Bibliography of Farmers Market Reports

August 2013 – State/Local Reports and National Reports (shaded blue)

Title	Source	Notes
Community Food Security Coalition Recommendations for Food Systems Policy in Seattle	Fisher, Andrew & Roberts, Susan. Community Food Security Coalition, for Seattle City Council, April 2011. <a href="http://www.seattle.gov/council/conlin/attachments/201105foodsystempol.pdf">http://www.seattle.gov/council/conlin/attachments/201105foodsystempol.pdf</a>	<p>Recommends food systems policy development and implementation. Reviews existing policies. Recommendations (beginning pg. 13) include: <i>Further Food-related Economic Development Opportunities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategy 29 - Develop new and strengthen existing programs to incentivize patronage of farmers markets.</li> </ul> <p><i>Reduce Settle Residents' Hunger and Increase Food Security</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategy 30 - Support flexible, low-cost, non-“bricks and mortar” forms of food access.</li> <li>• Strategy 31 - Incorporate outreach on SNAP into city programs and partner with other public and private entities.</li> <li>• Strategy 32 - Incent grocery stores, farmers markets etc. to locate in underserved communities.</li> </ul>
Community Health & Food Access: The Local Government Role	International City/County Management Association (2006). <a href="http://bookstore.icma.org/freedocs/E43398.pdf">http://bookstore.icma.org/freedocs/E43398.pdf</a>	Overview of strategies and approaches that cities and counties can use to improve access to healthy foods. Report provides national examples and a case study of the Ann Arbor farmers market, whose success led to community-based planning and farmland protection. Has resources & end notes. 24 page report.
Establishing Land Use Protections for Farmers Markets	National Policy & Legal Analysis Network to Prevent Childhood Obesity, a project of Public Health Law & Policy, December 2009. <a href="http://changelabsolutions.org/sites/default/files/documents/Establishing_Land_Use_Protections_for_Farmers_Markets_FINAL_WEB_20091203.pdf">http://changelabsolutions.org/sites/default/files/documents/Establishing_Land_Use_Protections_for_Farmers_Markets_FINAL_WEB_20091203.pdf</a>	Includes model comprehensive plan policies and zoning code to create more opportunities for farmers markets and ensure long-term viability. Discusses removing land use barriers, optimizing location, increasing access for low-income customers. Recommends actions for local government, including streamlining permitting, allowing use of public lands, subsidizing purchases for low-income residents, partnering with local schools and non-profit organizations to promote markets. 16 page report, footnotes.
Farmers Market Access Project, Expanding Nutrition Assistance Programs at WA Farmers Markets	King County, and the Farmers Market Access Project Advisory Committee. Funded by U.S. Department of Health & Humans Services and Public Health – Seattle & King County, 2012. <a href="http://your.kingcounty.gov/dnrp/library/water-and-land/agriculture/farmers-markets/201211-FMAP-Report.pdf">http://your.kingcounty.gov/dnrp/library/water-and-land/agriculture/farmers-markets/201211-FMAP-Report.pdf</a>	Explores nutrition assistance programs at nine farmers markets in King County. Contains recommendations regarding use of nutrition assistance programs, pg. 24. Includes references & appendices. 63 page report.

Farmers Markets as a Strategy to Improve Access to Healthy Food for Low-Income Families	Project for Public Spaces & Columbia University. Funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2009. <a href="http://www.pps.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/RWJF-Report.pdf">http://www.pps.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/RWJF-Report.pdf</a>	Project examined eight markets across the U.S. to answer three key questions regarding strategies for developing financially sustainable markets in low-income areas, what attracts low-income shoppers, and whether youth-oriented programs affect orientation to healthy eating. Recommendations, pg. 17 of the 20 page report.
Farmers Markets, Public Markets	Municipal Research & Services Center of Washington. Web document. Updated 9/2012. <a href="http://www.mrsc.org/subjects/econ/ed-farmmarket.aspx">www.mrsc.org/subjects/econ/ed-farmmarket.aspx</a>	Lists WA state regulations related to farmers markets. Lists government-sponsored farmers markets and includes some market documents such as bylaws, rules and regulations. Includes examples of local licensing, permitting & policy documents, temporary use permits, and promotional materials. Lists additional resources.
Farmers Markets Report	King County Department of Natural Resources & Parks, Water & Land Resources Division, February 2010. <a href="http://your.kingcounty.gov/dnrp/library/water-and-land/agriculture/farmers-markets/farmers-market-report-final.pdf">http://your.kingcounty.gov/dnrp/library/water-and-land/agriculture/farmers-markets/farmers-market-report-final.pdf</a>	Focuses on farmers markets in King County. Documents the public benefits of farmers markets and makes recommendations on markets' need for funding subsidies and assistance securing permanent locations. 23 page report.
Food Access Policy & Planning Guide	Eva Ringstrom, Branden Born, UW Northwest Center for Livable Communities, December 2011. <a href="http://www.nyc.gov/html/ddc/downloads/pdf/ActiveDesignWebinar/King%20County%20Food%20Access%20Guide.pdf">http://www.nyc.gov/html/ddc/downloads/pdf/ActiveDesignWebinar/King%20County%20Food%20Access%20Guide.pdf</a>	Pages 21 & 22 of this 47 page report includes recommendations on policy and planning options, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define and establish farmers markets as an approved land use</li> <li>• Allow markets on city-owned property</li> <li>• Work with schools and other institutions to allow markets on school grounds</li> <li>• Identify appropriate sites and ensure tenure for new markets (parks, street closures)</li> <li>• Streamline permitting process for small markets</li> <li>• Enable/require ability to purchase via federal nutrition program benefits at farmers' markets</li> <li>• Encourage developers to dedicate space for farmers markets</li> </ul>
Impact of WIC & Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Programs in Washington Communities	WA Farmers Market Association, 2011 <a href="http://www.wafarmersmarkets.com/docs/2011-WSFMA-FMNP-farmersurvey.pdf">http://www.wafarmersmarkets.com/docs/2011-WSFMA-FMNP-farmersurvey.pdf</a>	4 pg. report, statistics compiled from survey of farmers participating in WIC and SFMN programs.
Marketing Research and Strategy for Growing Sales Opportunities at Puget Sound Farmers Markets	Cascade Harvest Coalition, and Good Food Strategies, 2009. <a href="http://www.cascadeharvest.org/programs/farmers-markets">http://www.cascadeharvest.org/programs/farmers-markets</a>	Web report on a three-phase project. Study creates a marketing plan to increase the number of shoppers at farmers markets. Implements strategies at four farmers markets regionally. Evaluates effort and makes recommendations specific to the individual markets and general on how to increase numbers of shoppers at farmers markets – beginning on pg. 10, Phase 2.

Seattle Food Action Plan	City of Seattle, 2012 <a href="http://www.seattle.gov/environment/documents/Seattle_Food_Action_Plan_10-24-12.pdf">http://www.seattle.gov/environment/documents/Seattle_Food_Action_Plan_10-24-12.pdf</a>	City action plan to support a healthy food system. Includes Strategy 3 - Support farmers markets and small retailers that sell healthy and locally produced food. Recommends delivering streamlined permitting services to farmers markets and help existing farmers markets maintain viable locations.
Zoning for Public Markets and Street Vendors	A. Morales, G. Kettles, Zoning Practice, American Planning Association, Issue #2, February 2009. <a href="http://urpl.wisc.edu/people/morales/ZPfeb09.pdf">http://urpl.wisc.edu/people/morales/ZPfeb09.pdf</a>	Reviews examples of how communities use zoning & permitting to regulate markets. Provides recommendations on a “light-handed” regulatory approach, minimizing administrative costs and removing barriers. Recommendations start on page 6 of the 8 page report.



