

MAKING YOUR MARKET A DYNAMIC COMMUNITY PLACE



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INTRODUCTION

Farmers markets have undergone a spectacular growth in recent years. As of 2014, according to USDA statistics, there are over 8,200 farmers markets in the U.S., up from 3,706 in 2004. Other kinds of markets are growing as well, including craft fairs, flea markets, night markets, and prepared food markets. Many farmers markets are expanding, too, by extending their seasons into the winter, going year-round, and building permanent facilities, such as sheds.

Despite their growing popularity, markets are all too often thought of simply as places to shop – not as community places. As PPS likes to say, “When you think about Place, you do everything differently.” This guide is intended to help you do just that.

We know that while all markets have a core economic purpose, it’s their social function that enables them to flourish. While a market’s product mix and price point are both important to customers, research shows that an important reason why people like to visit markets is for the experience of engaging with their neighbors. In PPS’s research for the Ford Foundation, we asked customers at a series of markets around the country “What is the

greatest benefit of the market to the community?” The greatest response (28.2%) was “brings people together.”

The busiest, most successful market is therefore also a place where people want to spend time together -- a place where people interact easily and a setting where other community activities take place. People come to shop, but also to meet others, “hang out,” and enjoy the overall ambiance and excitement of the space – creating the heart and soul of a community. It is true common ground.

For a community with few public spaces, a market can become its de-facto civic square in the broadest sense of the term – a place where people of diverse ages, races, ethnicities, and socioeconomic backgrounds come to shop, meet, and mingle. Indeed, markets have the potential to be the most socially diverse public place in a community around the common experiences of food, shopping, culture, and conversation. In such markets, cultural barriers are dissolved, marginalized residents are empowered, and differences are celebrated.

Even better, successful markets can be anchors of multi-use community destinations. PPS’s principle of the Power of 10 states that major community destinations need at least 10+ places and each place

needs 10+ things to do. If the market is one place in a destination, what are the other 9+? When we think this way, we begin to see markets as part of something even bigger and more dynamic. Rather than a stand-alone market in a parking lot, for example, a market can anchor a Main Street sidewalk lined with other businesses, animate a library plaza, activate a revitalized town square, and occupy vacant storefronts or buildings. Soon your community has 10 places!

In these ways, a market can increase its spin-off benefits to its surrounding community, encouraging more investment, small-scale entrepreneurship, and local economic activity. These spin-off effects, in turn, will draw larger numbers of customers to the market allowing market vendors to flourish, and advancing the market's overall sustainability and community impact.

And all of this can be done at relatively low cost. Markets, at least those that operate in the open air, have always been the ultimate Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper (LQC) way to transform a public space – a phrase PPS uses to describe the simple, short-term, and low-cost solutions that are having remarkable impacts on the shaping of neighborhoods and cities. Since we began our work in 1975, we have used LQC interventions to address all kinds of public space challenges, and the impacts of these projects have been lasting and profound. Markets, with their relative ease of start up and flexibility, should be part of any community.

Benefits Of Markets

A well-planned and well-managed market can provide deep benefits to a community.

Successful markets:

Attract shoppers to a downtown or neighborhood commercial district.

Provide affordable retailing opportunities for small businesses.

Preserve farming or farmland in the region.

Supply a community with access to healthy, fresh food.

Create an inviting, safe, and lively public place that attracts a wide range of people.



Markets As Multi-Use



The historic Market House in Meadville, PA, has served the community since 1870. It features an indoor market space, a restaurant, and outdoor vendors who operate under an exterior canopy. A local arts center occupies the second floor



When the Marquette (MI) Farmers Market relocated from a vacant lot to a new community commons, it had a dramatic impact on business. The commons includes a community center and an adjacent public space used for the markets, outdoor concert and movies, ice skating, other community events.

Community Destinations



The Washington (PA) Farmers Market is relocating to a dual-level pavilion located on a downtown parking lot. The pavilion will also be used for community events.



City Market, Roanoke Virginia is a curb market with brick and mortar retail on one side.

PLACEMAKING STRATEGIES FOR MARKETS



Hub City Farmers Market, old and new locations. In Spartanburg, SC, a farmers market had failed twice but on the third try, a new location at an historic train depot was selected. This proved to be such a strong location that after ten years, the market relocated again to an expanded facility with a shed and café, located two blocks away in the historic African-American neighborhood. There it continues to grow and thrive.

Select the Right Location

Historically, markets have always been in or near the center of town and there is still a need for that today. The location, visibility and accessibility of a market are very important to its success. Most market customers do not typically travel (walk, bike, drive, transit) more than 15 minutes to visit it, and travel even less for small markets so locating in or near a place that is convenient to a lot of people is best. Ideally your market site will be:

In a high-traffic location, easy to walk and bike to, have good transit access and plenty of parking.

A site with existing activity - and the space and potential for more - whether a park or small plaza and/or a site that is adjacent

to a busy bus stop, community institution or retail shopping area is often a great place to locate a market. This enables the market to become a key element of a multi-use destination where other activities already take place or could take place.

A location with a strong sense of place already is ideal, however in some cases, a market can help create that place.

And, if you have an existing market that isn't doing well in its current location you can always move it. One advantage of markets is that they are easy to relocate, at least those that are temporary and open-air. Examples abound of markets that moved to a more advantageous site and thrived.



PPS worked with the Northwest Detroit Farmers Market to relocate from a church parking lot to a park adjacent to a community center, which was more conducive for community activities and programming.

Design the Market as a Public Space

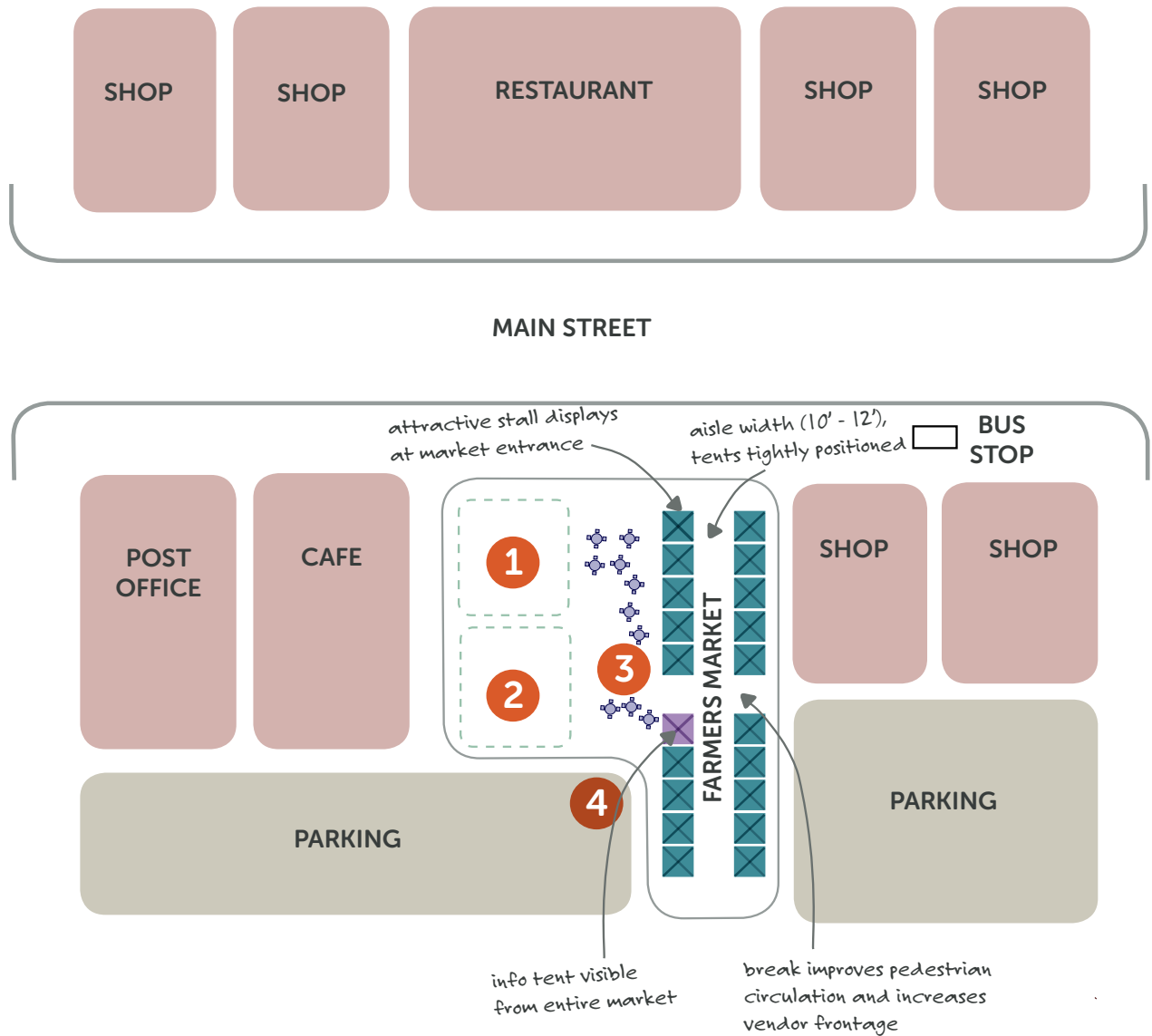
While the primary function of a market may be commerce, the busiest, most successful markets are places where people want to spend time together. A market is a place for meeting and catching up with neighbors, accessing services, and becoming part of the daily life of a community. Through programming, layout, and amenities, markets can provide many opportunities for visitors to enjoy themselves.

In addition to shopping, sitting, and eating, the market's layout should include spaces for performances, play or even learning that will give people multiple reasons to return to your market.

Comfortable places to sit will foster a dynamic hub of activity and allow people to spend time people watching, which is a favorite activity at markets. Moveable tables, chairs and umbrellas along with a food cart are a common LQC market addition.

Strengthen connectivity to existing destinations near the market space and extend programming and activation into the space, i.e. playgrounds, sports fields, a shed, a café, library, etc.

SAMPLE MARKET LAYOUT



- 1** Recreation area: bike repair, helmet fittings, lawn games
- 2** Children's activity area: games, lending library, storytime
- 3** Central event area: performance area, cooking demos, health information tent
- 4** Storage space



Mt. Vernon Farmers Market, Mt. Vernon, WA

Promote The Market As A Community Destination

To attract people to your market and reinforce it as a community destination you need to develop and maintain a strong promotions strategy. Most markets do not have large promotional/advertising budgets, and some don't have a budget at all, but fortunately markets are full of good news and unlimited programs and events that help drive customers to a market - many of which are free such as samples, music and space for dancing, board games, etc.

Develop a strong social media presence, including Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, and good connections with local press.

Program the market every day with a demonstration of how a market product can be used or made, live music, kid's events, etc. You won't know what is the best special event or activity for your market until you try it out so experiment and see what people like.

Create simple, clear marketing materials such as signs, banners, a-frames and fliers. Customers only care about when the market is open, where it is located, what they can buy and what they can do there.



Youth day at the Capitol City Farmers Market, Montpelier, VT

Emphasize What Makes Your Community Unique – And Make The Market Inclusive

A great market makes visitors feel like they are experiencing something special. Your market should be a place where neighbors can be proud of their history, culture, people, and community. Over time, residents should understand that their market space is unique to their town because of the types of food and merchandise that is for sale, the types of music that is played, the types of special events that are held there and who is hosting them.

Communities across the U.S. are becoming increasingly diverse, and markets have an opportunity to reflect that diversity and become spaces of inclusion by increasing market access for low and moderate income and non-English speaking individuals and families. This may not be

something that happens automatically, so markets may need to take some specific steps to make all people feel comfortable and welcome.

Focus your promotional materials on what makes your market unique - highlight vendors and products that can only be found in your community and promote that this market is of, for and by the community.

Invite a diverse array of talent from the community and highlight local culture, including musicians and local cooks to share their talents at the market.

Provide products and recruit new growers and vendors to more accurately reflect the demographics of the community.



At this neighborhood farmers market in Brooklyn, local youth grow the produce in community gardens and sell it at the market, learning the value of eating more healthily in the process.

Create Strong Community Partnerships

Strong relationships between the market and other organizations rooted in the neighborhood are assets that can contribute to the success of the market. Markets are great places to showcase a wide variety of community organizations' programs and offerings while simultaneously supporting the mission of the market.

Partnering with an organization that works with community members you are interested in attracting may result in more customers for the market. For example, to target a lower-income customer base, reach out to local Women, Infant and Children (WIC) providers, the agency that works with your area's Supplemental Nutrition

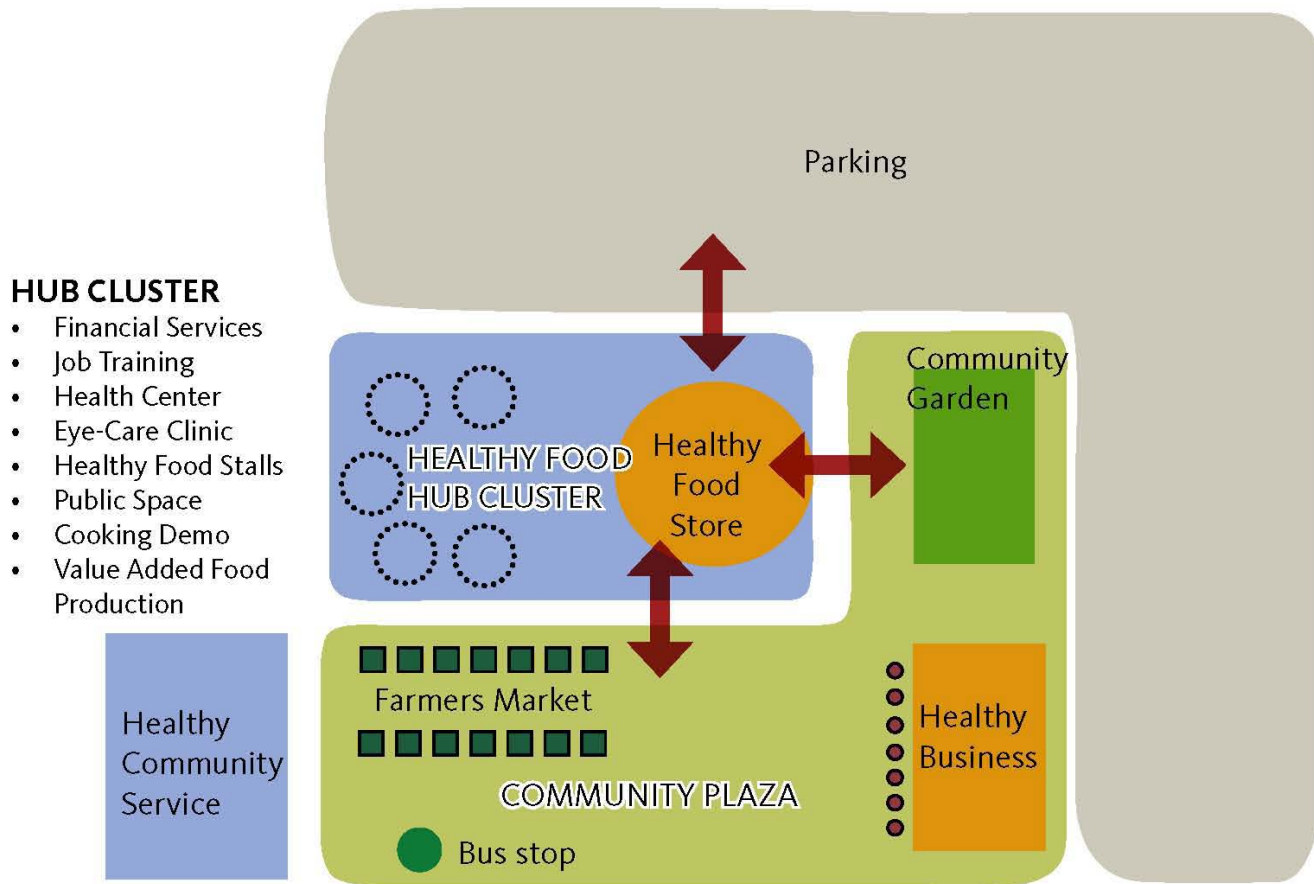
Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients and nearby food pantries.

Programming at your market can also be enhanced and increased through strong partnerships. Partners need to feel like they are benefiting from the relationship, so the more that the market can help promote another organization's program or activities the more likely they will be to help promote or help program the market.

Today, one particularly important partner for markets is health agencies and organizations. Across the U.S., farmers markets are playing a key role in enhancing fresh food access, especially in low-income communities. Markets are educating people about how to shop, cook and eat

more healthily. They are offering a variety of financial assistance programs such as SNAP and WIC to make it easier for low-income people to purchase healthy food, and in some instances, hosting health care staff who are providing front-line care and information on nutrition-related disease and prevention. When markets are viewed

as a multi-use destination with an emphasis on public health they become Healthy Food Hubs. In this way, a market links to other uses and activities that support healthy lifestyles: a shared use community kitchen, a community garden, an active playground, health clinics and services, exercise facilities, and other health pro-



Healthy Food Hub -Small Farmers Market Store Concept

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Farmers'
MARKET

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Women, Infant and Children (WIC) Offices

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Business associations

Chamber of Commerce

Lions Club

Neighborhood associations

Local recreational groups

Transit, pedestrian and bicycle advocates

Other local market organizers

State farmers market association

Food pantries

Shared-use commercial kitchens

Food advocacy groups

Local Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farmers

Restaurants

Food Co-ops

Community Gardeners

Local environmental stewardship groups

Churches and houses of worship

Future "Friends of the Market" group

Local arts organizations



Lynn Farmers' Market, Lynn, MA

Recruit the Right Vendors – Reflecting the Community and Region

A market's vendors are the heart of any market. Good market vendors can be established business owners or brand new entrepreneurs. What defines great market vendors is that they are comfortable with competition, know and represent their products well and can market their products in an ever-changing atmosphere.

Hand in hand with the right vendors, is the right product mix. There is no perfect formula for achieving the right product mix or how much of each product a market can support. A large market should aim for having at least three vendors representing each major product category (i.e. produce farmers, meat producers, vintage jewelry, etc.) However, a small market may only be able to support one or two vendors selling alike or similar products.

In the beginning, before the market has been “tested,” and management knows what products are best, the market will be populated by vendors/products who are a combination of what management wants or thinks will work, vendors/products that are willing to commit to the market and vendors/products that are what the customer wants. Ultimately, the vendors/products that represent what the customers want help the market come up with the right mix, though it's important to always keep experimenting and adding new vendors so that the mix does not become stale.



The Allen Street Farmers Market in Lansing, MI, has expanded from just an open air market on a parking lot to encompass an adjacent flexible indoor space, which used for the market, a commercial kitchen, a local food hub, and community events

Grow and Expand Your Market

Successful markets tend to grow naturally, but there are some strategic ways to grow and expand a market. The easiest way for a market to expand is to add another day. This allows a market to potentially add more vendors and reach a different customer base. When you open on another day keep in mind that this day might have a different feel to the others, or may require a different location and time given the anticipated customer base.

A growing number of markets are also starting to extend their seasons through the winter holidays or even going year-round as a way to increase the financial sustainability of their vendors and provide greater benefits to their communities. Vendors willing to extend the marketing season for potential financial gain are adding to their offerings through the use of greenhouses and/or developing

value-added items such as sauces and frozen produce. Markets that are interested in attracting a holiday crowd, but worry about losing some of their regular vendors to cold weather, can add arts and crafts vendors and holiday tree and greens growers to continue to attract customers.

Winter markets – relocating to a largely indoor space – are growing in popularity as well. While these markets do not have to be located at the same location as a summer market, it helps to create a stronger place if they are. Winter markets can be located in gymnasiums, vacant retail or industrial spaces, senior centers with large multi-purpose rooms, and other flexible spaces. To attract customers, these markets often have to change their strategies since fresh produce, a big draw in summer, is generally not as available. For example, in Madison, Wisconsin, the Dane



FarmFresh Rhode island moves its outdoor market indoors to create a Winter Market in a flexible industrial space.

County Farmers Market decreases from 300 to approximately 70 vendors when it relocates indoors to a senior center after the winter holidays. To keep customers interested and engaged the market hosts a community breakfast served with local ingredients.

Expanding into a permanent indoor facility can also have a dramatic impact by creating a year-round destination that enhances a market's impact on its community with a more permanent presence. However, with an increase in impact there is often an increase in expenses. Whether the expansion is into a new building or an existing one, the market will incur increased operating costs, so putting together a solid business plan before proceeding is important. But, there may be other ways to cover increased expenses with an indoor facility, including adding permanent retail or food vendors, leasing space to other community organizations,

or building in a multi-use space that can be rented out for special events and meetings. A simpler strategy than building or moving into an indoor facility is to add a shed structure to your market place. Shed structures are useful because they offer more weather protection for customers and vendors and can be designed to enclose in the winter for cold climates. Sheds also offer an opportunity to add permanent storage space, restrooms, and even a small market office. With the right design, a shed can work for a variety of community activities, not just the market.

Manage, Manage, Manage

A market's mission is its guiding principle. Every major decision made by management concerning the market should reflect and advance the market's mission. Ideally, market missions should include an emphasis on creating a great community-gathering place.

Markets do not drive themselves; they need strong and confident management, guided by the market's mission, to keep vendors and customers happy. There is no perfect job description for a market manager – they need to be ready to do whatever it takes to help the market succeed.

A successful market is sustainable for both vendors and market management. However, not all markets break even based on stall fees alone, and many markets – especially smaller markets or those located in lower-income neighborhoods – are always reliant on outside funding to operate and program their market. Even if outside funding is necessary, a market can still have a solid business plan that allows them to plan ahead.

Enhancing the market as a community destination can enhance the market's bottom line:

If a market is only one activity in a community gathering space, it is also possible to earn income from other activities. For example, a sponsor can manage multiple markets that bring in income, i.e., a Friday “night market” with entertainment and food trucks or a Sunday flea and craft market.

Prepared foods vendors can pay the most rent, so adding a cluster of food trucks or carts with a seating area will make a market more of a gathering place while simultaneously generating more income for the market. There are even markets that exclusively feature prepared food vendors and they are extremely popular. However, if you operate a farmers market with a goal to support local agriculture be careful to not add too many prepared foods so the focus shifts too heavily on ready-to-eat foods and the market steers away from its mission.

Find partners to pay for programming at the market – for example, if your market wants to have a day focused on public health work with a local hospital or clinic to organize, promote and program the entire day. Offer to promote the special event/program through social media and within the market, but let the partner pay for whatever event occurs.



CONCLUSION

To make your market a great community-gathering place, you must consider all of the factors that go into making a great place:

A variety of uses and activities that build off and synergize with the vendors.

Accessible to the community and linked to its surrounding spaces.

A comfortable, fun, and attractive place.

A social place that is a center of community life.

Achieving these goals is one of the ongoing roles of market management. Managers need to always be thinking about what next steps will help their market remain a dynamic community destination. The best way for management to do this is through strengthening their organizational partnerships and working together to achieve public benefits for the community. If a market does this year in and year out, it will, in time, become an important pillar in the community while also positively impacting the local economy.

