

CITY OF PORTLAND - CITY OF NEIGHBORHOODS
DOWNTOWN PUBLIC MARKET & NEIGHBORHOOD MARKET SQUARES

OUR PURPOSE

We seek to create an urban culture that appreciates and supports Oregon agriculture.

We seek to build economic and cultural bridges between urban and rural Oregonians.

We seek to invest in the future of Oregon agriculture.

We seek to invest in the social and economic vitality of our downtown and our neighborhoods.

SUMMARY

This is a proposal to support and complement the vision to recreate a downtown public market initiated by Commissioner Charlie Hales. We propose to support Oregon agriculture and to enhance the quality of urban life in the City of Portland by making infrastructure investments in both the downtown and the neighborhoods. Specifically, we propose: (1) developing a downtown public market to showcase Oregon agricultural products; and, (2) developing neighborhood market squares - multifunctional urban plazas - in each of the designated town and regional centers¹ in the City for use as sites for farmers' markets and other civic purposes.

ORIGIN OF OUR PROPOSAL

The vision to recreate a downtown public market is currently being crafted into a proposal by a volunteer committee - the Public Market Steering Committee - and a professional team directed by Commissioner Hales Chief of Staff Ron Paul. We have participated in this effort and applaud the work that has been accomplished to advance this initiative.

Over the last several months we have talked with citizens and growers about the public market initiative and have shared our concerns and suggestions with Commissioner Hales, Ron Paul, Marcy McInelly, Robert Bole, the Public Market Management and Operations Task Force, and members of the Steering Committee, individually and collectively. At their May 1st meeting, we made a presentation to the Steering Committee entitled, *"Placing the Public Market Proposal Within a Larger Vision."* We have now developed that presentation into this concept paper.

¹ The 2040 Plan designates seven regional & town centers within the City of Portland: Gateway, Lents, Hollywood, St. John's, Hillsdale, West Portland & Raleigh Hills. However, West Portland and Raleigh Hills are unlikely candidates for urban plazas at this time.

HISTORIC OPPORTUNITY

We believe there are converging urban and rural interests that create a rare opportunity to: (1) affirm the historic relationship between the citizens of Portland and local agricultural producers; (2) promote and support Oregon agriculture; and, (3) enhance the quality of urban life. We want to fully realize this opportunity.

Many Portland residents are increasingly aware of the desirability of supporting and preserving local food production. Many individuals and organizations have helped to raise public awareness about this issue. Farmers' markets in the city and region have helped to reacquaint city residents with the goodness and unique qualities of local varieties of fruits and vegetables and other local food products. Portland residents have come to appreciate farmers' markets because they provide access to local farm products and because they create appealing social events and civic forums that are attractive to diverse members of the community.

While urban interest in supporting Oregon agriculture has grown, the need to actively support Oregon agriculture has also grown. Oregon family farms are being increasingly threatened by severe price competition in the wholesale market from large corporate farms in California, Mexico and around the world. Oregon farmers and agricultural producers are facing devastating wholesale price competition whether they are selling locally, nationally or internationally. Without increased profitability for local farm products, there is concern about whether farms in the Willamette Valley will continue to produce food products

We believe these converging urban and rural concerns and interests present opportunities.

PROPOSAL OVERVIEW

We believe there are two ways that the citizens of Portland can partner with Oregon farmers to support Oregon agriculture and to enhance the quality of urban life. We believe these two components can serve Oregon agriculture in two different but important and complementary ways:

I. We can create improved direct marketing opportunities for local producers throughout the City of Portland by providing permanent improved sites - urban plazas - for farmers' markets downtown and in each of the following designated town and regional centers within the City: *Gateway, Lents, Hollywood, St. John's and Hillsdale*. This effort will benefit local farmers; improve the social and economic vitality of downtown and each of the designated neighborhood commercial centers and provide access to fresh locally produced food for all residents throughout the City.

II. We can create a downtown public market that is designed and managed with the express purpose to elegantly present and sell Oregon agricultural products to Oregonians and to the millions

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of national and international guests who visit Portland each year.² Educating natives and visitors about the unique qualities of Oregon agricultural products will enhance the value of Oregon products in the local, national and international marketplaces. Furthermore, we believe the state's agricultural marketing commissions should be encouraged to relocate their offices to the public market facility so that visiting trade delegations can be enticed and enchanted by the display of Oregon products available in the public market. This effort will benefit the export-oriented portion of Oregon agriculture - by far the largest portion of Oregon's 3.4 billion dollar agricultural economy.³ In addition, creating a public market in downtown Portland that celebrates Oregon's agricultural bounty will enhance Portland's reputation as the capitol of Northwest Cuisine and will provide a significant new downtown attraction for both residents and visitors.

I. NEIGHBORHOOD MARKET SQUARES

MAKING FARMERS' MARKETS A PERMANENT PART OF CIVIC LIFE

Farmers' markets have experienced a renaissance in recent years in Oregon and throughout the country. Vendor participation and customer attendance has also increased dramatically during this time. Farmers' markets serve many civic purposes and can be cultural and economic bridges between rural and urban communities.

Farmers' markets are successful for farmers because they are a low-overhead way to capture retail rather than wholesale dollars for their crops. For the farmer, participation in farmers' markets requires minimal investment for retail space and fixtures and labor costs are minimized because retail activity is concentrated during limited hours of operation. Essentially, farmers' markets train their customers to come at the same time - 3600 people within a 5-hour period last summer at the Hollywood Farmers' Market.⁴ And, the short burst of retail activity is what makes farmers' markets fun for customers as well. Everybody comes at the same time and, in the neighborhood setting, you're bound to bump into someone you know.

Farmers' markets are successful for neighborhoods because they serve many civic purposes in addition to providing ready access to local agricultural products. Neighborhood farmers' markets are family-friendly, community building events that bring neighbors together, attract retail activity to surrounding businesses, and provide forums for civic education and involvement.

² POVA Research Visitor Industry Overview: 1997 total visits to Portland metro area: 7.1 million (estimate); Origin of visitors to Portland metro area: Oregon residents - 11%; Other U.S. residents - 79%; Canadian residents - 5%; Other International citizens - 4%. Additional information available at: www.travelportland.com/about/pova/research.

³ Oregon Agricultural Statistics Service (www.oda.state.or.us/oass).

⁴ *Rapid Assessment of Five Oregon Farmers' Markets: Quantitative Results*, Larry Lev, OSU Agricultural and Resource Economics & Garry Stephenson, Benton County Extension, March 2001; (unpublished).

However, farmers' markets will be at risk until they secure permanent sites. Nearly all the Portland metropolitan area markets, including the Portland Farmers' Market and the Hollywood Farmers' Market, have been forced to relocate one or more times in the last ten years. In addition, some markets are subject to temporary displacement one or more times per season due to conflicting events that pre-empt use of their sites.

To overcome this risk and to provide the opportunity to create additional neighborhood farmers' markets, we propose acquiring and developing market squares - multifunctional urban plazas - for use as sites for neighborhood farmers' markets and other civic purposes in each of the following designated neighborhood commercial centers within the City: *Gateway, Lents, Hollywood, St. John's and Hillsdale*. And, we endorse the Public Market Steering Committee's intention to provide a permanent site for an outdoor farmers' market adjacent to the envisioned downtown public market. Permanent sites for farmers' markets will permit multiple market days, provide midweek sales opportunities for farmers and thereby attract additional retail activity for surrounding businesses.

And, in order for farmers' markets to realize their full potential for farmers and customers, we recommend improving these plazas with attractive open-air pavilions. Based upon the success of Saturday Market, the craft market located beneath the Burnside Bridge, we know that with overhead protection, Oregonians will shop outside from April through December and that is exactly when Oregon farmers have the most product to sell. Protected from the weather, markets will be able to lengthen their seasons by fifty percent and thus provide significant increased sales opportunities for farmers. A 9-month season will help to sustain customer buying habits and that will benefit both farmers and surrounding business owners.

Furthermore, setting-up and dismantling temporary facilities for farmers' markets is labor intensive and time consuming and is a disincentive for farmers, market managers and market volunteers. Permanent improved sites with open-air pavilions will protect farmers, customers and produce from the sun and rain and will encourage customer attendance regardless of the weather. Permanent sites with water, electricity and lighting will permit evening market hours, refrigeration and improved sanitation.

We envision these plazas as neighborhood Pioneer Courthouse Squares, perhaps with a coffee bar and ice cream vendor; and that the proposed pavilions will be used not only by the farmers' market but also for other community purpose such as art shows, dances or festivals and to provide shelter for café tables throughout the week. We envision plazas that will be attractive, vibrant "town commons" that will be alive from the first cup of morning coffee to the evening's last ice cream cone.

Neighborhood farmers' markets will provide convenient access to local farm products for many city residents unlikely to travel downtown, including senior citizens and recipients of WIC food coupons. We envision neighbors coming together to share in the beauty, vitality, conviviality

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and uniqueness of their neighborhood farmers' market - where they are reminded of the quality of life we enjoy together; where children learn to savor Oregon-grown flavors before they learn to walk; and where all of Portland's citizens - regardless of age, income or mobility - can share in the bounty of Oregon agriculture, and in so doing, help to preserve its future.

We need to acquire these plaza sites now and build our town centers around the market square, in European tradition. We need to acquire sites for urban plazas now before these centers are built-out and prices escalate further. The time is ripe. Five of the seven designated town centers - *Lents, Gateway, Hollywood, St. John's, and Hillsdale* - are good candidates for urban plazas at this time. Lents is currently an urban renewal district; Gateway is about to become a renewal district; and there is discussion about creating small urban renewal districts in Hollywood and St. John's for park acquisitions. It is also encouraging to note that Portland Development Commission has previously exhibited interest in using markets to promote community and economic development by funding the initial feasibility study for the Public Market and by sponsoring the Lents Farmers' Market.

II. DOWNTOWN PUBLIC MARKET CELEBRATING OREGON AGRICULTURE

The Public Market Steering Committee's preliminary plans for a downtown public market includes both a public market building for an indoor food emporium, demonstration kitchen and restaurant; and an adjacent site for an outdoor farmers' market. As currently envisioned, the public market building will be open daily and its principal tenants will be retailers who feature local agricultural products whenever possible. In general, local producers will have direct marketing opportunities outside at the contiguous farmers' market site and on an ad hoc basis inside the public market building when the outside farmers' market is not open.

The Public Market Steering Committee has established the following four objectives for the proposed public market:

1. *Showcasing local food products.*
2. *Promoting diverse sustainable agriculture in our region.*
3. *Appealing and being accessible to Portlanders from every sector of the city and from all socio-economic levels.*
4. *Providing an opportunity to educate the public about where their food comes from, how it is grown and most importantly how critical the rural community is to our urban community.*

We applaud these goals. But, as the committee has come to understand, there is an inherent tension between the stated objectives. We are concerned that expecting the public market to serve all these goals may jeopardize the credibility, support and ultimate success of the public market effort. The history of public markets in Portland and around the country supplies both inspiration and sobering lessons.

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We believe that it unrealistic to expect a new downtown public market to serve as a high-volume sales location. Portland is a city of neighborhoods. People do most of their food shopping in their own neighborhoods and appreciate the convenience of one-stop shopping at their neighborhood grocery store. We believe it is unrealistic to expect commuters to shop at a downtown public market on their way home from work or to expect people outside the downtown district to make the special effort to regularly come downtown to do their food shopping.

Instead, we envision this new public market as a working public market but one designed and managed with the express intent to elegantly present and sell Oregon agricultural products to the millions of local, national and international potential customers for Oregon agricultural products who visit Portland every year. We recommend that the programmatic mission of the public market be modified accordingly.

By educating Oregonians and visitors about the unique qualities of Oregon agricultural products, the public market will help to enhance the value of Oregon products in the local, national and international marketplaces. Creating an elegant showcase for Oregon agricultural products will be a unique and attractive downtown destination for residents and visitors; will enhance Portland's reputation as the capitol of Northwest Cuisine; and will serve as a regular neighborhood shopping destination for downtown residents. A public market conceived and managed for these purposes will be of extraordinary service to the City and to Oregon agriculture.

Furthermore, to fully utilize the public market potential to promote Oregon agricultural products, we believe the state's agricultural marketing commissions should be encouraged to relocate their offices to the public market facility. Oregonians produce more than 200 different agricultural commodities, and the state has more than twenty commodity commissions – from the Oregon Albacore Commission to the Oregon Wine Advisory Board. In fact, Oregon is second only to California in the number of agricultural commodities we produce.⁵ We can already envision visiting trade delegations being enticed and enchanted by the display of Oregon products available in the public market and then enjoying an elegant meal of fresh, local and seasonal foods and Oregon wines at the restaurant located within the public market building.

We are confident that the Public Market will be an important venue to showcase Oregon wines and foods and that it will become a treasured civic amenity. However, as the steering committee acknowledges, direct sales opportunities for producers will be limited in the public market. Consequently, we like the steering committee's plan to provide an adjoining site for an outdoor farmers' market. And, like our suggestion for open-air pavilions for the neighborhood market squares, we believe the best way to provide dependable, cost-effective direct marketing

⁵ Oregon Department of Agriculture (www.oda.state.or.us).

opportunities for local growers from April through December is to improve the farmers' market site with one or more open-air pavilions.

A PREFERRED SITE FOR THE PUBLIC MARKET

If we accept that a principal purpose of the public market will be to elegantly present Oregon agricultural products, then of the three sites currently under consideration by the Steering Committee, we believe the federal government building (the old post office) at 511 NW Broadway is the best potential site for the public market. The building is elegant and will be attractive to both residents and visitors and contains many floors of office space that could be leased to the agricultural marketing boards. It will also be good site because it will be part of a neighborhood - the most densely populated neighborhood in Portland - and this neighborhood will provide a good and growing residential customer base of support for the future market.

In addition, we are pleased at the prospect of reclaiming the adjoining park block and utilizing this park block as the site for a downtown farmers' market, hopefully the Portland Farmers' Market. And, we are especially excited at the prospect of erecting a permanent open-air park pavilion on this site. On non-market days and evenings, we can envision the pavilion being used for art shows, wine tastings, festivals, concerts and dances. Furthermore, we understand that a pavilion for this site would be consistent with the recommendations of the Advisory Council of Experts for the redevelopment of the park blocks.

In fact, if the 511 NW Broadway building is chosen for the public market, we believe that it would be desirable to erect the pavilion in advance of opening the public market, especially since the anticipated timeline for the building renovation may be 5-6 years. By immediately erecting a permanent pavilion for the farmers' market we can begin to build a customer base that will help the future indoor public market succeed.

CONCLUSION

We believe there are two ways that the citizens of Portland can partner with Oregon farmers to support Oregon agriculture and to enhance the quality of urban life. We believe these two components can serve Oregon agriculture in two different but important and complementary ways:

First, we can create greatly improved direct marketing opportunities for local producers throughout the City of Portland by providing permanent improved sites - urban plazas - for farmers' markets downtown and in each of the designated town and regional centers within the City. We want to make it easier for markets to succeed and prosper in Portland. Our goal is to help assure that farmers' markets will be a permanent part of Portland civic life. By providing permanent sites with open-air pavilions we can provide permanent expanded retail opportunities for local farmers from April through December and provide dependable convenient access to local farm products for all the

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citizens of Portland. This effort will benefit local farmers and improve the social and economic vitality of downtown and each of the designated neighborhood commercial centers.

Second, we can create a downtown public market with the express purpose to elegantly present and sell Oregon agricultural products to Oregonians and to the millions of national and international guests who visit Portland each year. Educating Oregonians and visitors about the unique qualities of Oregon agricultural products will enhance the value of Oregon products in the local, national and international marketplaces. Creating an elegant showcase for Oregon agricultural products will be a unique and attractive downtown destination for residents and visitors; will enhance Portland's reputation as the capitol of Northwest Cuisine; and will serve as regular neighborhood shopping destination for downtown residents. This effort will benefit the local, national and international marketing efforts of Oregon agriculture.

The basis for NW Cuisine is respect and appreciation for the freshness and unique qualities of local seasonal varieties. If we are to build an urban culture that appreciates and supports local agriculture then that work needs to be done throughout the city – downtown at a public market and at neighborhood farmers' markets, where mothers and fathers share these values with their children every market day.

Portland is a city of neighborhoods. We need to invest in the quality of life in the neighborhoods as well as downtown. By combining these proposals we can solidify support throughout the city and throughout the agricultural community. By adopting this larger vision, this city-wide commitment, we will be providing the basic infrastructure that will support creating an urban culture that appreciates and supports local agriculture.

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