

## MARKETABLE APPROACH

Some farmers' markets in Calgary:

■ The Kingsland Farmers' Market opened in 2010 in an car dealership building at 7711 Macleod Trail S., not far from Heritage LRT station. It is an offshoot of the Calgary Farmers' Market, as many of the vendors formed their own market when they found out the Calgary

Farmers' Market was relocating. It has more than 70 vendors. Visit [www.kingslandfarmersmarket.com](http://www.kingslandfarmersmarket.com)

■ Crossroads Market is in a heritage building and boasts being Calgary's largest year-round indoor/outdoor market. It has more than 30 indoor and 25 outdoor vendors. It is also a flea, antiques and collectables

market. Visit [www.crossroadsmarket.ca](http://www.crossroadsmarket.ca)

■ Calgary Farmers Market is at 510 77th Ave S.E. near Blackfoot Trail and Heritage Drive. It first opened in 2003 in Currie Barracks and moved to its current site after \$5 million in renovations. Visit the website at [www.calgaryfarmersmarket.com](http://www.calgaryfarmersmarket.com)

# Farmers' markets need fresh ideas

I love a good debate — like the one currently taking place regarding the logic of the Calgary Farmers' Market relocating to Blackfoot Trail near Heritage Drive, where there is no transit service.

The debate always leads to someone lamenting about

why don't we have a permanent downtown or inner-city farmers' market that's supported by the city.

Vancouver has one, Edmonton has one, Saskatoon has one — why not Calgary?

I don't buy into the theory that we have to have everything other cities have.

First off, the Calgary Farmers' Market is not a true farmers' market. Only about half of the vendors are farmers.



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It is as much a food court and craft market as a true farmers' market.

I also don't buy the argument that the city should be supporting a farmers' market because it connects consumers with producers and will lead to a stronger sustainable food policy.

It's a nice, altruistic idea, but I don't think the city should be in the behaviour modification business. As Jeremy Klaszus recently pointed out in the Calgary Herald, other cities subsidize their major markets.

But in Calgary's case, if we were to do that, we would have to subsidize not only the Calgary Farmers' Market, but also the Crossroads Market and Kingsland Market because they have a similar business model.

I recall one letter to the editor in the Herald asking about why there's all the media fuss over the Calgary Farmers' Market, as it's not the city's only farmer's market — good point.

Rather than imitate what other cities are currently doing or looking to the past, I say let's look to the future and develop a new Calgary model for farmers' markets. I propose that instead of a major downtown market that requires Calgarians to drive across town to get to it, we develop more modest, year-round farmer/food producer-only markets in each quadrant of the city (all three current major farmer's markets are currently in the south).

Bigger is not always better. There are several farmers' markets that sprout up in and around Calgary during the outdoor market season from June to early October.

The Hillhurst Community Centre Market could be used as a model because it uses an existing parking lot to host 15 to 20 food producer vendors every

Wednesday afternoon/early evening in the summer.

I expect this model could be duplicated at more community centres around the city, or perhaps at school parking lots and fields that sit empty on Saturdays and Sundays.

Rather than build new structures, let's look at how we can better use existing public facilities.

The question then is what do we do in the winter when these neighbourhood markets have to go indoors?

My recommendation is that all or most of these same places could also be used in the winter.

The Hillhurst Sunday Flea Market would benefit from being expanded to include a winter farmers' market component.

There must be one or two community centre halls or schools gyms in each quadrant of the city that could accommodate 10 to 15 local weekend food vendors in the winter to sell root vegetables and other produce. Let's reuse and rejuvenate our community centres



Calgary Herald Archive  
A vendor serves a sample at the Calgary Farmers' Market.

and schools by converting them into weekend markets.

I also expect these sites could be sites for community gardens such as the case in Killarney, making the link with urban agriculture even stronger.

Ultimately, I envision the incorporation of a farmers' market area into all of our major recreation centres.

They are the new civic gathering places for a suburban, family, recreational-oriented city like Calgary.

Do we really want one large central farmer's market that forces people to make a special trip (drive a vehicle or take transit) to get there?

Why not design our city to allow temporary and permanent boutique farmer's markets that are easily accessible to where the people live, shop and play — in other words, in the suburbs.

Let's be innovative, not imitative.

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