

## **Year-Round Farmers' Market Enhancement Strategies**

Essential to the overall operation of the Lane County Commons will be creating innovative strategies for linking the commercial success of the farmers' market to the dynamic growth of the local food economy and conceptualizing a thematically consistent mix of culture, services, and commerce to associate with, and draw business to the farmers' market specifically and the site in general. Several such strategies follow:

**1. Provide maximum incentives to shop at the market:** The success of the year-round market will depend almost entirely upon the volume of sales it can generate. This, in turn, will depend on a diversity of factors, some of which are listed below:

- Transportation and parking convenience
- Appeal of the cultural setting
- Competitive pricing
- Sales, incentives, bonuses, coupons, free services, etc.
- Balanced diversity of products—meeting as many food needs as possible
- Availability of unique and valued food products
- Sense of community commitment to "buying local"
- Comfort and attractiveness of market facilities
- Having direct personal relationships with farmers and producers
- Special events and ambient culture (street musicians, etc)
- Availability of public spaces that facilitate community connectedness

**2. Create a dynamic balance in the uses of the farmers' market:** The farmers' market should not be used for just the sale of local produce, but should have a balanced synergy of uses. The more the uses, and the more these uses fit together to create a coherent whole, the more vibrant the market and its use. The Pike Place Market in Seattle is an example of a vibrant, multi-purpose market space having a farmers' market at its core. Examples of complimentary functions that might find space at the year-round farmers' market or at other locations on the repaired fairgrounds' site include the following:

- Retail sales of fresh produce, dairy, mushrooms, honey, seafood, etc.
- Wholesale food sales to institutional buyers, restaurants, or other markets
- Sales of locally processed foods
- Sales of nursery plants and vegetable starts
- Spaces for music and street performance
- Spaces for local culture creative art and sculpture
- Gathering spaces for meetings, forums, food demonstrations, etc.
- Garden and home craft sales
- Small restaurants/food stands
- Office space for agriculture/sustainability oriented organizations
- Tea shops, herbal shops, fair trade food import shops, etc.
- Green products shops
- Kiosk space for posters and notices
- Space for publications sales

**3. Eliminate vendor fees—support market with public revenue:** The value of money is in its use. The more money is put into use in a local community, the greater it facilitates economic activity. The more the local economic activity, the greater the tax base.

Active development of a local food system hub, connected with related initiatives to build a local food economy, could stimulate greater economic growth—per dollar of public incentives—than any other sector of economic activity. With this in mind, there is compelling rationale for providing public funding for the fairgrounds agricultural hub—this funding coming from the steadily increasing tax base created by the growing local agricultural economy.

One way to direct this public funding, so as to gain maximum advantage from such expenditures, would include the following elements:

- Vendor fees would be subsidized by the County. This would serve to lower market food prices, thereby increasing sales volume, and further increasing the County's tax revenue base.

- Some of the County subsidies would be given in the form of payments to the OSU Extension Service. This would insure a steady revenue base for the Extension Service and maximize the incentive for the Extension Service to aggressively support and help develop the Lane agricultural economy.

**4. Insure easy and frequent use of food stamps:** More economic stimulus results from public funds allocated for food stamps use than any other stimulus measure. If food stamps are used to purchase locally grown and/or processed foods, their stimulus value becomes far greater due to the "local economic multiplier" effect. Acceptance of Oregon Trail Card purchases can be difficult to accommodate for individual farmers, CSAs, and satellite markets, as they may not have capacity to handle credit card type purchases. The year-round farmers' market will arrange check-out payment in a way that makes Oregon Trail Card purchases easy and convenient. There will also be a developed mix of incentives and conveniences to attract food stamps users to shop frequently at the farmers' market.