



2019 Annual Report

Shoreline Farmers Market Association

Brendan Lemkin & Kara Conner

Overview

Shoreline Farmers Market (SFM) completed its 8th season in 2019. For the 5th year, the market was located at Shoreline Place (formerly Aurora Square). The market continued to support local agriculture and small businesses and partnered with the City of Seattle to provide equal access to fresh foods for food insecure families. Vendor sales increased 13% over 2018 and attendance rose by an estimated 9,000 customers. The City of Shoreline secured Port of Seattle Economic Development Partnership Program funding for Shoreline Farmers Market to increase marketing strategies as well as staff and program support. The market hired staff to coordinate the kids PoP Booth and implemented stronger educational activities for children at the market. This report will detail the Market's 2019 financials, staff, marketing, programs, vendors, as well as challenges and opportunities for future growth.

Market Programs

Supplemental Nutrition Access Program (SNAP) & Fresh Bucks: This year concluded the 4th year of the Market's partnership with the King County Fresh Bucks Program which was implemented by the City of Seattle's Office of Sustainability & Environment. In Washington State, 1 in 7 people rely on the SNAP program to supplement their food purchases and half of these beneficiaries/participants are children. SNAP is essential to our communities and the Fresh Bucks program makes shopping at a farmers market more accessible. The Fresh Bucks program matches, dollar for dollar, all SNAP and EBT transactions made at participating farmers markets, meaning a \$20 withdrawn from the account is matched with an additional \$20 that can be used to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables only. The Fresh Bucks program also includes a Fresh Bucks Rx incentive that is prescribed by medical institutions and Fresh Buck Vouchers that are distributed to community members who are not eligible for SNAP but deemed food insecure. 2018 saw a dramatic increase of Fresh Bucks distribution. Due to drastic policy changes in the Fresh Bucks Rx and Voucher programs in 2019, Fresh Bucks suffered a 97% loss in the Rx portion of the Fresh Bucks program. SNAP and EBT transactions increased 4.7% this year totalling \$4,354 SNAP dollars and \$4,006 Fresh Bucks spent at the Shoreline Farmers Market.

Fresh Bucks Funding Update: The Federal FINI grant ends December 2019. Farmers markets operating within Seattle city limits will continue offering the Fresh Bucks program which is now funded by the Sweetened Beverage Tax passed earlier this year. Despite a grant proposal (Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program) from the WA Department of Health (DOH), there is no secured comprehensive funding for King County or other Washington markets operating outside of Seattle in 2020 or beyond. Next year, all Washington farmers markets outside of Seattle will participate in a statewide incentive program in partnership with DOH. Unfortunately the DOH program will not include the Rx Program. In 2020, SFM will receive partial funding for a SNAP matching incentive program. Due to the new tiered funding structure SFM will receive approximately 15% of total program funding needs. Consequently, SFM will be required to secure additional funding to cover the remainder of the program fees and administration, estimated at \$6,000. This matching program is essential to creating

an equitable space for market shoppers and greatly expands their spending power all while supporting our local farmers and producers.

Hopelink Partnership: Shoreline Farmers Market has been donating produce to Hopelinks' Food Access Program and surrounding food banks since 2012. Food access is a top priority for the market and we are proud to have farmers and producers generously contribute fresh goods to these programs. Hopelink volunteers receive and deliver donations every week, rain or shine. In 2019 the market was able to donate 3,523 pounds, the highest donation amount yet and almost double the pounds donated in 2018. These fresh goods were distributed directly to members of the Shoreline community at Hopelink Food Bank. In addition, Hopelink tables at the Market, connecting with those in need and growing awareness within the community.

Power of Produce (PoP) Program: Our most popular program at the Shoreline Farmers Market is the kids PoP Program. PoP is a multifaceted program that gives \$2 in market currency to youth that can be used to purchase fruits and vegetables at the market. The program is designed to encourage healthy food choices and teach kids the value of a monetary transaction. The program has transitioned over the past 2 years away from tiny prizes and instead has incorporated quick-touch educational activities that promote the ethos of PoP. Activities include identifying greens found at the market, learning about different pepper varieties, and taste testing unique vegetables. The PoP Booth Coordinator and Market

Manager have created a PoP Activity Guide that can be used in future years and shared with markets new to the PoP Program.



During the 2019 season, SFM served 1,085 unique participants and distributed \$5,440 in PoP Bucks. This is a 31% increase in participation and a 15.7% increase in PoP Bucks distribution from 2018. The PoP Program continues to grow with the Market and its budget will be adjusted accordingly in future seasons.

The Everett Clinic has generously supported the PoP Program for 4 years and is essential to the success of this program. This sponsorship covers approximately 70% of the program cost. The main challenge of this program is finding a single sponsorship that covers all program expenses allowing SFM to focus its budget on marketing and operations.



Find Broc: Find Broc is an extension of our PoP Program that encourages kids to explore foods at the Market by searching for a hidden stuffed broccoli (named Broc). Vendors are enthusiastic and eager to assist us by hiding Broc at their booths and in their produce. The program engages kids at the Market and provides a platform for them to explore the various booths, interact with the farmers, and feel more connected to the Market. When a child finds Broc they get a treat in the form of a healthy snack such as snap peas, berries, tomatoes or carrots. Finding Broc is a highlight for many kids at the Market and their excited squealing can be overheard when Broc is found.

Chef Tent: The Chef Tent is made popular by our dedicated volunteer Chef Naomi and her volunteer assistant Shari. Each week they take ingredients from the market and create a delicious dish on the spot. Customers are invited to sample the dish, learn more about how the produce used, and discover new cooking techniques. These recipes are published weekly on the SFM website and past season recipes are always available. The program was created to engage customers and highlight vendor products that may be unfamiliar to market shoppers. Over 2,600 samples were distributed to customers during the 2019 season and this program was made possible this year by allocated funds from the Port of Seattle Economic Development Partnership Program. Although there is real value in the Chef Tent program future seasons are dependant on a sponsorship as the cost versus benefit is continually re-evaluated.



Musical Performances: The live music offered at the Shoreline Farmers Market is one of the key elements that sets us apart from neighboring markets. This season SFM hosted 36 musical performances totalling over 81 hours of music to delight our customers. (We even had an encore during our market breakdown one week.) At SFM the musicians are given a stipend in the form of “market bucks” allowing them to shop at the market and support the market vendors.

In past years, providing compensation for 36 musicians has proved difficult with the market offering as little as \$15 for their time, in comparison to some area markets that pay musicians up to \$200 per performance. The Port of Seattle Economic Development Partnership Program funding has allowed SFM to pay a generous stipend of \$50 for each musical performance. Each time a musician is paid they are told about the funding source and the reaction, each and every time, was overwhelming gratitude and appreciation. Returning musician Ronnda Cadle was in shock stating, “I feel so appreciated”.

Providing consistent music at any farmers market is key to a successful day. Music brings people together, reinforces the sense of community, and brightens the space allowing customers to settle in and enjoy the market longer. SFM will prioritize funding for musicians in future seasons through budget reevaluations or a targeted sponsorship.

Additional Market Highlights: In addition to our regular programs, SFM is proud to partner with the Shoreline Historical Society and share space during their annual Celebrate Shoreline Car Show. The Market provides space to area nonprofits to table and connect with customers.. New in 2019, SFM hosted the King County Library System Bookmobile and Department of Health and Human Services Mobile Community Services Office. Both mobile resource programs appreciated the opportunity to join the Market and reported great outreach success. Our fiscal partner, Central Market, continues to support the market in allowing the use of their restrooms and commissary area as well as donating hundreds of pumpkins to PoP Program in October.

Sales and Market Finance

Sales: In 2019, market sales reached 404,334 - a 13% increase over 2018 sales. With less wildfires, weather conditions were more manageable than years past and we had no market closures. Customer counts increased by 9,000 in 2019, estimating 24,000 adult customers attending the market over the 18 weeks. Farm sales jumped from 43% to 57% of total sales and cumulative food related sales (excluding crafts) represented 94% of total sales this season. As a member of the Washington State Farmers Market Association, SFM is required to track and report annual sales and farm sales must be greater than processors. These guidelines aid us in creating a balance of vendor and product diversity while maintaining the focus on local farms.

Market Finance: The 2019 season brought in a gross revenue of \$123,000. This was made up of \$41,417 from vendor fees, \$60,000 from the City of Shoreline (of which \$35,000 was secured through the Port of Seattle Economic Development Partnership Program), \$17,300 in private sponsorships, \$769 in branded swag sales, and \$4,168 in offsetting Fresh Bucks reimbursements. SFM secured \$5,000 more in sponsorships over 2018. Key sponsors include: Central Market, The Everett Clinic, Shoreline Community College, and Goldfish Swim School.

The City of Shoreline continues to be the main financial support of the Market with additional in-kind donations including office space and staff support. The City of Shoreline contributed staff hours to secure the Port of Seattle Economic Development Partnership Program funding for the SFM budget. This Program Funding included \$35,000 to be spent on marketing, staffing, and program expansion for the farmers market. These funds were distributed after the receipt of the mid-season and annual reports. These additional funds were key to the expansion of brand recognition and marketing efforts for the 2019 season.

Outgoing expenses include staff, volunteer stipends, busker stipends, marketing, new equipment/supplies, Washington State Farmers Market conference, rent, and administration fees. Total expenses at the end of the year will amount to \$132,000. With additional revenue from the City of Shoreline (secured through the Port of Seattle funding), SFM was able reallocate funds to pay off credit card debt that remained from previous years marketing and supply purchases.

Vendors and Staff



Vendors: The 2019 Vendor lineup had a healthy balance of farmers, producers, prepared foods, and select crafts. SFM averaged 40 vendors at each market, not including sponsors or community nonprofit booths. SFM actively recruited new vendors this season working to increase product diversity for increased customer satisfaction. A key addition to the market was King’s Mozzarella, an up and coming handmade mozzarella cheese producer who was able to bring new customers to SFM and maintain a loyal customer base throughout the season. Additional new key vendors included: Skagit Gourmet Mushrooms (organic cultivated mushrooms from Skagit Valley), Magana Farms (produce farm from Sunnyside that has been selling at Pike Place Market for over 20 years), and Tall Grass Bakery (handmade artisan bread and granola based in Seattle). Key losses from 2018 were 11 Olives

(artisan olive oil) and Standard Bakery (handmade bagels and pastries). SFM had fewer craft vendors this season as customer trends are moving away from artisans and toward farms and producers. Each season SFM evaluates past years vendor sales to determine potential growth for the market. A common mistake among markets is increasing vendor counts without customer spending matching the increase; SFM takes caution to grow slowly and steadily.

SFM finds that it’s imperative to continually work closely with vendors, taking care to cultivate positive relationships and gain trust. This task is not taken lightly and is reinforced by off-season communication, farm visits, and actively recording and receiving feedback.

Staff: SFM retained its market manager for another year ensuring constant market engagements throughout the off-season, continuity of management, and consistent engagement. The market manager oversees all market operations and programs, securing sponsorships, recruiting vendors, and managing staff and volunteers. Additionally, the manager participates in conferences, performs farm

visits, visits and evaluates area farmers markets, and works closely with the Washington State Farmers Market Association on special projects such as the Market Integrity Project.

SFM employs 5 part time staff to run the information booth, run the PoP Program, setup and breakdown the Market, perform Health Department inspections, and assist the manager with daily operations. Previously SFM relied heavily on volunteers as the backbone to operate the Market. After a hefty analysis it was determined to be more beneficial to hire staff for our market programs and operations. Staff include: two staff members that have been with the market as volunteers since the beginning, one long time community member with developmental disabilities who enjoys greeting customers, and two hardworking volunteers recruited from the 2018 season. The market employs the executive director (market founder) on a part-time basis to oversee contracts, insurance, and licensing.

Marketing

SFM is steadily growing its customer base and brand recognition. The market sees committed customers who support the market all season long but continue to focus on bringing in new customers. Even with a high visibility market location, many Shoreline residents are unaware of the farmers market. With the upcoming Shoreline Place CRA, the Market is aiming to secure customers that will sustain us through the inevitable growing pains of the CRA redevelopment in the current market location.

In past years the market has focused its marketing on poster distribution, social media, banner placements, and word of mouth. Armed with additional funding from the Port of Seattle Economic Partnership Program funding the market contracted a graphic design agency to create an impactful image that was displayed on the highly visible billboard at 152th and Aurora for the months of July, August, September and October - resulting in 1.2 million community impressions . The billboard is not only a marketing prop but displays a commitment to the community. Other marketing strategies for 2019 included an increase in social media paid marketing which resulted in 350k impressions over the last year, weekly e-newsletters sent to 588 community members, paid online ad placements through local news channels, and direct mailings delivered to 5,600 Shoreline households.

2020 and beyond

As the SFM faces new challenges and logistical impacts from the development of Shoreline Place, the focus will remain strong on impactful marketing strategies and customer retention. SFM will continue to work with the Washington State Farmers Market Association and its member markets to advocate for food incentive programs, local policy change, and the development of uniform market guidelines. In order to stay on top of market trends the market manager will continue to schedule farm visits, participate in relevant trainings and conferences, and collaborate on projects with area market managers. Finally, SFM will add 1-2 fall markets to the 2020 schedule in an attempt to stay relevant in the off-season and stay competitive with area markets also hosting fall markets.

Summary

The Shoreline Farmers Market continues to grow and add value in the community and across the Puget Sound Region. Each year, key metrics and indicators help tell the story and instill confidence in community stakeholders - from farmers and artisans, real estate owners and local government, to local businesses and ultimately, our customers. Each year the market closes its doors for the season with the intention of opening them wider the following year - and 2020 will be no exception. The future is bright for this market and Shoreline as a city. Development at Shoreline Place, the two Link Light Rail stations and numerous residential, commercial and infrastructure projects ensure a growing and increasingly diverse population of market-goers. On top of anticipated and noted site and financial challenges - external factors (such as rain, smoke, fluctuating agricultural markets) will continue to present challenges to the organization. Each year as the market grows, it is able to weather and be prepared for different types of business impacts that affect customer and vendor experience.

The Shoreline Farmers Market would like to thank everyone in the community that continue to ensure success and viability of this community pillar.

