

**Shoreline Farmers Market Mid-Season Update: July 1, 2020**



## **Overview**

The Shoreline Farmers Market is entering its 9<sup>th</sup> season. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the farmers market has made significant adjustments in order to comply with Federal and State Department of Health safety guidelines. In addition to COVID-19, the farmers market is in a new temporary location for the 2020 season. The market continues to support local agriculture and small businesses but cannot expand community programs or provide an inclusive space for the community to gather. In other words, the market is operating as a food retail location only. The first 4 markets have seen a 50% reduction in vendors but a steady and promising stream of customers - many of whom wait in line as occupancy is limited due to social distancing guidelines. Additional funding from the Port of Seattle Economic Partnership Program will greatly benefit the farmers market as revenue losses are projected to top \$40k.

## **Funding**

The City of Shoreline continues to provide primary financial support, with \$37,000 and in-kind donations including office space and staff support. The City of Shoreline contributed staff hours to secure a second round of funding from the Port of Seattle Economic Partnership Program, which includes \$23,000 to be spent on marketing, staffing, and COVID-19 related expenses for the farmers market. The City of Shoreline will distribute these funds in receipt of the mid-season and annual reports (July, November). In addition to these funds, the market has secured \$3,500 in community sponsorship, a drastic reduction from last year's \$16,800.

## **Staff**

The Shoreline Farmers Market is unable to maintain the level of paid staff in 2020. Previous on-site staff have transitioned to a stipend based volunteer role, which will not sustain operations in future years.

## **Marketing**

With a large projected revenue loss, the Shoreline Farmers Market has focused marketing strategies on low-cost and free channels including social media, local neighborhood groups, community networks, and posters. With the upcoming Shoreline Place CRA the market is aiming to continue to secure customers that will sustain us through growing pains of the CRA redevelopment in the current and undetermined future market location.

In 2019 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 summer months. This season the market has turned to radio and ran 14 segments of a local NPR station, reaching thousands of area residents. These ads promoted our food access programs and stated our commitment to local farmers.

## **Programs**

The WA Department of Health and Seattle King County Public Health have mandated that all farmers market community programs are suspended during COVID-19 and Phase 1 of county re-opening. There is not an official confirmation if these programs will be allowed in a modified fashion during Phase 2-4.

In 2019 our kids Power of Produce (PoP) Program served over 1000 unique participants and distributed \$5,400 PoP Bucks that went back into the market with our farmers. Our Chef Tent engaged hundreds of customers during the market and promoted vendors' products. Musical performances drew in customers and families and contributed to the welcoming feel of the farmers market. Without these

community programs, the market operates strictly as a food hub for the community reconnecting to its roots of connecting customers with farmers and local producers. Customers come strictly to support the market and purchase local food.

### **Sales and Revenue**

At the mid-season point last year vendors had reported sales of \$93,976. This season they have reported \$61,755 in sales. The reduction in sales correlates to less vendors and customers attending the market. To date we have collected \$5721 in revenue from vendor fees, a 36% reduction from last season. Food access programs have seen a growth this season, distributing 100.4% more in EBT/SNAP dollars than 2019. We hope to see this trend continue.

The farmers market is projecting an estimated \$40,000 loss of revenue in vendor fees and sponsorships in 2020.

### **Mid-Season Reflection**

The market will operate only 17 markets this season, closing on July 4th for the holiday. Operating a market during the COVID pandemic, on top of a shaky relationship with the Landlord who controls our location has proved challenging, but presents an opportunity to connect with new consumers committed to supporting local farmers and producers. The market will continue to promote the farmers market while complying with WA Department of Health safety guidelines.

Additionally, the market is working with the City of Shoreline on a nascent effort to recruit board members in an effort to stabilize the market structure and prioritize a Strategic Plan, fundraising, administrative and marketing support and community outreach.