

Honorable Chair and Members  
of the City Council Citizen Development and Enrichment Committee  
City Hall  
Torrance, California

**Members of the Committee and Board:**

**SUBJECT: Downtown Torrance Farmers' Market**

**RECOMMENDATION**

Recommendation of the Community Development Department that the Torrance City Council Citizen Development and Enrichment Committee recommend to the full City Council that a Request for Proposals be drafted to solicit outside assistance in managing a Downtown Market/ Event Program.

**BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS**

On September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2011, the Community Development Department appeared before the Redevelopment Agency to discuss the Downtown Torrance Farmers' Market trial period. Upon conclusion of a staff presentation on the results of various surveys and a comprehensive performance report, the Agency directed staff to conduct additional research and bring information to the Citizen Development and Enrichment Committee for further input and direction.

The City-operated Downtown Torrance Certified Farmers' Market trial period concept was approved by Council in late 2010 as part of a concerted effort to help stimulate more interest and economic activity in the Downtown. The trial period was set to run during the spring and summer months of 2011, whereupon the City Council would reconvene to determine whether or how to proceed with the Market in the future. This market officially opened on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2011 and continued every Thursday evening from 4:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M. at El Prado and Sartori Avenues. Despite extensive outreach and marketing for the Farmers' Market, a steady decline in patronage made it increasingly difficult to retain farmers who were willing to participate in the market.

By the end of the Market trial period, only a handful of farmers remained of the 15 original participating vendors. In response to the decline in attendance and revenue, Community Services Staff conducted a survey of farmers and market patrons to gather insight on ways to improve the market. Results showed the farmers generally agreed that, all other factors unchanged, they would not participate in the market in future years without being assured minimum revenue of \$300/week/farmer (Attachment A). Similarly, Community Development Staff surveyed business owners and Downtown residents. Both the market patrons and residents surveyed demonstrated

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a comprehensive program in the Downtown would be the most viable approach for expanding weekly events and to include a greater number and wider variety of vendors and special programs.

There are several organizations in the area that specialize in market management, most of whom are not-for-profit organizations. Staff has met with one such organization in order to better understand their function. Having a third-party entity manage the market would help infuse new ideas into the weekly events. Markets managed by these types of entities may include an array of live performances, fine art vendors, music, pre-packaged goods, holiday themes, etc., that surpass a traditional farmers' market model. An RFP would allow the City to evaluate several proposals from different providers while retaining general oversight via a contract agreement. The criteria developed in the RFP would include the types of events the City was looking for in the Downtown area with appropriate provisions to ensure that the Market and events remain compatible with the character of the Downtown would be included in the agreement.

Once direction from the Committee is received, it will allow staff to do additional research and then return to council seeking approval to proceed. Staff recommends that the Citizen Development and Enrichment Committee recommend to the full City Council the development of a Request for Proposals to seek outside assistance in managing a market concept for the Downtown.

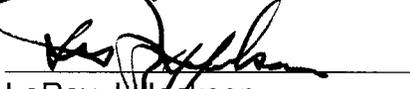
Respectfully submitted,

Jeffery W. Gibson  
Community Development Director

By   
Gregg Lodan, AICP  
Planning Manager

CONCUR:

  
Jeffery W. Gibson  
Community Development Director

  
LeRoy J. Jackson  
City Manager

Attachment:

A) Redevelopment Agency Item & Attachments (September 20, 2011)

Agency Meeting  
September 20, 2011  
Agency Item 4A

Honorable Chair and Members  
of the Torrance Redevelopment Agency  
City Hall  
Torrance, California

Members of the Agency:

**SUBJECT: Redevelopment Agency - Review the Downtown Farmers' Market pilot program performance report.**

**Expenditure:** None

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Recommendation of the Deputy Executive Director that the Redevelopment Agency review the Downtown Torrance Farmers' Market performance report and authorize the six month pilot program to sunset on September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

### **BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS**

On October 19, 2010, the Agency approved the establishment of a Downtown Torrance Farmers' Market to be privately operated at El Prado and Sartori Avenues from 4:00 – 8:00 P.M. every Thursday. On February 15, 2011, the Council authorized a transfer of operation to the City's Community Services Department under a six month pilot program. This trial period began March 31, 2011, and was set to close on September 29, 2011. The Market was initiated as a part of ongoing efforts to help stimulate economic development and bring about a sense of community in Downtown Torrance.

During this trial period, City staff initiated a variety of marketing strategies to help promote the Downtown Farmers' Market. Flyers were widely distributed and posted in each of the Downtown businesses and several Downtown Bulletins were mailed, posted, and available online publicizing the Market. In addition, weekly email announcements were sent out by the Old Torrance Neighborhood Association and Farmers' Market list serves. Advertisements were placed in the Torrance Seasons publication, the Torrance Tribune, Herald News, the Bunka-Sai Program, and information about the Market was announced weekly at City Council meetings. CitiCable and the Daily Breeze did promotional specials on the market, and CitiCable also featured the market on the message runner at the bottom of the screen. Staff also used electronic message boards as well as a variety of other strategies to help generate interest in the community about the Downtown Farmers' Market.

The Community Services Department monitored the Market each week for attendance, costs, revenue, and conducted a survey amongst the Farmers to gauge viability

(Attachment A). With the exception of opening day on March 31<sup>st</sup>, attendance at the Market was relatively light, averaging between 150-200 customers per week. This resulted in lower than projected revenues and difficulty retaining Farmers. The Market originally started with 15 farmers, and has since dropped down to seven. Redevelopment staff also prepared a brief survey for Downtown businesses and residents in order to gauge the community perception of the Market (Attachment B). Although operating at a current total loss of approximately \$1245, the Market was still well received by the community. Of the surveys returned, everyone stated they would like to see the Market continue and grow. Suggestions received for improving the Market included better selection, more variety in vendors, and changing the hours from 4:00 – 8:00 P.M. to 3:00 – 7:00 P.M.

With the first season of the trial period for the Downtown Farmers' Market nearly complete, staff recommends that the Agency close the initial pilot program after September 29<sup>th</sup> with the intention to re-establish the market again in the spring of 2012. During the interim months, staff will explore new strategies to help boost market attendance, retain and attract new farmers, and increase revenues. Staff will look into ideas such as modifying the present location of the Market, increasing the number and types of vendors, starting the market earlier during the day, expanding the marketing program, implementing a subsidy program to help retain farmers, and exploring the possibility of a corporate sponsor and/or private vendor to assist in the successful operation of the market. Staff anticipates returning to the Agency in February 2012 with an update on the status of these strategies and a recommendation on how to proceed with the Downtown Farmers' Market.

Redevelopment Staff recommends that the Agency authorize the Downtown Farmers' Market pilot program to sunset on September 29<sup>th</sup> to allow staff additional time to prepare a revised strategy for a successful Market.

Respectfully submitted,

CONCUR:



Jeffrey W. Gibson  
Deputy Executive Director



LeRoy J. Jackson  
Executive Director

JEFFERY W. GIBSON  
Deputy Executive Director

By   
For: Gregg Lodan, AICP  
Planning Manager

Attachments:

- A. Downtown Farmers' Market Status Report (August 25, 2011)
- B. Downtown Bulletin Vol. 79 (August 18, 2011)

**DOWNTOWN FARMERS' MARKET  
PROGRAM PERFORMANCE MEASURES  
STATUS REPORT – August 25, 2011**

Prior to the launch of the six month trial period, the Community Services Department identified five performance measures that would help determine the success of the Downtown Farmers' Market and whether or not it should be extended for another period of time. The performance measures and the results are listed below:

1. Does revenue match expenses and recover all direct costs?  
No. The revenue to date (for the period of 3/31/11 – 8/13/11) totals \$3,331.81 while the expenses have been \$4577.21 for a **loss of \$1245.40** (please see attached itemization of direct costs.)
2. Was the average Market attendance high enough to warrant continuation of Market operations?  
No. With the exception of Opening Day, attendance was relatively light. Some days were better than others, but the average attendance was approximately 150 – 200 shoppers per Market day.
3. Did the Market rate favorably to neighboring Downtown merchants?  
*Community Development Department surveyed the merchants and can answer this question.*
4. Was farmer retention high (and were staff efforts high to maintain a maximum number of farmers) in the Market?  
Farmer retention was not high. Along the way, a total of 18 farmers dropped out of the Market and needed to be replaced. At the current time, only 6 farmers remain in the Market, down from the 15 that we attempted to have each week throughout the course of the pilot program. Staff have expended a great deal of effort in trying to retain and replace farmers.
5. Was there an impact to existing Tuesday or Saturday Farmers' Markets at Wilson Park?  
No impact was noted.

## SURVEY RESULTS

### **FARMERS**

Surveys were given to farmers in an effort to get their feedback. At this point, a total of six responses have been received. The questions, responses, and comments are listed below:

1. Please rate your overall impression of the Downtown Farmers' Market on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest and 1 being the lowest:  
1-3    2-2    3-0    4-1    5-0    *Average score: 1.83*

2. If the Downtown Farmers' Market were to operate year-round on Thursdays from 3:00 – 7:00 p.m., would you participate?  
Yes – 1    No – 5
3. If the Downtown Farmers' Market were to operate seasonally (May through October) on Thursdays from 3:00 – 7:00 p.m., would you participate?  
Yes – 1    No – 5
4. If you answered "no" to question number 2 or 3, would you be willing to participate if the stall fee were reduced or eliminated?  
Yes – 1    No – 5
5. Has your participation in the Downtown Farmers' Market been financially successful for you?  
Yes – 0    No- 6

Comments from farmers:

1. "Not enough customers. I am staying because of Mary Lou. She helped me and now it is time I help her."
2. "Our sales have gone down and we are now sending only one employee. We had planned to quit but Mary Lou called us and asked us to please stay so we are honoring her wishes."
3. "No customers and very little sales. I use the Downtown Post Office all the time and I see more people down there during the day. Also I feel it is too close to the other two Torrance Markets. We plan to hang in there unless sales drop off more."
4. "I am willing to hang in there but my sales are terrible. I realize it is a new Market and it started off well but the customers have disappeared."
5. "I am dropping out as I have been offered a Market in Orange County that is an established Market and I will be able to make some money. I took on a second certificate to try and help out this Market but the customers just do not seem to come out. Come winter, this "wind tunnel" will be impossible. We started the end of March and it was cold and windy here. The sad part about this Market is it is close to my home and I spend less time going to it plus use less gas. I love the quaintness of the Market but it is missing a crucial element --- customers."
6. "My sales have slowly gone down, down and I have to pay for gas and an employee. I feel I owe Mary Lou a thank you for having me participate in the Tuesday Market. We will stay unless my sales drop down to where I can't afford to do the Market and quite frankly, we are close to that now."

NOTE: In an informal survey, farmers (both current and those who have participated in the past) were asked how much money they would need to gross in order to make participation in the Downtown Farmers' Market worthwhile. Of the 13 farmers surveyed, 12 said they would need to make between \$300 - \$350 per week while one said he would need to make \$800 per week.

## CUSTOMERS

Customers were also given surveys in an effort to get their feedback. At this point, a total of 20 responses have been received. The questions and responses are listed below:

1. How do you rate this Market, 10 being the highest and 1 the lowest?  
1 – 0   2 – 0   3 – 0   4 – 0   5 – 2   6 – 1   7 – 3   8 – 5   9 – 1   10 – 7;  
one responded "very good". *Average score: 8.21*
2. What is your favorite thing about this Market?  
"Near home" (2 responses), "The friendly vendors" (2 responses), "Fruits and veggies", "Very fresh" (2 responses), "Fresh fruit", "Location and variety", "The staff and the variety of vendors", "Good quality", "Avocados", "Location and time", "Location" (2 responses), "Samples and onions", "Salad Guy", "I can walk to it on any of three days and everything is fresh!", "Easy to go to and very good", "The produce", and "Fresh produce and proximity to home".
3. What don't you like about this Market?  
"Perfect", "Nothing --- it is a great Market" (3 responses), "Too small" (4 responses), "No parking and too few vendors", "Need more vendors" (2 responses), "No food", "Not enough selection because not enough vendors", "Parking", "Produce", and "I would like to see more stands". Three left this question blank.
4. Do you like the mixture of farmers and vendors?  
"Yes, very cool", "Yes" (15 responses), "Yes, fairly", "Yes, more vegetables", "Yes, could have a larger variety", and "Yes, very nice".
5. Do you feel the staff is friendly and helpful?  
"Yes, yes, yes", "Yes" (15 responses), "Very" (2 responses), "Excellent! Yes!", and "Yes, of course!"
6. How does the Downtown Farmers' Market compare to other Markets that you attend?  
"Just a bit smaller", "It is really good", "Don't know", "Its vendors and farmers are much more friendly", "A little too small" (3 responses), "The best" (2 responses), "I can walk to the Torrance Certified Farmers' Market 3 days a week. Why should I go anywhere else?", "Everyone is always so helpful and great vendors", "I go to Wilson – same people – so good", "Good, but needs to be bigger", "Smaller --- I also go to the others in Torrance", "The best --- would not go anywhere else", "Not a big", "I like it because it is very personal", and "Not applicable". Two left this question blank.

**DOWNTOWN FARMERS' MARKET**  
**LABOR AND MATERIALS/SUPPLIES COSTS**  
*as of 8-13-11*

**DIRECT LABOR COSTS**

1 Recreation Specialist II x 100.40 hours		
1 Recreation Leader x 44.6 hours		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 2,835.85</b>

**MATERIALS/SUPPLIES**

Health Department permit	\$	163.50
Department of Agriculture permit	\$	204.00
<i>Torrance Tribune</i> advertising	\$	562.50
Posters and flyer design and copying (Central Services)	\$	766.36
Cleaning supplies (brooms, dust pan)	\$	45.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 1,741.36</b>

**GRAND TOTAL**            **\$ 4,577.21**



# City of Torrance Redevelopment Agency

## DOWNTOWN BULLETIN

August 18, 2011

VOLUME 79

# DOWNTOWN FARMERS' MARKET SURVEY

Below you will find a survey designed to help us better meet the needs of Downtown businesses and community. Please complete and return to the Community Services booth at the Downtown Torrance Farmers' Market during regular operating hours (between 4:00-8:00 PM) on Thursday, August 25<sup>th</sup>.

### FOR EVERYONE:

1) Do you shop at the Farmers' Market? (*check one*)

ON A REGULAR BASIS \_\_\_\_\_ SOMETIMES \_\_\_\_\_ NEVER \_\_\_\_\_

2) Do you feel that the Market has brought people to Downtown? (*check one*) \_\_\_ Y \_\_\_ N

If yes, please explain:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3) How would you rate this Market overall (Please circle, on a scale of 1-10, 10 being highest)?

Please explain:                    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4) Would you like to see the Downtown Farmers' Market continue operating? \_\_\_ Y \_\_\_ N

If yes, YEAR ROUND? \_\_\_ SEASONAL? \_\_\_ (i.e., MAY-OCT)

5) Do you feel that the 4:00 -8:00 PM hours of the Market were effective? \_\_\_ Y \_\_\_ N

If not, what hours would be better (*check one*)?     3:00-7:00 PM     2:00 – 6:00 PM

6) How would you improve the Farmers' Market?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### FOR BUSINESS OWNERS:

7) Do you feel that the Farmers' Market contributed positively to your business? \_\_\_ Y \_\_\_ N

Please explain:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8) Did your business experience any problems related to the Market? \_\_\_ Y \_\_\_ N

If yes, please explain:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_