



September 15, 2016

Chair and Committee Members
Economic Development Committee
100 Queen St. W.
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

RE: Creating a Public Food Markets Working Group

SUMMARY:

Though long-treasured by city-dwellers as a way to connect to local growers and traders, while surrounded by a festive atmosphere, entertainment and access to arts, crafts, street food and fresh produce, the widespread benefits of public food markets remain relatively unknown and unappreciated. As such, many public markets exist on the margins.

Under the current system, information about procedures, permits, fees and regulations is often incomplete and inconsistent, complicating communications between market managers and City Staff. Many markets trying to establish themselves are forced to navigate different city divisions and processes depending on the type of market proposed and the space they intend to occupy, without the reliability of a consistent streamlined process. For entrepreneurs wishing to test and sell at public markets, information about where markets are located, Public Health requirements, licensing, corporate registration, and who they need to contact is extremely difficult to access and navigate. In addition, limited opportunities for emerging businesses are available at already established markets.

Addressing these challenges to ensure public markets and entrepreneurs can thrive in communities throughout the GTA is essential to meeting economic development goals. In Toronto public markets have grown organically and have responded to demand. This expansion leads to more sustainable 'grassroots' businesses and diversified economic development. It provides business incubation opportunities, animated public spaces, enhanced innovation and entrepreneurship, and more effective community engagement, cohesion and well-being.

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In Toronto the demand is clear. In 2006, the City of Toronto had 10 operating farmer's markets. In 2016, we now have 35 dedicated farmer's markets, and that is not including markets that sell other types of goods or markets that are operated by organizations, such as the 30 Good Food Markets operated by FoodShare, the Grab Some Good mobile markets, or the TTC pop-up markets. In 2011, Toronto's food and beverage cluster had annual sales of about \$17 billion (Source: Ontario Ministry of Agriculture & Food, 2011). Small businesses engaged in food and beverage manufacturing continue to account for a larger share of total establishments in the food and beverage sector. In 2013, small businesses with less than 100 employees accounted for 90.2% (1,036) of total food and beverage establishments compared to 88.4% (880) in 2012. (Source: Canadian Business Patterns, Dec. 2012-2013).

Small food businesses rarely have access or capacity to serve big retail operators. Public food markets can provide a low cost of entry and low risk for a new business and access to customers to test and receive feedback on their products prior to scaling up. Public food markets can act as incubators, creating a flourishing city for innovators and entrepreneurs. Following the example of global cities such as London and Barcelona, Toronto is primed to take key leadership in supporting public market expansion and innovation.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That City Council direct the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture to establish a Public Food Markets Working Group, made up of City staff from Toronto Public Health, Parks Forestry and Recreation, Municipal Licensing and Standards, Facilities & Real Estate, Transportation Services, and other outside stakeholders such as the Toronto Food Policy Council, non-profit food organizations, TABIA, current market organizers, farming organizations and farmer's market associations, to advise the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture on the barriers and opportunities for the further development of public markets within the City of Toronto and on the development of a Public Market Strategy for the City of Toronto.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mary Fragedakis
City Councillor
Ward 29, Toronto-Danforth