

# Project for Public Spaces

October 18, 2023

Dear Councillor Alejandra Bravo,

City of Toronto

My name is Kelly Verel, and I represent the Market Cities Program at Project for Public Spaces. In this capacity, I am pleased to support marketcityTO's request to develop the first City of Toronto Public Market Action Plan.

Chair Alejandra Bravo,  
Economic and  
Community  
Development  
Committee

Toronto boasts over 105 public food markets, bolstering over 2,500 urban and rural entrepreneurs (2019 data). This number has likely increased as the COVID-19 pandemic fueled a surge in start-ups, particularly among millennials, launching businesses from home. 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 still need to be discovered and appreciated. As such, many public markets exist on the margins.

The Market Cities Program at Project for Public Spaces works to advance a new vision for market systems that create infrastructure, policies, and investments at the city, regional, and national levels. The Program was founded on the belief that successful markets help build communities rooted in well-being and equitable opportunity. We believe the potential of markets can be harnessed to help sustain residents' access to food, decent jobs, and social infrastructure in the face of inevitable climate change impacts. The Program aims to support public markets working together to achieve greater community impacts than they can achieve working independently. We envision a future in which every city has a market strategy that supports its ecosystem of market managers, vendors, food producers, and distributors.

In 2020, the Market Cities Program worked with leading market organizations in three North American cities, including Toronto, to audit each city's network of markets, identify challenges and opportunities, and convene a broad group of stakeholders, all with the goal of developing recommendations for new policy and governance structures. We continued our relationship with the local Toronto team this past year, working together to present the 11th International Public Markets Conference in June 2023. We see the proposed City of Toronto Public Market Action Plan as a direct

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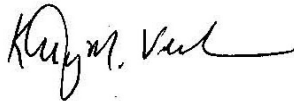
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extension of the outcomes from these engagements, which are rooted in broad community and stakeholder engagement, thoughtful data collection and analysis.

Toronto has an opportunity to be a leader again in sustainable food and inclusive economies. Since 2015, a group of public market organizations and market managers, supported by the Toronto Food Policy Council, have been advancing the work required to increase awareness and understanding of Toronto public markets and their role in city-building. It is now the time to have an Action Plan that allows city staff, councillors, market managers, vendors, the private sector, academia, and the not-for-profit sector to work together and build the sector for the benefit of the markets, regulators, and the public at large.

Please feel free to contact me directly at [kverel@pps.org](mailto:kverel@pps.org) if you would like to discuss further Project for Public Spaces' support of this initiative.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kelly Verel", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kelly Verel  
Co-Executive Director  
Project for Public Spaces