

Bryant, Shellie

From: Michael Gertler [REDACTED]
Sent: September 29, 2019 1:23 PM
To: City Council
Subject: Form submission from: Write a Letter to Council
Attachments: gertler_sfmc_letter_to_mayor_and_council_sept_29_2019.docx

Submitted on Sunday, September 29, 2019 - 13:22

Submitted by anonymous user: 216.197.221.77

Submitted values are:

Date Sunday, September 29, 2019
To His Worship the Mayor and Members of City Council
First Name Michael
Last Name Gertler
Email [REDACTED]
Address [REDACTED] Temperance Street
City Saskatoon
Province Saskatchewan
Postal Code [REDACTED]
Name of the organization or agency you are representing (if applicable)
Subject Saskatoon Farmers' Market Co-operative negotiations re building
Meeting (if known) City Council
Comments
Your Worship and Honorable Councillors,

Please see the attached 10-point business case for accommodating the Saskatoon Farmers' Market Co-operative in its present location. This non-profit co-op has a 45-year history of developing, upgrading, expanding, and successfully managing a producer market in our City core. It is a respected organization and a valued institution with thousands of loyal patrons. It is the best bet for continuing to offer high quality produce and other handmade food products in a welcoming and festive atmosphere. Whatever else is added to the mix, whatever improvements are doable and compatible, the SFMC should remain the core activity and key facilitating broker. The SFMC yields huge dividends to Saskatoon and region. Let's not sacrifice this golden goose!

Attachments

[gertler_sfmc_letter_to_mayor_and_council_sept_29_2019.docx](#)

The results of this submission may be viewed at:

<https://www.saskatoon.ca/node/398/submission/339894>

September 29, 2019

Dear Mayor and Council:

I am grateful for this opportunity to share some thoughts re the future of the Saskatoon Farmers' Market Co-operative (SFMC). I write as a resident of Ward 6, and as a patron and student of farmers' markets here and elsewhere. I am an associate professor of sociology and teach rural sociology, the sociology of communities and community development, environmental sociology, and the sociology of agriculture and food. At the University of Saskatchewan. I am also a Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives and serve on the committee overseeing the professionally accredited Regional and Urban Planning program. Almost 20 years ago, in collaboration with several colleagues working under the auspices of the Community-University Institute for Social Research, I undertook a study of the economic and social importance of the SFMC. So, I write as a citizen but also as a researcher who has studied this market and followed the literature on farmers' markets in North America.

Time is short. I am going to summarize a 10-point 'business case' for keeping the SFMC in downtown Saskatoon. I will also present some arguments for keeping this market as a civic enterprise run by a non-profit producer co-operative.

- The SFMC is a sustainable economic engine: It provides meaningful livelihoods for well over a hundred vendors, and their families and employees, adding strength and diversity to the regional economy. Through relational marketing, they realize a premium for their products—adding values and value to the exchange.
- The SFMC is a business incubator: It fosters successful start-up and operation of food-related enterprises—by women, new immigrants, young people, and others who otherwise might not have such an opportunity.
- The SFMC is a destination and attraction: It pulls thousands of local customers, suburban residents, and out-of-town visitors to the downtown where they patronize other enterprises and add to the general vibrancy of the area.
- The SFMC is a unique amenity and a recruitment and retention tool: It is an important part of the perceived quality of life of many Saskatoon residents, and it is an amenity that help businesses, professionals, and others decide to locate here and to stay.
- The SFMC is a far-sighted investment: It generates revenues for the City directly in terms of rents, taxes, parking revenues, bus ridership, and increased property values in its vicinity. It helps to make investments in private and public developments more viable and attractive—with resulting positive fiscal and political feedback at City Hall.

- The SFMC is valuable social infrastructure: It is a safe, low-crime, and attractive space where women, seniors, families, and young people of diverse backgrounds can shop, mingle, and interact, enjoying the ‘cosmopolitan canopy’ that it provides. It is a community-building tool that brings together people from many walks of life and many locales. Relationships are built and friendships multiply.
- The SFMC is a nurturing institution: It makes quality, affordable, local food more accessible to people who could not or would not travel long distances to attend a market in a less central location. The benefits in terms of health, longevity, and enjoyment of life are numerous, and difficult to exaggerate.
- The SFMC is an educational institution: Vendors and patrons share information and knowhow with each other. While its vendors exchange many kinds of valuable production and marketing knowledge among themselves, its patrons gain food literacy and skills.
- The SFMC is a cultural institution: It fosters a local cuisine and food culture, and keeps agricultural and gardening traditions and food tastes alive. It is a recurring festival or ‘happening’ with a family-friendly, celebratory atmosphere. It is a welcoming place and helps to develop a stronger and more positive community identity.
- The SFMC spawns and supports other beneficial activities: As a hybrid commercial-public venue featuring a wide array of authentic products and engaged producers, the market is a high-quality space that attracts other kinds of citizen engagement and socially useful activity—artisans and musicians, students and researchers, non-government organizations, political candidates, and people who simply wish to socialize and share information with fellow citizens/residents.

As a non-profit co-operative, the SFMC equitably and efficiently organizes and manages the farmers’ market, helps to assure quality goods, and provides fair treatment and a democratic forum for vendors. It also provides stability, planning, and a longer-term development vision. It networks with similar and allied organizations, and it is a trusted partner to the city, other parts of the social economy, and local businesses. It is a broker for many kinds of collaboration and a key node in many networks.

Across North America, farmers’ markets have been growing in size and number, and they are widely regarded as initiatives that are uniquely effective in providing opportunities, services, and life to downtown neighbourhoods. Why would Saskatoon cast aside a successful model and working enterprise that has ‘delivered the goods’ for more than four decades? We should not lightly dismiss or give up its many economic, social, and environmental multipliers. It would be a mistake of historic proportions to let the SFMC be dismantled or permanently displaced to the outskirts of the city. Let’s not kill our golden goose in the name of short-term fiscal savings or some incomplete, short-sighted, and narrowly conceived administrative or business calculus. We can and need to do better than that.

I very much hope that you act to support a win-win solution for retaining the SFMC in South Downtown. We expect our elected officials to show leadership that represents our collective interests, public priorities, and shared investment.

If you would like to explore any of these points further, I would be glad to chat by phone or to meet for a coffee.

Your sincerely,

Dr. Michael E. Gertler

Mobile: [REDACTED]