

**Schroader, Kathy**



**From:** Ann Foster <annfoster5093@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 16, 2015 4:01 PM  
**To:** Cnty 2016 Comp Plan; Stewart, Jeanne; Madore, David; Mielke, Tom  
**Subject:** Farmers markets in Clark County and alternatives to the Comprehensive Plan Update

Ladies and gentlemen:

I am requesting that this be part of the public record, as submitted within the public comment period for the Comprehensive Plan Update:

There are currently 7 farmers markets operating in Clark County. These vary dramatically in size, mix of vendors and sales generated. The Vancouver Farmers Market, in downtown Vancouver, operates two days a week and is one of the largest in Washington State; it has opened a second market in East Vancouver this year, 2015. The Camas Farmers Market in downtown Camas operates one market a week. The Salmon Creek Farmers' Markets hosts two a week, at two separate locations. These three market organizations receive support and funding from a variety of businesses and organizations, all of which encourage the vibrancy and healthful eating habits that a farmers market provides within a community. In addition, some of these funding sources support these three markets and their programs to support and incent customers who are under-resourced and are on a food assistance program (examples are SNAP, Fresh Match, and the Farmers Market Nutrition Program).

These three markets, operating a total of 5 days a week (with two markets on Thursdays), make up the bulk of farmers markets in the County. Together they produce significant numbers:

Based upon 2015 numbers to-date, these 5 market locations are generating a total of just over \$5,000,000 dollars in TOTAL sales. The total number of attendees over the course of a given farmers market season is in the hundreds of thousands.

More impressive is that over half of these sales dollars are from farm producers: specialty crop producers, meat and dairy, honey, nursery, and products that are produced from farm products (example, goats milk soaps, bees wax soaps). Notably, farm sales far exceeds the sales from other categories at a farmers market, such as crafts, prepared or processed foods. The bulk of farm producers at these markets are Washington-based.

It's important to note that these numbers do not include some of the smaller, but significant markets in Clark County, such as Ridgefield and Battle Ground, whose numbers are not available at this time.

In addition to generating dollars that remain within the local (ie., SW Washington) region, farmers markets provide marketing opportunities that nurture small businesses by enabling customer interaction, solidification of a customer base, networking, and avenues for a successful business selling wholesale to local grocers. Successful farms hire employees, who are increasingly needed to plant, grow, and harvest crops for market.

Farm businesses in Clark County are continually facing struggles as development encroaches upon productive acreage, creating pollution, water limitations, soil modification, increased traffic (which further generates pollution and livestock interference). The loss of agricultural land - or productive land that is forced into dis-use by development - removes more farm businesses from the local economy; and this has a tremendously negative impact on farmers' markets and farm businesses.

As an organizer of the Salmon Creek Farmers' Markets for the past several years, I strongly endorse Alternative 1 to the Comprehensive Plan. The cumulative impact of Alternatives 2 and 4 clearly would contribute and accelerate the loss of productive agricultural land...land that is used for the production of food.

Farmers markets remain a source of community, access to locally-produced (often sustainably grown) produce, as well as eggs, meat, cheeses, vibrancy, healthy communities and a sustainable local food system. Without productive agricultural lands, farmers markets cease to exist. And with that Clark County loses over \$5,000,000 dollars in its pockets.

Best regards,

Ann Foster,

Organizer, Salmon Creek Farmers Markets

Board, Washington State Farmers Market Association