A "How-to" Guide for Hosting Mini Farmers' Markets in Minneapolis

Minneapolis
City of Lakes

Steps to a Healthier MN
Minneapolis

IATP

Foreword

To increase access to healthy foods in low-income neighborhoods, the City of Minneapolis instituted a streamlined permitting process for small farmers' markets. This initiative makes it easier and less expensive for organizations to bring fresh and affordable produce to their neighborhoods. The following manual has been developed by the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) with the support of Steps to a Healthier Minneapolis to guide interested organizations through the process of establishing successful mini markets to serve members of their communities.

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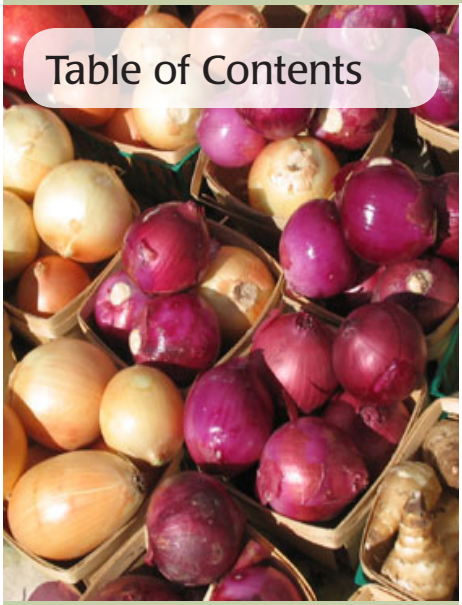

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What is a mini market?

What is a mini market?

- A mini market (or "local produce market") is a small farmers' market that has five or fewer farmers who sell their own locally grown produce and flowers.

- The mini market concept was developed, in the summer of 2005, with the dual goals of increasing access to healthy foods and supporting local farmers.

- Mini markets are generally located in low-income neighborhoods with limited access to healthy foods, especially fresh produce.

- Mini markets fall under a 2009 City of Minneapolis policy that allows small produce markets to function with only a permit rather than a business license. This greatly reduces the time and expense of setting up a new farmers' market. Please note: permit will be printed on a standard licensing certificate.

- The City of Minneapolis also refers to mini markets as "Local Produce Markets." The permit required for a mini market is a "Local Produce Market" permit.

- Mini markets are usually hosted by community organizations and can be held at any location in Minneapolis that complies with the health and zoning codes for locations with food sales. Any organization can host a mini market in their community.

- Because the Local Produce Market permit is specific to the city of Minneapolis, the mini markets as described in this "how-to" guide can operate only in Minneapolis. Other municipalities should contact their own licensing department to determine their options for starting a mini market.

What is <u>not</u> a mini market?

- Any farmers' market that has more than five farmers, sells "value-added" products such as bread or salsa, or offers arts and crafts, etc., is considered a regular farmers' market and requires a business license. The business license process costs approximately $450 the first year, with a $170 annual renewal fee. Fees are subject to change every year.

If you are interested in hosting a regular farmers' market, rather than a mini market, please visit: http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/business-licensing/food/index.asp.

What are the benefits of a mini market?

What are the benefits of a mini market?

Mini markets are a low-cost way to bring healthy, local produce into any neighborhood. Like other farmers' markets, mini markets provide a number of community benefits. They:

- build a sense of community
- support the local economy
- provide healthy food options
- connect people with farmers who grow food

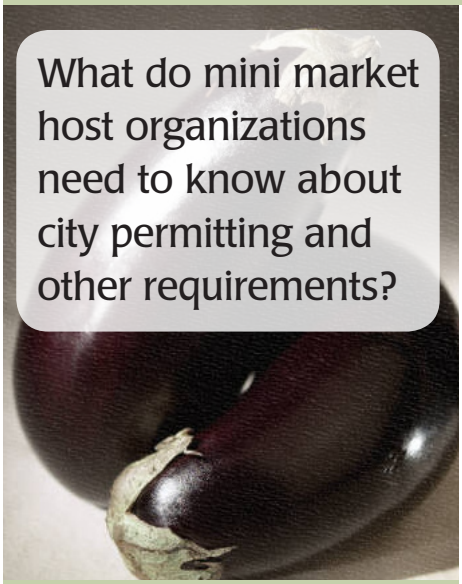
Mini markets also provide additional benefits that might not be realized with a larger farmers' market. For example:

- Mini markets are less expensive and easier to organize than a larger farmers' market, making it possible for organizations and neighborhoods that cannot support a larger market to have a farmers' market.

- Mini markets can choose not to have membership fees or rental fees for participating farmers, which gives farmers who might not be able to sell at a larger farmers' market the opportunity to sell at a mini market.

- Mini markets can be authorized by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture to accept Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) food assistance coupons. FMNP coupons can only be used at farmers' markets, but many FMNP recipients lack transportation to Minneapolis' major markets. By locating in areas with high participation in food assistance programs, mini markets help ensure that people can use their FMNP coupons (See page 21 for more about FMNP).

What do mini market host organizations need to know about city permitting and other requirements?



What do mini market host organizations need to know about city permitting and other requirements?

- Mini markets are permitted and regulated by the City of Minneapolis.
- Mini markets fall under a 2009 City of Minneapolis policy that allows small produce markets to function with a permit rather than a business license. The permit is called a "Local Produce Market" permit.
  - As of 2009, the permitting process for a mini market costs $158 the first year and is free thereafter as long as there are no major changes to the market.
- The permit allows mini markets to have a maximum of five farmers who sell only their own locally grown produce and flowers.
- There are several forms that must be completed to ensure that both your mini market and your farmers are allowed to operate.

Forms for the mini market manager to complete:

- Local Produce Market Permit application
  - The mini market manager must fill out a City of Minneapolis Local Produce Market Permit application and associated paperwork and submit them to the address listed on the application.
  - The Local Produce Market Permit application can be obtained through the City of Minneapolis' Development Review Office: http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/business-licensing/food/index.asp
  - Upon review of the application, the market manager will receive a Local Produce Market permit from the City of Minneapolis.
- It is highly recommended that the mini market host organization inform their insurance carrier about their mini market and add the mini market to their policy.
- It is also highly recommended that your mini market be authorized to accept Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) coupons. See page 21 for FMNP information.

Forms for the mini market manager to collect from farmers:

- The Mini Market Vendor Packet describes market rules and regulations and includes several forms that farmers must complete and submit to the mini market manager:

  - Mini market application form.
  - It is required by the State of Minnesota for farmers to complete a Minnesota Department of Revenue ST19 tax form.
  - Proof of liability insurance is recommended.

- The mini market manager must keep these forms on file.
- For 2009, the Mini Market Vendor Packet can be obtained from the Local Food Organizer at IATP: (612) 870-0453. Mini market managers may alter the packet as desired.

Forms for farmers to complete:

- Farmer's Licensing Exemption Form
  - Farmers must be registered to sell in the City of Minneapolis. Farmers selling only produce that they have grown and harvested themselves are exempt from licensing requirements; however, they must complete the "Farmer's Licensing Exemption Form" found at http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/business-licensing/food/index.asp and submit it to the address listed on the form.
  - The Farmer's Licensing Exemption Form can be obtained from the City of Minneapolis' Department of Environmental Health: http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/business-licensing/food/index.asp.
  - Farmers only need to complete one Farmer's Licensing Exemption Form per year, even if they sell at multiple farmers' markets. The farmers must inform the mini market manager of the location(s) at which they are selling.

Other information:

- City of Minneapolis personnel may inspect mini markets to ensure that health codes are being followed.

- If your market is authorized to accept Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) coupons, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture may visit your market to ensure that farmers are complying with the FMNP rules (See page 21 for FMNP information).

What do mini market hosts and farmers need to know about the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP)?

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The Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) is a national program through WIC (Women, Infants and Children) and NAPS (Nutrition Assistance Program for Seniors). It is designed to improve the diets of low-income, nutritionally-at-risk children, pregnant women and seniors and to expand the use of farmers' markets.

FMNP participants in Minnesota receive $20 per year to be used at farmers' markets. This money comes in the form of five $4.00 FMNP "coupons" that act as checks. FMNP coupons can only be used at farmers' markets that are authorized to accept them.

It is highly recommended that your mini market be authorized to accept FMNP coupons. In past years, FMNP coupons have made up more than half of the sales at some of the mini markets. They also enable people to visit your market who might not otherwise be able to do so.

The Federal and state rules about FMNP coupons are a little tricky. Both the farmers' market as a whole and the individual farmers must be authorized to accept FMNP coupons.

Mini market hosts are only responsible for making sure their market is FMNP-authorized. Farmers arrange their own FMNP authorization. These are explained separately below.

Market authorization

- According to Federal law, a farmers' market must have a minimum of five FMNP-authorized farmers in order to accept FMNP coupons.

- Most mini-markets do not have five FMNP-authorized farmers. However, the mini-markets together can be authorized under the umbrella of the "Mini-market Project". For the 2009 market season, the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) is acting as an umbrella organization for markets that choose to seek FMNP authorization. If you want your mini market to be included under the "Mini Market Project" umbrella, please contact the Local Food Organizer at IATP: (612) 870-0453.

- If your mini market is FMNP-authorized, you must have at least one FMNP-authorized vendor present at all times, so that FMNP recipients can redeem their coupons.

- FMNP authorization is free.

Vendor authorization

- In order to be able to accept FMNP coupons, individual farmers must also be FMNP-authorized.

- Many farmers who sell at farmers' markets are already FMNP-authorized.

- Farmers arrange their own FMNP authorization. To become authorized, a vendor needs to attend a training held by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. For more information about vendor authorization, see http://www.mda.state.mn.us/food/business/fmnp.htm.

- FMNP-authorized farmers can only accept FMNP coupons at FMNP-authorized markets.

- FMNP authorization is valid as long as the vendor continues to sell at an FMNP-authorized market and is not cited for non-compliance. It is not necessary for a vendor to "renew" FMNP authorization.

Farmers receive a manual at the FMNP training detailing their responsibilities as an FMNP-authorized vendor. It is the farmers' responsibility to comply with all of the FMNP rules. However, mini market managers can help make sure they are doing so. In particular, it is good for the market managers to know that:

- Farmers' pink "FMNP Checks Welcome Here" sign must be visible at their booth at all times.

- Farmers cannot make change for FMNP coupons. If a customer tries to pay for less than $4.00 worth of produce with an FMNP coupon, the vendor must work with them to provide a full $4.00 worth of produce.

- FMNP coupons must be signed by the customer at time of purchase. Farmers cannot accept pre-signed coupons.

- FMNP coupons can only be used to purchase fresh vegetables, fruits and herbs.

- To ensure that farmers do not charge more for FMNP coupon purchases than for cash purchases, farmers must have the price of their produce prominently displayed.

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture occasionally visits the markets to ensure compliance with the FMNP rules. If a vendor is found violating any of the above guidelines, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture may cite the vendor for non-compliance. Consequently, farmers will have to attend the FMNP training the following year to become reauthorized.

What are the responsibilities of the mini market host organization and the farmers who sell at the mini markets?

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Mini market host organization:

Mini markets are hosted and coordinated by community organizations. The host organization:

- Provides the space for the market.
- Provides oversight of the market.
- Identifies a staff person to serve as the mini market manager.

The mini market manager is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the market. The mini market manager's responsibilities are to:

- Commit to being at the market each week while the market is in operation.
- Recruit farmers to sell at the market. See page 34 for information about finding farmers.
- Complete the City of Minneapolis Local Produce Market Permit application and associated paperwork and submit them to the City. See page 15 for permit information.
- Have farmers fill out the forms in the Mini Market Vendor Packet and submit them to the mini market manager, who must keep these forms on file. See page 16 for information about the vendor packet.
- Build a relationship with the property owner of the market site (if other than the mini market host organization).
- Build relationships and maintain communications with the farmers who sell at your market.
- Oversee the daily operation of the market, ensure health and safety, and maintain cleanliness.
- Promote the market to the surrounding community. See page 42 for promotion suggestions.
- Connect with a local food shelf and encourage farmers to donate unsold product. See page 47 for food shelf information.
- Secure Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) authorization for the market. This is not required. See page 21 for FMNP information.

Farmers:

- Be registered to sell produce in Minneapolis. See page 16 for registration information.

- Fill out the forms in the Mini Market Vendor Packet and submit them to the mini market manager. See page 16 for information about the vendor packet.

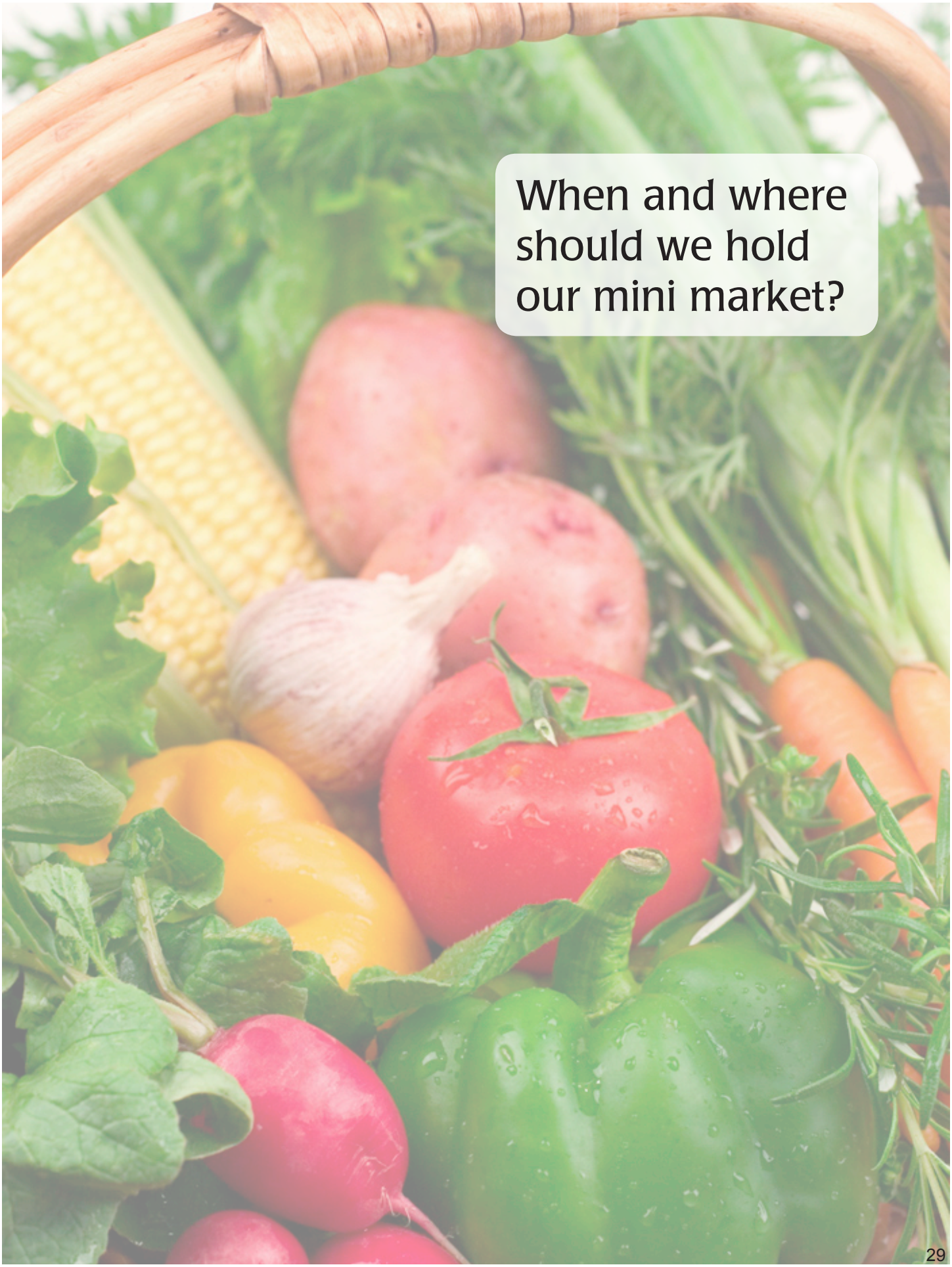
- Bring tables, tents, and all other materials needed to sell at the market.

- Commit to selling weekly for the whole market season (generally late June through late September).

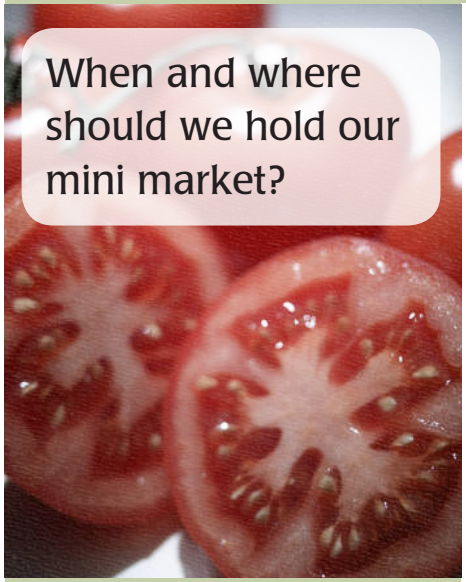
- Contact mini market manager in advance if unable to attend a market.

- Be authorized to accept Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) coupons. Not all farmers need to be authorized. (See page 21 for FMNP information).

- Donate unsold produce to a food shelf if asked. See page 46 for food shelf information.



When and where should we hold our mini market?



When and where should we hold our mini market?

Market Dates:

- Because mini markets only sell locally grown fresh produce, the markets can only operate when this produce is available, typically between late June and late September.

Market Times:

- Mini markets generally last between two and four hours.
  - Mini markets can be held any time; however, an afternoon mini market is preferable because it allows farmers to sell at bigger farmers' markets in the morning and then come to the mini markets afterwards.
- If possible, try to coordinate your market with other activities in the neighborhood.

Market Location:

Regardless of where you hold your mini market, all markets must have zoning approval and are required to provide:

- Access to a bathroom and hand-washing facility for farmers.
- Access to a building and phone in case of emergency.
- A 10' x 10' space on a "cleanable surface," such as concrete or asphalt, for each vendor.
- Prompt removal of all trash and debris within 100 feet of the mini market.

You will also want to consider:

- Amount of foot traffic in the area – more is better!
- Visibility of the potential market site – again, more is better!
- Availability of parking or accessibility via public transportation.
- Remember that markets take place outdoors and are susceptible to changing weather. Farmers who sell in open-air markets will come prepared but make sure your market is in a location that shoppers will visit if it rains.

Other things to keep in mind:

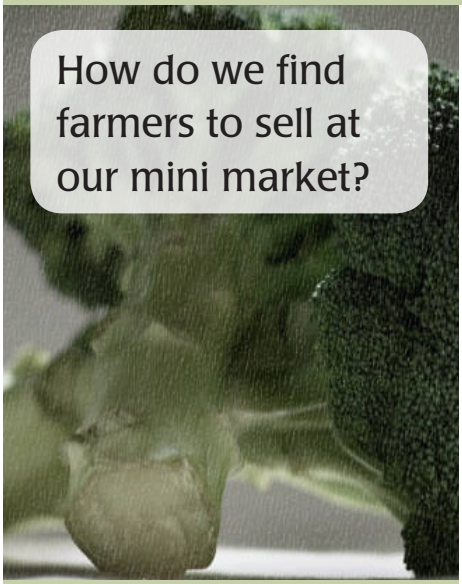
Where and when you hold your mini market depends in part on the people you want your to serve. For example:

- If your goal is to attract neighborhood residents on their way home from work, an early evening market near a busy street corner or a bus stop might be most appropriate.

- If, on the other hand, your market is aimed primarily at the residents of a senior housing facility, a mid-afternoon market in an accessible location that is visible from the seniors' apartments is recommended.

Please note: if you decide to change the location of your market, you will need to reapply and pay for a new permit as the new site must go through a zoning review.

How do we find farmers to sell at our mini market?



How do we find farmers to sell at our mini market?

The mini market host organization is responsible for finding and coordinating with the farmers who will sell at your mini market.

There are many ways you can find farmers to sell at your mini market:

- Visit other farmers' markets and talk to farmers in advance of your market opening date. Most of the bigger markets start in May or June.

- Visit markets that operate on the same day as you want to hold your mini market. Many mini market farmers sell at the bigger farmers' markets in the morning and then come to the mini markets in the afternoon. If the farmers are already in town for another market, they are more likely to be available for your mini market.

- Call farmers and organizations listed in the Minnesota Grown directory: http://www.mda.state.mn.us/food/minnesotagrown/directory.htm

- Contact local agriculture organizations and farming groups to broadcast the opportunity to sell at your market.

- Network with other mini markets that do not share your market day. Many of the farmers participate in more than one mini market.

When talking to farmers:

- Make sure your farmers can commit to being at your market each week for the entire market season. This will provide continuity and avoid surprises.

- Make sure your farmers are licensed to sell at farmers' markets in Minneapolis. See page 16 for vendor licensing information.

Make sure you recruit enough farmers for your mini market to take place even if one of the farmers can't make it on a particular day. While you may only have a few farmers on a given day, it is best to build a roster of 4-5 farmers willing to sell at your market

- If you want your mini market to be able to accept Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) coupons, ask the farmers if they are FMNP-certified. See page 21 for FMNP information.

What do we do once we've found our farmers?

What do we do once we've found our farmers?

Once you have found farmers to sell at your mini market, the mini market manager must:

- Make sure the farmers complete the forms in the Mini Market Vendor Packet and submit them to the mini market manager. See page 16 for information about the vendor packet.
- Establish guidelines for contact in case a farmer cannot make it to the market or a market needs to be cancelled.
- Call your farmers a few weeks before the market starts to confirm that they will be there.
- Meet your farmers in person before your market starts. This will help you develop a relationship with your farmers, allow you to answer any questions you may have for each other, and help avoid any confusion on the first day of your market.
- Make sure your farmers feel welcome and appreciated at your market. You want them to have a positive experience and to come back each week – and hopefully even next year.
- Remember that farmers sell produce as a livelihood. One of the best things you can do for farmers is to create a lively environment with lots of customers!

How can we promote our mini market to people in our neighborhood?

How can we promote our mini market to people in our neighborhood?

Think of your mini market like any other community activity, such as a garage sale or neighborhood festival. Get the word out in as many ways as possible! For example:

- Make lawn signs to put around the neighborhood.
- Distribute flyers throughout neighborhood. For example, post flyers on public bulletin boards at libraries, community centers and coffee shops.
- Ask nearby businesses and housing facilities if they can advertise the market to their customers and tenants such as placing pre-made flyers in their windows.
- Submit short articles or ads to your neighborhood or organizational newsletter, newspaper or website. Don't forget to include the dates, times and location of the market!
- Promote your market at other neighborhood events such as a festival, block party, etc.
- Encourage nearby restaurants to buy from the mini market.
- Advertise at local WIC clinics.

- Invite friends to visit the market with you!

Other important things to consider when promoting your market:

- Be sure that any signs, flyers, etc. are written in the languages spoken in your neighborhood.
- Keep promoting your market throughout the summer, not just before it starts.
- Make sure your market takes place every week during the period you announce. Customers will come back if they know they can rely on it.

As time goes by, your customer base will grow. Once people know the market is there and visiting the market becomes part of their routine, they will come more regularly – and hopefully tell their friends and family to come as well!

Connecting with food shelves: Ways to make fresh, local food even more available in your neighborhood

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Food shelves rarely have fresh produce to give to their clients. At the same time, farmers selling at farmers' markets often have high quality leftover produce that did not sell. Some farmers may be willing to donate this leftover produce to a nearby food shelf, which is a tax-deductible donation for the farmer.

As a mini market host, you can help make this possible by:

- Connecting with a food shelf in your neighborhood. Community centers, places of worship and social service organizations often have a food shelf or can tell you where to find one.

- Making arrangements for transporting the produce to the food shelf ahead of time. The mini market manager is responsible for making sure donated produce gets to the food shelf in a timely manner. Some food shelves may even pick up donations.

The food shelf should provide a receipt for donations. Mini market managers are asked to keep these receipts and track the total number of pounds donated each year.