



Press Release

Contact: Kara Alnasrawi
Director, Economic Recovery
kalnasrawi@burlingtonvt.gov

Statement Regarding the BTV Market

Burlington, VT -- The City loves the Farmers Market and wants it to be successful wherever it is located. The BTV Market is designed to support small businesses and vendors, especially BIPOC businesses, who are *not* farmers and growers, expanding upon BCA's existing Saturday Artist Market in City Hall Park. An empty City Hall Park on Saturdays is not an option for the downtown, and this market is designed to help boost regional businesses, not compete with them. We look forward to cross-promoting our two markets and directing shoppers down Pine Street to the Farmers Market.

The City has been working with the Burlington Farmers Market to return to City Hall Park since before construction started in 2019. The Mayor and BFM signed the attached MOU in 2019 which the City committed \$10,000 to the BFM to help with relocation costs and the BFM indicated they intended to return to the park post-construction.

The City invited the Farmers Market to return to City Hall Park in 2021, and they decided to stay on Pine Street. To try to ensure there was sufficient time to work through all details of a 2022 return, the City began outreach for the 2022 season in September 2021, before their 2021 season had ended.

We followed up repeatedly throughout the fall to see if we might be able to address their concerns about returning to the park, and were eventually invited to address the steering committee in mid-January. We delivered the attached presentation in a 2.5-hour meeting with the steering committee on January 17.

City Hall Park can accommodate all of the Farmers Market vendors. We shared a map in the January meeting that accommodates 89 vendors, and offered to consider alternative layouts and close down additional blocks of College Street and/or St. Paul Street if the Farmers Market wanted to increase the size of their market further. It has always been our intention to accommodate all Farmers Market vendors when the market returns to City Hall Park.

While the MOU that the BFM signed in 2019 offered a phased in fee schedule (where the first year would be free and rise to \$15,000 by year 3), at the January meeting this year, we offered to waive the fee entirely in the proposed four-year agreement. We also clearly indicated that all aspects of the City's offer were open to further discussion and alteration.

While we regret not informing the Farmers Market in advance, the decision to move forward with this project was only made after the Farmers Market Steering Committee clearly indicated they were not returning to City Hall Park for the 2022 season and potentially beyond. We did consistently communicate to the Farmers Market board over the last two years that the City had invested heavily in

a City Hall Park renovation in 2019 to better accommodate *greater* public use, and going another season without Saturday programming was not an option for the City. It is especially important that the Park be actively used on Saturdays now, at a time when the City is actively working to restore the health of the downtown after two very challenging and uncertain pandemic years.

The expansion of BCA's Artist Market to include makers and chefs is specifically designed to support micro-businesses and assist them in engaging with a customer base they would not normally have access too. This concept is based on the success of the City Hall Park Winter Market we have run the last two years which have given 68 small and micro businesses (75% of them women and BIPOC-owned) an unprecedented opportunity to access the large customer base in Burlington's vibrant downtown. We are offering an innovative grant program to help micro-entrepreneurs cover the costs of participation and insurance in order to make the market truly low-barrier. We feel strongly that supporting all forms on economic activity in multiple locations throughout the City is not only possible but is also a positive development for our community.

We met with the Farmers Market leadership again last week, and reiterated to them that the offer still stands for them to return to City Hall Park as soon as this upcoming summer – the City would like nothing more than for the Burlington Farmers Market to return to the downtown they were such a major part of in recent decades.

###

Attached:

- 2019 MOU between the City of Burlington and the Burlington Farmers Market
- Proposal delivered to the Burlington Farmers Market on January 17, 2022