



January 3, 2023

## Honourable Mayor Nuttall and Members of Council,

May we first start this letter to thank each and every one of you for sitting on Council. For those of you that have served previously, thank you for your help over the years to support the Barrie Farmers Market and for those that are new to the job we look forward to working with you as one of Barrie's oldest Not for Profit community groups.

For your convenience, please note the following highlights:

- We are very grateful for the partnership we have formed over the past century and are always looking to work with the City of Barrie Council
- BFM prefers the City Hall location over a new location at the current Transit Terminal site; but is constrained in winter months and seeking solutions at/in the area of the City Hall location for winter vendors, and would like to work with staff to make a plan for that expansion to present to Council in the near future
- Would appreciate Council providing support and funding for mobile markets again during summer 2023 as it opened up more Barrie residents and visitors to the Saturday market and provided additional opportunities for artisans and musicians that wouldn't have been available otherwise in the same amount as was granted us in 2022 ( \$25,000) as this experiment was successful in expanding the Tourism to Barrie
- It is important to note that a permanent market would be direct competition to BFM and not complementary for future planning purposes

***Barrie Farmers Market history*** - A review for those of you new to Council.

The BFM was established in 1846 on the land that City Hall currently resides on today. It was a gift of three and a half acres of land that was granted from the Crown to the Market that allowed us to exist. This Grant of land was for market purposes only. We had a building erected and operated for many years. After a fire in 1875 a new beautiful building was erected and enlarged to allow for some Municipal duties as they were without a home. The Market Square served a dual purpose for decades. On the first floor was market operations, and on the second floor we allowed the seat of municipal

government. It is the shape of this building that is outlined on Mulcaster street today in memory of that historic site. In the 1950s Barrie was booming and therefore needed more land to develop. We are still researching our history but it appears by all accounts that in 1952 an Ontario Bill was passed that allowed City Hall to take over the land Granted to the Market by the Crown as well as ownership of our building with the provision that The City take on the obligation to always provide a building suitable to the Market and a place of operation on a one acre parcel which is why the market operates where it does. We have been working with the City Council for a long, long time. We happily share this home base and work well with your many departments to keep the market running seamlessly as a partnership.

In recent years many associations suffered, but we actually excelled as the need for local products vs imported food became very evident to the general public as a basic need. This past summer the market flourished with some luck from Mother Nature, and the implementation of the Mobile Market project.

On February 14th of 2022 Council passed a motion to assist the Farmers Market with going Mobile to operate a few pop up market days on different days/ times/ locations downtown to survey the growing need of the market from the public, to gain insights into their needs and to offer an alternative to the Saturday Market source. This motion allocated \$25,000 to this project.

We are writing to you to give you some results of that project and insights we learned along the way as well as an update to our current operations.

The mobile market series was held on four dates, at two locations. We worked with City Staff and chose Heritage Park, and Centennial Park as downtown spaces that could accommodate the basic needs of operation. Parking is a top issue for both vendors and customers, electricity, physical space, and accessibility were all factors that comprised this result. We hosted these special events on Thursdays and at an opposite time to the market to see what knowledge we could gain vs our regular events.

The Market on Saturdays currently averages approximately 3050 visitors in a four hour period during the busiest summer months. This comprises 74 percent local residents and 26 percent of tourists to the area. ( 2257 residents vs 793 tourists or visitors to Barrie every Saturday )

We saw a huge difference in the Mobile Market numbers. The total tourists outweighed the residents which was a highlighted difference. People were coming to the market as part of their outings with families from other towns and cities and were visiting our beautiful Lakeshore. The Mobile Market Series averaged 1258 total counts per day, with an average of 46 percent being residents of our area and 54 percent being tourists from outside of Simcoe County.

Of the residents that were local to Barrie visiting on a Mobile event, a whopping 84 percent of them did not know about the Barrie Farmers Market on Saturdays. Many new families are moving to Barrie and had no idea that the market existed, or that the Downtown Open Air operated which we highlighted during this time as well. As Barrie is growing, many residents are unaware of all the services this City has. These events caused awareness of the market to new residents and therefore overall increased attendance at the market this summer. Once a local resident attends the market

they generally make it part of their weekly routine. The mobile markets were a huge advertising and marketing advantage for the regular event.

The market vendorship increased as customer numbers increased. The more people coming the more vendors we had to have to fill the need. That translates into a lot more Bakers, Artisans, Farmers, and Makers that are local having a place to sell their wares. Mobile market dates were particularly good for the artisan group as many farmers can only attend once a week to a market as they are farming the rest of the time, this allowed for a lot of different art mediums to be showcased.

Our Staff ensured that marketing and advertising funds were allocated to long term assets for the most part so that they could be reused at the regular events and enhance them for our residents' enjoyment. Thousands of photos were taken with our Huge Strawberries, Pumpkins, and Neighbourhood post. These were then posted on social media where we saw a fantastic thing happen. The attendance to our market increased regularly which we believe was directly related to reviews and social media chatter about our marketing enhancements.

The market vendor count went up to 84 including our artisans over the summer. That was 84 businesses that were directly affected by the mobile market successes and at our average count for the main part of the summer we saw over 70,000 visitors come through the marketplace. The Committee then naturally expanded to a second set of musicians to perform at the opposite end of the space and that led to 15 different bands / singers/ musical talent groups to expose the residents to the amazing musical scene we have here in Barrie. This expansion included more spaces for community groups and registered charities to attend. It gave them a free space to fundraise, to interact and to be part of the space for our community. This also saw space allocated to public education for Barrie Fire, Barrie Police, Library, and the Transit department to relay information to the residents.

This season reaffirmed that what we offer is local EVERYTHING. From music to art, jewelry and clothing, grown produce, honey, maple syrup, and wools/knit products made from local animals. We have local organic beef, chicken, pork, and several orchards here in Simcoe County that provide the freshest fruit. Our bakers are home bakers. This is only allowed at true Markets and offers what only a love of baking can provide. Everyone comes together and creates quite a cultural and social event here each week.

This was an amazing summer and a highlighted piece of our history to see the market expand out again. We wanted you all to know, both previous members and new, that this project made a profound and lasting effect on our market success. Tourists always attend and they have a lovely time, but it is the rise in the regular resident visits to the marketplace that will sustain the market long term. We learned that downtown may not be the space to move to permanently, as it is full of tourism opportunities, but not the residents that keep us going week in and week out. More surveys are needed. The regular market customer comes in the rain, the sleet, the snow to support their farmers. Tourists are fair weather friends of the market and we value and welcome them as a tourist destination but we also know that the community we serve is the reason we are so successful. That success comes because we get to know them, their kids, their woes, their joys over many many visits. They get to

know us. There is a connection and we form a relationship. Their feedback thus far through your own staff reports have been consistent that they want us to be happy in our home.

Our current home is big enough to sustain the increase in summer months and we are looking for options for winter at this time. Our Storage needs have now been met with some changes that the City Staff were able to facilitate. Our residents, vendors, and our visitors need parking, accessibility, and permanence. We are happy to have all of these in our home at City Hall. The Market Executive Board of Directors would like to pursue options at City Hall.

A really important item to note here with the Barrie Market, is that it is a True Farmers Market. This is a designation that applies to few markets that operate today. Our mandate is to ensure that it is always a True market with more farmers and producers than anything else and that all items are made by the vendors. The difference is the reselling is minimal here. Community Markets, public markets like many larger markets are not true Farmers Markets. As more farmland is sold and developed over time our Market will be a jewel for the City of Barrie. Not a large public market but one of the largest Farmers Markets in Ontario to serve our people, and our visitors to the City. Public Markets are simply not Farmers Markets.

The executive Directors of the Barrie Farmers Market would really like to revisit the success of the Mobile Market series next summer. It is with hope that we can continue to count on the Council to assist with funding to make this happen again.

Most Sincerely,

Jaime Grant - Marketing and Operations Manager

On behalf of the Barrie Farmers Market

Dated: January 3, 2023