

*"We are a welcoming, active and business-friendly rural foothill community built on California's rich gold rush history."*



**City Manager's Report**  
**February 14, 2023 City Council Meeting**  
**Prepared by: Terry Zeller, Director of Community Services**  
**Item #: 12.1**

**Subject:** Take the following actions:

1. Review the results from the recent survey of Downtown merchants about the Farmers Market held on Wednesday afternoons around the Bell Tower; and
2. Provide direction to staff for the continued use of the Bell Tower area for a Farmer's Market by El Dorado County Farm Trails.

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**Purpose:** Request Council review of the background, survey, and options pertaining to the Bell Tower location for the Wednesday Farmers Market.

**Strategic Plan Strategies:**

Maintain/Improve Quality of Life, Item 1(c): Assess and modify programs

Economic Development, Item 2: Enhance and diversify cultural and other tourism attractions

Economic Development, Item 3: Enhance community identity-the look and feel of a great town

**Background:** In 2014, the City entered into an agreement with El Dorado County Farm Trails to formalize an existing farmers market operation they had been operating at the Bell Tower. This agreement has been renewed over the years without changes, offering a lease of the Bell Tower area each Wednesday afternoon from the first Wednesday in June to the last Wednesday in October. In 2020, there were three farmers markets operating on City property: The Saturday market on the El Dorado Trail north of the Ivy Lot, the Sunday market at the Tetrault lot, and the Wednesday afternoon market at the Bell Tower.

In February of 2021, an effort was made by the Community Services Department to consolidate vendors of the three markets on City property to a two-market arrangement, one proposed at the Fox lot for Wednesday afternoons and the other on the El Dorado Trail north of the Ivy Lot for Saturday mornings. The goal was to increase the number of vendors within a given farmers market while limiting the locations to reduce the conflict between the markets and Downtown merchants for parking and number of days of market competition. The RFP was proposed at the February 9, 2021 City Council meeting. The Council decided to postpone the RFP and allow the existing three markets with agreements in place to continue to operate on public property.

In 2021, the Saturday and Sunday farmers markets both moved to the then Regal Cinema parking lot, leaving the Wednesday market as the only remaining farmers market on City property. In the fall of 2021, continued concerns voiced by Downtown merchants prompted discussion about the possibility of 2022 being the last year for the Wednesday market to be located at the Bell Tower. Staff began working with El Dorado County Farm Trails in the fall of 2022 to plan the move to the El Dorado Trail between Clay and Locust Streets, just north of the Ivy Lot.

**Discussion:** El Dorado County Farm Trails requested a meeting with the City Manager and CSD Director in January to discuss the possibility of remaining at the Bell Tower location in 2023 and beyond, citing the importance of their presence Downtown and the economic difficulty of re-establishing a market in a different location. As a result of the meeting, staff created a 3-question survey and hand delivered it to merchants on Main Street between Bedford and Sacramento streets to gauge the impact of the market on businesses and the Downtown as a whole. The questionnaire and a summary sheet of responses are attached to this staff report.

Staff is requesting the Council to review the survey summary, have a discussion, and move to approve one of the five options shown below. The option to move the market to the trail location may require some improvements to the ground surface where booths will be located to meet County Health Department standards. Moving the market to the Main Street frontage of the Ivy Lot is also possible with consideration of keeping leased spaces and a driving lane open through the lot during the market's operating hours. Keeping the market at the Bell Tower will continue to cost the City labor to set up and fill water barricades. All options have their costs, which are outlined in the section below.

**Options:** Based on the survey results and further discussion, staff requests the Council to consider one of the five options in moving forward with this item:

1. Leave the market at the Bell Tower with no changes to its program or footprint.
2. Leave the market at the Bell Tower with conditions, such as removing Stagecoach Alley from the market footprint.
3. Move the market to the trail behind the Ivy Lot, between Clay and Locust Streets.
4. Move the market to the south portion of the Ivy Lot, retaining leased parking area in the north and east portions of the lot.
5. Approve other options as the Council sees fit.

**Environmental:** The location or relocation of the market is not subject to CEQA or environmental review. The market, as a temporary installation, has no impact on the environment.

**Cost:** Moving the market to the trail would require labor and material costs for improvements to the ground surface estimated at less than \$500 which would be absorbed through the General Fund budget for Fiscal Year 2022/2023. Moving the market to the Ivy Lot would require some minor pot hole filling, and both the trail and Ivy Lot locations would need the installation of a power outlet for any entertainment. Keeping the market at the Bell Tower will continue to create labor costs to set and fill water barricades, which in 2022 were deployed to increase the safety of the public in creating a physical barrier to vehicles traveling on Main Street. The average cost per week for setting and filling the barricades is \$332, consisting of 2 hours labor x 3 Maintenance Workers plus a minimal cost for the water as calculated per gallon from the nearby fire hydrants.

**Recommendation:** Take the following actions:

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2. Provide direction to staff for the continued use of the Bell Tower area for a Farmer's Market by El Dorado County Farm Trails.



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**M. Cleve Morris, City Manager**



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**Terry Zeller, Dir. of Community Services**

Attachments:

- A. Example of Survey
- B. Survey Summary
- C. Written Survey Comments