

## Crossroads Farmers Market 2020 Report

Crossroads Farmers Market operated a full 33-week season in 2020 from April through the end of November. Throughout the year, Crossroads supported twelve full-season vendors, including seven farmers, three food businesses, one coffee roaster, and one mask maker. In addition, we offered graduates of our Microenterprise Training Program the opportunity to be a Pop-Up Vendor for six-weeks in order to showcase their business. Three graduates participated and found success in marketing and selling their products at the market. Despite the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, Crossroads continues its mission to provide healthy, affordable food to the Takoma/Langley Crossroads. In order to quickly adapt in 2020, we added additional safety precautions, partnered with community organizations onsite, hired our community ambassador team to work at the market, increased our SNAP match, initiated a Senior CSA program. In total, gross market sales for the 2020 season reached over \$261,000, only slightly less than 2019, which was just over \$268,000.

At the beginning of the season, Crossroads Farmers Market quickly adapted to ensure CDC-recommended safety precautions were being followed and enforced at market. This included mandatory masks, additional spacing in between vendor stands and shoppers, adding in hand washing stations, and purchasing personal protective equipment for staff. We procured hand sanitizer in large quantities, gloves, masks, and sanitizing wipes to ensure staff and volunteer safety. Volunteers contributed over 530 hours throughout the season to support enforcing many new market policies, such as masks and safe spacing between shoppers. These additional costs and measures were necessary at the onset of the season and we continued to quickly adapt as we learned more about the virus through the rest of the year, seeking donations when possible.

Throughout the season, Crossroads partnered with local community organizations to extend the reach of fresh food from the market to vulnerable community members. Each week, Meals on Wheels purchased \$100 in produce from Crossroads' farmers and received more than 1,860lbs in donated produce to be used in their senior meal delivery program. In addition, Centronía, Cheer, and Priority Partners purchased a total of \$7,280 in Fresh Checks for their participants to be picked up and used at market throughout the season. In July, the MCPS Summer Meals Program began distributing meals to school-aged children and extended their distribution through the end of the season. At its peak, the program distributed breakfasts and lunches to 175 children weekly. Through the entire month of September, Crossroads partnered with the Langley Park WIC office to sign up mothers for the program and distribute WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program checks onsite. By the end of the month, they had



distributed all WIC FMNP checks available. Together these partnerships helped to reach more community members and offer a safe space to purchase fresh food for families.

One of the innovative, emergency response programs that Crossroads initiated in 2020 is the Senior CSA. Building off of the framework of our existing multi-farm CSA, Crossroads partnered with two local low-income senior residences, Victory Tower and Chillum Oaks, to offer weekly bulk produce deliveries at no cost. Each week, nearly 200 residents received about 500lbs of fresh fruits and vegetables from Crossroads' farmers. Monthly produce drop-offs have continued through the winter months to ensure that these seniors have access to fresh, locally sourced, produce outside of market season. The cost to offer this program is more than \$70,000 and was primarily funded by the Montgomery County Food Council, MAFRAC, and private donations. Crossroads plans to continue this program in 2021 for as long as needed and is seeking funding to support these efforts.

In addition, Crossroads increased compensation to our seven Community Ambassadors, six of whom are Takoma Park residents and one long-term ambassador who lives in Silver Spring. Previously Ambassadors received a small annual stipend, but this year they were paid \$15 per hour. In addition to the outreach they did in their communities, Ambassadors pivoted to respond to the pandemic--most worked at the farmers market, while one Ambassador focused exclusively on SNAP sign ups, and signed up over 50 individuals for SNAP benefits throughout the season. Through their efforts, Ambassadors reached over 4,450 people, 1,500 of whom learned about the market and the Fresh Checks program for the first time. In 2021, we hope to hire additional Ambassadors to join the team and increase outreach even further.

To further address the heightened food insecurity in the Takoma/Langley Crossroads, Crossroads Farmers Market increased our federal benefits match. In April and May, we offered an unlimited match on SNAP purchases and maintained a match at \$50 for the remainder of the season. When the Pandemic-EBT card was released, we accepted and matched these funds at the market as well. We continued to match WIC FMNP checks at a one to one rate. Throughout the season, Crossroads matched over \$25,000 in SNAP and P-EBT sales and over \$51,000 in WIC FMNP checks. In total, Crossroads matched over \$80,000 in Fresh Checks that shoppers used to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables. This was a 14% increase in total matching Fresh Checks from 2019. Of this, \$35,000 in Fresh Checks was distributed to 650 Takoma Park residents at the market.

To continue to strengthen the Crossroads Farmers Market, we are seeking the City's support in several ways. First, we would like the City's support in ensuring the Anne Street location will be available for the market long-term. This location serves the community in its close proximity to the WIC office, accessibility to the bus station, and high visibility from the street. We have been in this location since 2014 and have strong ties to the space and the surrounding community. To help market our programming,



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we are also asking for bus shelter signage again in 2021 and the use of the City's hand washing station to help with safety at market. Additionally, it's time to renew our Contract for Services with the City. The last RFP cycle was in March of 2017, as part of the Community Partners Program (CP2) program, and last year was our third and final renewal. Please let us know the next steps for the 2021 season and beyond. Finally, we are also seeking additional financial support to help offset the cost of the Senior CSA in the 2021 season. The weekly cost of the program for 100 seniors is \$2,200 and we plan to continue to provide this program to both Victory Tower and Chillum Oaks. This ongoing support will help the market to grow and continue to reach its diverse community members.