



Philadelphia

A TOOLBOX FOR MARKETS AND VENDING

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Technical Assistance Panel
March 5–6, 2026

About

Urban Land Institute

The Urban Land Institute (ULI) was established in 1936 as a nonprofit educational and research institute. It is supported by more than 45,000 members in 82 countries representing all aspects of land use and development disciplines. ULI's mission is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land to create and sustain thriving communities worldwide. ULI Philadelphia has more than 900 members in the Philadelphia District Council, which includes the Philadelphia metropolitan area, Central Pennsylvania, Delaware, the Lehigh Valley, and Southern New Jersey. ULI provides guidance to nonprofits and municipalities seeking solutions to land use challenges. Its Technical Assistance Panels objectively evaluate specific needs and make recommendations on implementation in an atmosphere free of politics and preconceptions. ULI member and non-member professionals provide their expertise in a voluntary capacity and each has signed an agreement to prevent current and potential conflicts of interest.

ULI Advisory Services

Since 1947, the ULI Advisory Services program has assembled well over 700 ULI-member teams to help sponsors find creative, practical solutions for complex land use challenges. A wide variety of public, private, and nonprofit organizations have contracted for ULI's advisory services. National and international panelists are specifically recruited to form a panel of independent and objective volunteer ULI member experts with the skills needed to address the identified land use challenge. The program is designed to help break through obstacles, jump-start conversations, and solve tough challenges that need an outside, independent perspective. Three- and five-day engagements are offered to ensure thorough consideration of relevant topics. An additional national offering is the project analysis session (PAS) offered at ULI's Fall and Spring Meetings, through which specific land use challenges are evaluated by a panel of volunteer experts selected from ULI's membership. This is a conversational format that lends itself to an open exchange of ideas among diverse industry practitioners with distinct points of

view. From the streamlined two-hour session to the "deeper dive" eight-hour session, this intimate conversational format encourages creative thinking and problem solving. Learn more at americas.uli.org/programs/advisory-services/. Distinct from Advisory Services panels, TAPs leverage local expertise through a half-day to two-day process.

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Cover photo: Vendor markets are often used to activate emerging commercial districts.

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Contents

Executive Summary	1
Introduction and Background	5
Goals, Feasibility, Prototypes, and Models	9
Vendor Support	17
Agency and Partner Collaboration	21
Summary	24
Appendix: Case Studies	26
About the Panel	29

Acknowledgments

On behalf of ULI Philadelphia, the panel would like to thank the City of Philadelphia Department of Commerce for inviting ULI to conduct this study. In particular, the panel would like to thank Anna Breece, Director, Policy and Strategic Initiatives, Office of Policy and Strategic Initiatives, Dorian Philpot, Policy Manager, Liam Kelly Fleming, Senior Director, Business Technical Assistance Office of Neighborhood Economic Development, and Nicole Marcote, Director, Business Technical Assistant Program, for providing insights and information leading up to and during the two days of the panel. The panel would also like to thank the wide range of professional, municipal, and community stakeholders who generously took the time to share their perspectives during the interview sessions.



Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Philadelphia has a rich and robust ecosystem of street fairs, seasonal markets, and established vendor markets that bring vitality, commerce, diverse cultural experiences, food, traditions, and much more to residents and visitors alike.

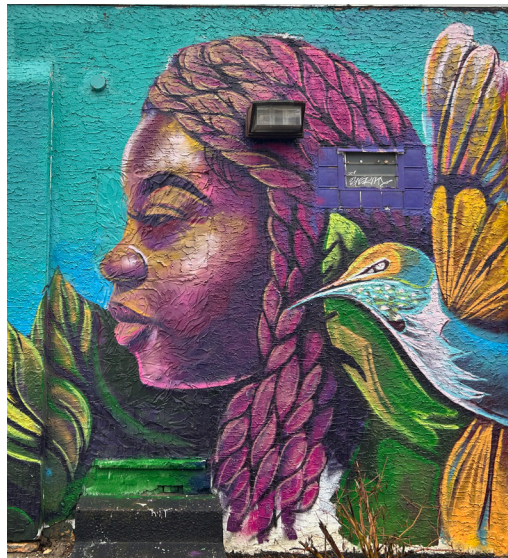
While this rich vendor fabric brings many benefits to the community, managing the associated processes, approvals, and support networks for this wide array of vendors and market organizers is proving to be challenging for the City of Philadelphia (the City) and the Department of Commerce. The Department of Commerce (Commerce) is staffed by professionals who are committed to providing the support and guidance these markets and their vendors require, yet do not yet have clear and concise municipal systems and structures in place to adequately manage, direct, and guide the markets and those who wish to launch them.

To help Commerce identify viable process paths, which could assist with site selection and ongoing support, Commerce turned to the Urban Land Institute Philadelphia District Council (ULI) for assistance through its technical assistance panel (TAP) program. Using the objective TAP process, experienced local and national professionals were convened to provide Commerce with insights into best practices in land use and market site selection and guidance on tools and resources that can be marshaled to support new and ongoing vendor markets.

The panel delivered a set of recommendations that fall into three categories: goals, feasibility, typologies, and models; vendor support; and agency and partner collaboration. Additionally, the panel presented a series of case studies that illustrate models working well in Philadelphia and around the country.

Goals, Feasibility, Prototypes, and Models

The range of active markets across Philadelphia creates a complex network of business activities that do not lend themselves to a one-size-fits-all solution. Recognizing the complexities and variations in intended outcomes can help create a framework that begins to guide and support the process.



The 4th District Container Village welcomes visitors with an artist's mural along the outer walls.

Establish the goal. “What is the goal of this vendor market?” This simple question can help ensure that all parties understand what success would look like for a particular market and will help chart the appropriate path forward.

Identify the conditions. The feasibility of a new market requires identifying and planning for the conditions at hand. Who is organizing the effort? What is the intended geography? Other factors typically include the existing businesses, community gatherings and events, vacant parcels, and more.

Explore market feasibility and demand. Foundational feasibility questions begin with the who, what, when, where, and why of the new market and can provide a framework for reviewing market demand. A market demand analysis should include the following: a feasibility analysis, a demographics review, an environmental scan (traffic, parking, and transit), a gap analysis, information about timing and duration, identification of potential partners and operators, and information gathered from community engagement.

Prototype modeling. The panel identified six scenarios most likely to occur in Philadelphia and modeled the attributes of each prototype to help Commerce identify key points of concern or attention. The scenarios included:

1. Pop-up Event
2. Temporary Structure
3. Semi-Permanent Structure
4. Existing Vacant Smaller Building or Groundfloor Commercial Space

5. Existing Large Vacant Building
6. New Construction

The scenario detail could be outlined in a one-page checklist or guide that Commerce staff and potential market operators could use to determine the best possible fit for new market proposals.

Vendor Support

Commerce can play an important and helpful role in assisting new market operators by providing technical support and connectivity to additional services when needed.

Provide technical assistance. Early training for market managers can equip them with the knowledge and understanding of what is expected and what approaches tend to work well for a market, the manager, and the community. Ongoing, consistent information on relevant updates and connections to resource support are also helpful for market managers.

Assist with permitting and license navigation. Assisting new market operators with the licensing and permitting process can lead to more successful outcomes and may reduce future problems. The existing permit navigator could be used to determine which licenses and permits a vendor will require. Additionally, consolidating mobile vendor licenses from eight to one would be a welcome improvement, and the panel also recommends adding a guidebook for vendors to walk them through the permitting process.

Create a pathway to compliance PILOT program. The panel recommends establishing a compliance pathway that leverages early grant funding to support licensing while increasing penalties as entities fail to comply. In this system, non-compliant vendors are given three opportunities to do the right thing, after which penalties are imposed.

Provide market operators with resource development. The organic nature of the city's markets requires information and insights from people "in the trenches." A vendor Advisory Board could help inform the city's markets and vendor policies. Additionally, a citywide convening of market operators could be helpful, providing them with a platform to meet and share information and best practices.

Agency and Partner Collaboration

To help Commerce envision and plan for facilitating agency collaboration, the panel recommended seven steps to support the vendor market ecosystem and facilitate success along the way.

Set the framework, hire a director. The panel recommends establishing a Senior Market and Vending Director within the Department of Commerce to serve as the central coordinator for the City's vending and market ecosystem and to act as the primary liaison between vendors, market operators, City departments, and City Council.



The shops in the Container Village make efficient use of the space for a variety of retail operations.

Create an interagency coordinating framework. The panel recommends adding an interagency vending coordination framework to convene Commerce, Parks & Recreation, Licenses & Inspections, the Streets Department, and the Planning Commission to help ensure consistent communication, reduce conflicting guidance, and create a shared approach to citywide vending.

Provide training. City staff would benefit from training on implementing the vending policy to reduce potential confusion, facilitate faster permitting processes, and possibly reduce instances of future vendor non-compliance.

Support operators. Successful markets rely on strong operators who manage vendors, coordinate logistics, and ensure compliance,

and these operators need help. Commerce should explore ways to provide technical assistance, capacity-building grants, and market feasibility studies to ensure markets function as sustainable community assets and help vendors grow their businesses.

Launch a support program. A new “Friends of the Market” support program could provide administrative and operational support to emerging markets, reducing barriers to community-led markets and helping them scale more successfully.

Align with economic goals. Markets and vending should be viewed as tools for the city’s economic development, and positioning markets within the City’s broader economic development framework can help ensure valuable alignment while supporting markets’ success.

Host office hours. Commerce is encouraged to consider hosting office hours for vendors and market operators at an established market location. This approach can raise the visibility of City resources, begin to meet the vendors where they are, and encourage more active and proactive dialogue between markets and the City.

Summary

The City’s Department of Commerce can play an important role in facilitating better decision-making and fostering success as vendor markets launch and continue operations across the city. The intentions and goals behind each market are as varied as the markets themselves, but commonalities exist that can help all parties determine potential paths with the greatest chance of success. Understanding a new market’s goal early and articulating the existing conditions can set a market up for success.

City process improvements can meaningfully assist with market launches and facilitate early and ongoing compliance. By using and improving existing licensing and permitting systems and tools, Commerce can expand the range of resources available to the vending community, support compliance measures, and enhance transparency in City processes. For vendors who have difficulty achieving compliance, a graduated system of support that eventually moves to penalties recognizes that the very vendors who may have difficulty with the compliance process are the ones who may be disproportionately impacted by high fines.

Ongoing communication with the vendor community, which could help facilitate additional process improvements and citywide support, could be achieved through a vendor-operator Advisory Board and citywide operator convening. These measures can also help ensure alignment between the vendor community and the City’s economic development goals.

The broad array of markets across Philadelphia is a city strength. The Department of Commerce’s attention to this community and its dedication to vendors to date are commendable. With additional tools and director-level leadership, Commerce is poised to lead the city’s vendor market into its next iteration, where the community experiences the benefits of the activation and commerce and businesses find paths toward impact and growth.



Introduction and Background

Across Philadelphia, community organizations, business owners, and community members are enjoying the exciting and engaging retail and experiential opportunities that vendor markets, pop-up shops, and festival vending offer. The markets can bring commerce to an emerging commercial district, help elevate and support brick-and-mortar businesses that can use a tent or table to expand their reach, and bring the community together for celebrations, shopping, and engaging experiences that are often the hallmark of such vendor markets.

The City of Philadelphia (the City), and specifically the Department of Commerce, recognizes the value these markets bring to the community and is eager to facilitate business activity while also providing guidance on where, when, and for how long these markets can expect to operate. In pursuit of these goals, as well as the City's longer-term goal to establish additional vending markets throughout the city that dually meet the needs of vendors and neighborhood residents, while recognizing that different communities have unique needs, the Department of Commerce (Commerce) turned to the Urban Land Institute Philadelphia District Council (ULI) for guidance. Specifically, Commerce asked ULI to address key questions focused on a menu of vending models, public resources to support the markets, potential underutilized sites, and coordination across City departments and community agencies.

ULI, using its trusted and objective technical assistance panel (TAP) program, convened a team of professionals with the expertise needed to answer the City's questions. With local and national experience, the panel brought a wide range of expertise to the task, including real estate development, community organization management, vendor event formation and cultivation, market management, and public sector leadership.

The TAP process, held in an intensive two-day workshop format, was informed by a tour of the 4th District Container Village and interviews with stakeholders. The panel then spent the rest of its time together evaluating the questions posed by Commerce, deliberating on their findings, and shaping a set of actionable, practical recommendations that Commerce and its partners can consider as they work to support Philadelphia's entrepreneurial community and robust market vendor community.

What the Panel Heard

To provide the panel with first-hand insights from people who operate, manage, or participate in existing vendor markets, the Department of Commerce assembled a series of interviews with over 35 community, business, and public-sector partners and residents who shared the following feedback.

- The current processes for securing market and vending permits is unclear and the costs appear to be high and significantly

Questions for the Panel

The City is seeking clarity on best practices and market model viability, as well as identification of underutilized sites that could support new vending markets.

- Can ULI develop a menu of vending market models that analyze location, feasibility, cost, program structure, frequency, and best practices for different land use types? (e.g., public vs. private land)
- From a funding and program perspective, what resources are needed to establish new vending markets across the city?
- Are there specific sites of underutilized land across Philadelphia that could be leveraged to establish markets? Especially site locations that are the least disruptive, but most beneficial, for their communities.
- How can multiple agencies work together to streamline and implement the vending market models developed through this TAP?



variable. The costs associated with hiring the police officers are particularly high.

- There are often inconsistent instructions for market operators, and enforcement of City regulations that impact markets, their vendors, and the surrounding community is also inconsistent.
- Commerce staff were noted as helpful, and the interactions were generally positive.
- The work performed by the Department of Sanitation following vendor markets is greatly appreciated, and they do a good job of ensuring the streets are clean.
- The political dynamics vary across the city, and policy consistency appears to differ, leaving community leaders unsure about the options before them.

- The infrastructure associated with some vendor markets is significant enough to warrant building permits.
- All parties—public and private—would welcome clarity on site selection for potential new markets, which currently include parkland, parking lots, vacant parcels, streets, sidewalks, and more.
- There are multiple variables that affect markets differently—including, for example, timing, frequency, size, location, capacity, and budget—so a one-size-fits-all approach may be difficult to take.
- There are also important differences across goals for individual markets, which can include activating vacant spaces, supporting an emerging commercial district, creating a permanent market, and more.

The market managers that the panel interviewed articulated the following specific needs.

- **Connection point.** A one-stop connection at the City could provide initial clarity on the permitting process and encourage legal markets by making it easier and more transparent. This initial connection could also help managers navigate to the eventual right person or department they need for questions beyond basic market permitting.
- **Guidance.** The processes that govern markets can be complex, given the various City departments that need to play a role—from Commerce to Sanitation to Public Safety and more. Guidance on City processes, even if it is just a “typical” process, would be educational and helpful to market managers.



The TAP was informed by an in-depth briefing with Commerce staff, a tour of the Container Village, and a series of interviews with additional City staff, leaders from community and market organizations, and business owners and market operators.

- **Training.** Training is needed to help market managers navigate the process. This information, shared early in the year and with a group of current and potential market leaders, could facilitate their work and also reduce the follow-up calls fielded by City staff.
- **Capacity building.** New and even seasoned market managers and organizations would benefit from help with capacity building, which could include building staff capacity as well as financial capacity.
- **Technical assistance.** Technical assistance would benefit the markets and the City, helping ensure the markets operate legally and safely and providing the business insights that will ultimately support the success of the entrepreneurs and seasoned business owners participating in the market.
- **City coordination.** Coordination across City departments is needed. The departments that require navigating in the early days of market formation are challenging enough without having to build coordination across City departments as well.



Recommendation Overview

Based on the information gathered through the tour, interviews, and related deliberations, the panel outlined three key areas of focus for its recommendations.

1. Goals, feasibility, typologies, and models.

A framework is needed to help market managers, new ventures, and the City identify the market's ultimate goals, enabling them to chart a path that best supports positive outcomes and goal achievement.

2. Vendor support.

Existing markets and vendors need ongoing support and connection from Commerce and the City to help ensure that their ventures remain successful, impactful, and profitable.

3. Agency and partner collaboration.

The range of public sector entities and nonprofit, business, and neighborhood organizations involved in the market process requires thoughtful, intentional collaboration. This collaboration can help support access, equity, and success across the city.



Goals, Feasibility, Prototypes, and Models

There is such a broad range of active markets across Philadelphia, from those that span just a weekend to those that run for months at a time or longer. There are markets that spread across a street that has been closed for the day while others operate out of established brick-and-mortar facilities. Some markets intend to elevate the commercial appeal of an area while others seek to elevate cultural traditions, art, and/or food.

The City and Commerce recognize the complexities associated with this robust market ecosystem and asked the panel to provide a menu of market models that take these factors into consideration and fold in best practices for the land use associated with the activities.

Establish the Goal

The first question that can set the stage for all of the market applicants' work, permitting, public-sector activities, and community involvement should be, "What is the goal of a vendor market?"

This simple question can often get lost in the shuffle of the work associated with launching a new market, but it is this question and the subsequent answers that will shape the most appropriate path forward for all parties involved.

The panel began its work by modeling three separate vendor market scenarios:

1. Open a food use market to increase access to fresh food in a neighborhood or specific geography.

2. Activate a space and bring or strengthen vibrancy in a community.
3. Create opportunities for vendors to sell their products.

In each of these three scenarios, there are additional nuanced scenarios that could be teased out further, which could further refine the recommended path forward. For example, the third item, opportunities to sell, could work for an area that does not yet have a strong commercial presence. It could also work for an area that already has commerce, but new businesses need a more visible launch point.

Digging into the ultimate goal of a new market is not about questioning the legitimacy of the applicant or the idea. It is instead to ensure that all parties understand what success would look like for this particular market and help chart a path through City permitting, resources, potential partners, timelines, and more that can best position the market, the organizers, and the vendors to agree that the result was worth the effort.

Identify the Conditions

The potential feasibility of a new market will hinge on identifying and planning for the conditions at hand. Who is organizing the effort? What is the intended geography? Other impactful conditions could include any existing commercial area, current community gatherings and events, vacant parcels, and more.

Explore Market Feasibility

The questions that follow the establishment of the goal will help determine the feasibility of the market idea by identifying the conditions that can support success, recognizing potential barriers, unearthing potential partners, and more.

Sample conditions questions might include:

- WHO? What is your role? Examples could include District Councilmember, community development corporation (CDC), community organization, etc.
- WHERE? What is the intended neighborhood or area?
- WHEN? What time of year will work best for the market, and how long will it run?
- WHAT? What are the goods or food intended for the market? Does the intended operator already have relationships with vendors, or will this be an open call for applicants? If the latter, does the timeline reflect this?
- WHY? What niche is the market hoping to fill? Is there an existing market in the area? If so, is it a formal event or an informal one? If there is an existing market, who is the operator or manager? Is there an opportunity to partner, or is this a needed differentiation?

Conduct Market Demand Analysis

The apparent informality of a vendor market can often belie the need for considering market demands. Whether a business

operates out of an established retail building or a pop-up shade structure, consideration should be given to the goods to be sold and how they align the intended market. The following questions can help a potential market organizer identify how the market can stand out and attract visitors for the participating vendors.

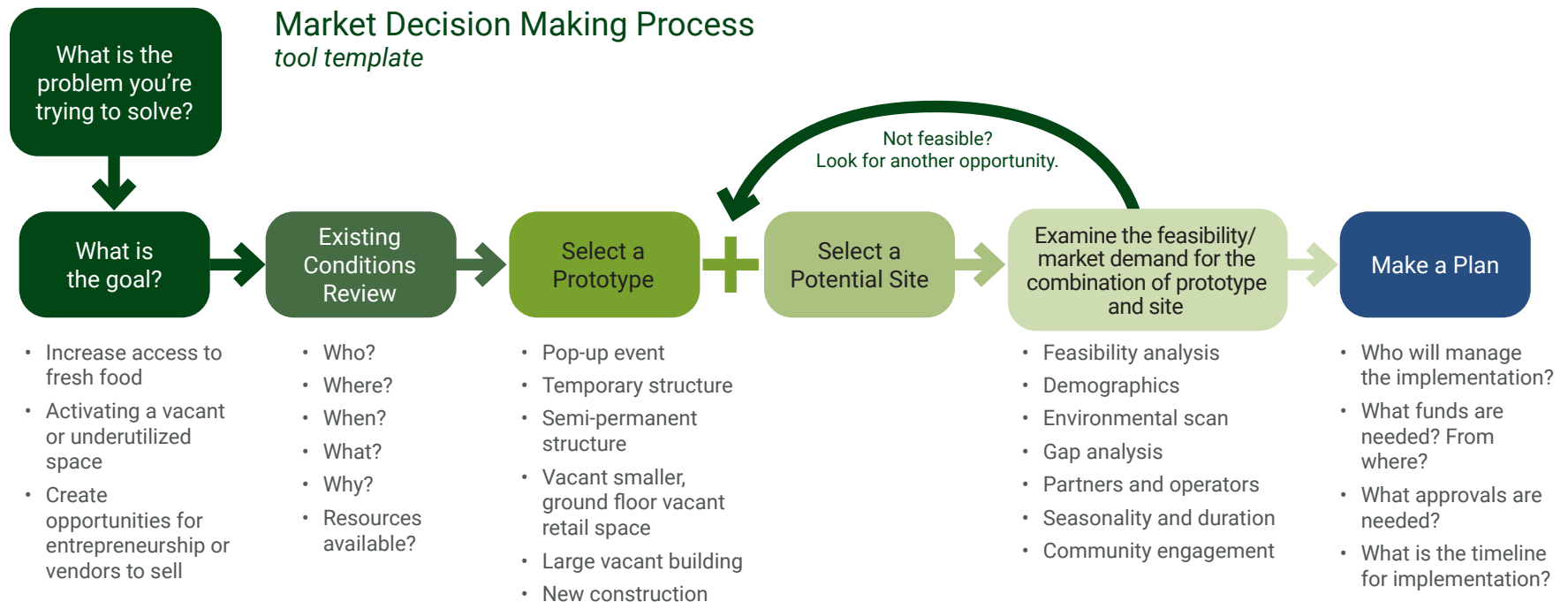
- **Feasibility analysis.** Has a feasibility analysis been completed for the area, either by the market organizer or another entity? When was the analysis completed, and does it apply to this market's goals?
- **Demographics.** What are the potential demographic personas of people who

would visit the market? Who lives close to the market? Who would travel there?

- **Is there an established customer persona?** It can be helpful to sketch potential customer personas, identifying what potential visitors would want or need, which products or services they might purchase, as well as demand drivers such as nearby new development and events and programs already happening.
- **Has prospective customer engagement occurred?** It is also helpful to spend time well before pursuing market formation to speak with potential customers, gather their feedback on

ideas, refine the market approach based on that feedback, and more.

- **Environmental scan.** Has the market organizer considered the existing market infrastructure near and around the intended market site? What already exists to meet the demands? What does not exist (and why)?
- **What are the foot traffic counts in the area?** How do those counts vary by season?
- **What are the parking conditions in and around the proposed market area?** Will visitors be able to drive by and find parking, or will they need to know where to park? Will most visitors walk to the market instead?



- **What is the proximity to transit?** Will people who regularly ride transit be able to visit the market, or is it too far from stations or stops to be comfortably walkable?
- **Gap analysis.** What is the gap in available goods and services in the intended area? Are there existing vendors in the community, and have they expressed interest in this initiative?
- **Partners and operators.** While many applicants may believe they are the first or only person or organization to have this idea or operate in the intended space, it is important to take the time to ask about potential partners in the community who could contribute to or even join forces in the proposed market.
 - **Are there other local partners who have been engaged in this?** Launching a new effort is challenging, as is gaining early visibility and the level of visitorship that will lead to vendor success. Working with existing and well-known civic institutions, community-based organizations, and others can often help boost capacity, with additional volunteers, and elevate the effort through additional marketing channels and established relationships.
 - **Is there a proposed market operator?** There needs to be a clear point of contact for any questions surrounding the market. If it is not the person

applying for the market permit, what is the operational relationship with the other entity or person?

- **Have any vendors been engaged or already expressed interest in participating?** This question will be important as it relates to the timing of the eventual market days, as recruiting vendors can take time.
- **Seasonality and duration.** Timing is important to identify in the foundational stage. Will this be a one-off event occurring over just one day or weekend? Will it be hosted on a semi-regular basis, such as monthly, weekly, or quarterly? If weekly, will it be open on multiple days? Will it be hosted throughout the year or only seasonally, which the City defines as fewer than 180 days?
- **Community engagement.** Has any outreach or community engagement been done? Beyond outreach to potential partners and vendors, additional outreach should include engagement with individual community members in the intended geography. This could also include community organizations, neighborhood associations, schools, houses of worship, and any other organization with members who frequent the area and may be helpful in the course of the entity's market research. These early conversations can also begin to seed interest in and visibility for the eventual market days.

Prototype Modeling

While there are an unlimited number of possible market scenarios, the panel identified six associated land use prototypes that it considered most likely to occur in Philadelphia, modeling potential construction and infrastructure needs and intended impacts. The land use prototypes include:

1. Pop-up Event
2. Temporary Structure
3. Semi-Permanent Structure
4. Existing Vacant Small Building or Groundfloor Commercial Space
5. Existing Large Vacant Building
6. New Construction

For each of the above prototypes, the panel outlined key considerations and anticipated associated needs that will require variable levels of planning, timing, staffing, and funding. While not exhaustive, this list can serve as a foundation for a potential flowchart or toolkit for market evaluation by City leadership (councilmembers), Commerce staff, and an applicant. This information could also serve as the foundation for a one-page checklist tool that Commerce staff and potential market operators could use to determine the best possible fit for the idea at hand.

1: Pop-up, Event-Based Market

Duration: Temporary, Weekly, Quarterly, or Seasonally

Structure: Tents

Estimated Costs: \$–\$\$

Location Types: Parks, temporarily closed streets, vacant parcels, alleyways

Audiences: Neighbors, friends, family, city residents

Permits Needed: Special Event Permits

Infrastructure Needs: Tents, tables, shade, seating, wayfinding, restrooms, safety measures (Police, Security, Fire/EMT), trash collection and disposal, lighting, audio and visual (AV) services, electrical, plumbing, parking, vendor load-in/out areas, potentially WiFi

Other Considerations: Weather, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodations

Examples: [Rittenhouse Square Farmers' Market](#), [Baltimore Farmers' Market](#), night markets



2: Temporary Structure Market

Duration: Temporary and up to 180 days

Structure: Semi-permanent structures, which could include pre-fabricated structures

Estimated Costs: \$\$–\$\$\$\$

Location Types: Parks, vacant parcels

Audiences: Neighbors, friends, family, city residents, surrounding communities

Permits Needed: Special Event Permits

Infrastructure Needs: Structures and associated foundations and heating/cooling (HVAC) (triggering Building permits), restrooms, safety measures (Police, Security, Fire/EMT), trash collection and disposal, lighting, AV, electrical, plumbing, parking, vendor load-in/out areas, potentially WiFi

Other Considerations: Weather, ADA

Examples: [Christmas Village](#), [Lighthouse Village](#)



3: Semi-Permanent Structure Market

Duration: Semi-permanent (up to 10 years)

Structure: Semi-permanent structures, which could include shipping containers

Estimated Costs: \$\$\$–\$\$\$\$\$

Location Types: Vacant parcels

Audiences: Neighbors, friends, family, city residents, surrounding communities, and possibly tourist draw

Permits Needed: Temporary Activation Permits

Infrastructure Needs: Containers or other structures, foundation, electrical, plumbing, HVAC, sprinklers, kitchen, storage, restrooms, safety measures (Police, Security, Fire/EMT), trash collection and disposal, lighting, signage, AV, parking, vendor load-in/out areas, WiFi

Other Considerations: Weather, ADA

Examples: [4th District Container Village](#), [Downtown Container Park](#) (Las Vegas)



4: Existing Vacant Small Building or Groundfloor Space

Duration: Semi-permanent (up to 10 years)

Structure: Existing small building or groundfloor commercial space

Estimated Costs: \$–\$\$\$

Location Types: Existing buildings

Audiences: Neighbors, city residents, surrounding communities, regional draw, and tourists

Permits Needed: Temporary Activation Permits or Full Development Approval

Infrastructure Needs: Electrical, plumbing, HVAC, storage, restrooms, security, trash collection and disposal, lighting, parking, WiFi, signage

Other Considerations: TBD

Examples: [MeanTime program](#), [Zero Empty Spaces](#) (Florida)



5: Existing Large Vacant Building

Duration: Permanent

Structure: Existing, large building

Estimated Costs: \$\$–\$\$\$\$\$

Location Types: Existing large buildings

Audiences: Neighbors, city residents, surrounding communities, regional draw, and tourists

Permits Needed: Full Development Approval

Infrastructure Needs: Electrical, plumbing, HVAC, restrooms, sprinklers, kitchen, signage, storage, offices, security, trash collection and disposal, lighting, AV, parking, vendor load-in/out areas, WiFi

Other Considerations: TBD

Examples: [Reading Terminal](#), [Bok Building](#), [Gather Food Hall & Bar](#) (University City), [Mother Road Market](#) (Tulsa)



6: New Construction

Duration: Permanent

Structure: New Construction

Estimated Costs: \$\$\$\$–\$\$\$\$\$

Location Types: Vacant parcels

Audiences: Neighbors, city residents, surrounding communities, regional draw, and tourists

Permits Needed: Full Development Approval

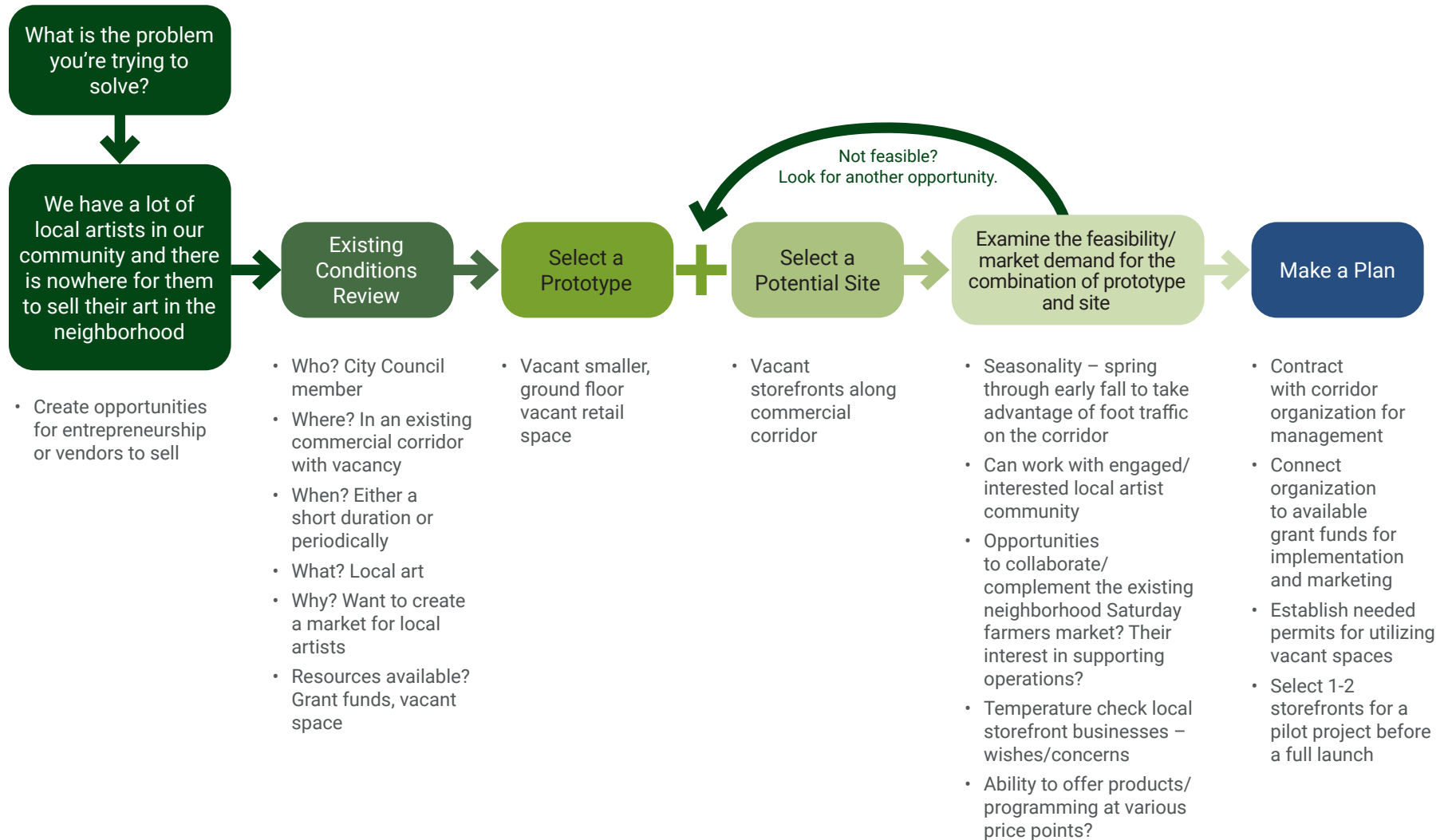
Infrastructure Needs: Electrical, plumbing, HVAC, sprinklers, kitchen, storage, offices, restrooms, security, trash collection and disposal, lighting, AV, parking, vendor load-in/out areas, WiFi, signage

Other Considerations: TBD

Examples: [City Point](#) (Brooklyn), [Strand Market](#) (New Brunswick), [Rockwood Market Hall](#) (Portland, OR)



Market Decision Making Process, *Example*



Case Study

4th District Container Village

The Department of Commerce arranged a tour for the panel of the 4th District Container Village in West Philadelphia. Constructed from decommissioned shipping containers, the Container Village is home to 20 retail and service vendors who bring new products and experiences to the neighborhood and to visitors to Fairmount Park or passing by on Parkside Avenue.

The Container Village is dedicated to supporting small businesses, hosting cultural events, and providing resources to residents. With strong leadership from Lancaster Avenue 21st Century Business Association (LA21) Community Development Corporation, ERIC Entrepreneur Resource Innovation Center, and partnership with the City and Council member, the Container Village is dedicated to “expanding its reach, enhancing community programming, and continuing to serve as a dynamic space for innovation and connection.”

The panel used the site as a case study to consider what worked well in its delivery and could be replicated and what, going forward, might work better with a different approach.

Vendor operations. The site has a strong operator, LA21, which provides vendor curation, business support, and on-site facility management.

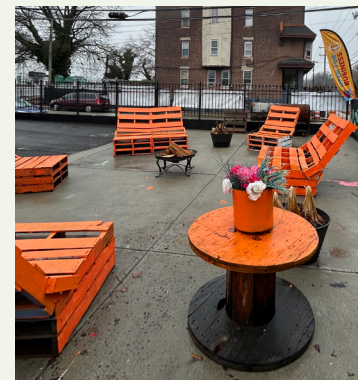
Community engagement. LA21 is also adept at hosting regular and engaging community events, which bring the surrounding neighborhood together at the site and support vendors’ retail success.

Infrastructure. The placement of the shipping containers required a number of related and unexpected infrastructure improvements, including foundations for each container, ADA ramps, restrooms, and more. These issues triggered a need for zoning and building permits, which was not anticipated when the idea of containers was first proposed.

Utilities. In addition to electricity and HVAC for each container, site-wide electricity needed to be considered, and loads managed so the service could meet the needs.

Parking. While on-street parking is available around the site, visitors may be intimidated by parallel parking or parking on the busy Parkside Avenue. Surface parking lots are not readily apparent. All of this makes dropping in challenging.

Funding and Investments. The Department of Commerce contributed \$300,000 to purchase the shipping containers. Follow-on improvements have required an additional \$2,000,000 in funding from other sources and have supported additional infrastructure upgrades, business services, and operational management. *(These figures do not account for the City staff and Councilmember time required to navigate the development through the formation process from start to finish)*





Vendor Support

The process of launching a market and operating it successfully requires an impressive array of skills, technical knowledge, and familiarity with City operations and permitting. Commerce can play an important and very helpful role in assisting those launching a new market and those operating markets in navigating the systems and providing technical support or connectivity to additional services when needed.

Navigating Technical Assistance

Early training, by the Department of Commerce for market managers, can position those managers to operate their markets from a position of knowledge and with a better understanding of what is expected and what approaches tend to work well for the market, the manager, and the community.

Provide consistent information regularly.

Commerce is encouraged to provide a consistent level of information for all community development corporations, business improvement districts, and other organizations that typically receive funding support from Commerce. This could take the form of a monthly or quarterly information session, newsletters, social media posts, or other digital communications.

Connect to outside resources. With staff resources already stretched thin, Commerce can identify third-party resources that could help vendors and market managers with

business plan reviews and feedback along the way. This outside-in perspective can help all parties ensure that plans are reasonable and thoughtful, and that markets are positioned for success from Day 1.

Provide food service-specific assistance.

Very few markets operate without some form of food service. Commerce is encouraged to consider expanding investment in or encouraging funding for commissary kitchen development in the broader market. Commerce can also assist these efforts by expanding home kitchen safety certification, which would entail a [state-level policy change](#).

Permit and License Navigation

Navigating municipal systems, permitting processes, and departments is rarely easy in any jurisdiction. In a city the size of Philadelphia, the process can be daunting enough that some may not succeed, others may only address the bare minimum requirements, and others may skip it altogether and proceed without securing any City approvals. Assisting with the licensing and permitting process can lead to more successful outcomes and potentially reduce the likelihood of issues later.

Utilize the existing permit navigator

platform. The City has a digital platform for permitting that could also be used for vendors with the addition of a permit and license tool for their use. This module could

use a smart form to guide users through a decision-tree tool, using a question-and-answer format to help users find the next needed item following each step. Ideally, users would be able to complete the initial application process online and download a PDF of the remaining permit or license procedure and cost.

Explore a license consolidation for mobile vendors. At the time of this study, mobile vendors face eight separate options for securing a license. Using a revised structure or new legislation, a consolidation of mobile vendor license types could make this process much easier and far less intimidating for new vendors, again reducing the likelihood of vendors skipping this important step.

Create a virtual guidebook. It is often noted that most guidebooks today are outdated the day they go to print. An online option would facilitate easy and timely updates. Commerce could create a guidebook for vendors that walks them through permitting processes, offers links to helpful resources and third-party services, and connects them to the City's broader business services.

The following cities have established similar processes that could serve as a model for Philadelphia:

- [Seattle, Washington](#). The City of Seattle's Special Events Office coordinates permit applications for major events throughout Seattle, including festivals, block parties, neighborhood celebrations,

walks and runs, concerts, parades, and demonstrations/marches.

- [Washington D.C.](#) The District of Columbia provides essential municipal services in support of special events to ensure events occurring on public space in the District of Columbia are conducted in a manner that protects public health and safety.
- [Boston, Massachusetts](#). The City of Boston is working to bring all of its permitting online and currently uses an online intake form to help potential markets and special events with guidance that can prove beneficial in the early days of idea formation and process navigation. [Boston, MA](#)
- [New York City, New York](#). The NYC Mayor's Office of Citywide Event Coordination and Management first separates events into those held in parks and those held on city streets. All applicants use the City's online E-Apply system.

Pathway to Compliance PILOT Program

As noted in the stakeholder interviews, the City faces challenges in consistently enforcing the vending regulations. This inconsistency can lead to vendors choosing to operate outside the system, knowing that the risk, time, and headaches saved by skipping this step are worth the potential penalty.

“

“Enforcing rogue vending is a challenge.”

—PANELIST

While it is common practice to use a high penalty to encourage proper permitting, penalties, which are enforced by agencies other than Commerce, can disproportionately impact minority communities, who make up a significant population of vendors.

The panel recommends that Commerce employ positive pathways to permitting while increasing penalties along the way as compliance slips or is ignored over time. In this system, non-compliant vendors are provided with three opportunities to do the right thing.

1. **First Warning:** At the time a vendor is found to be operating without a permit, Commerce would provide a “pathway to compliance grant” to cover the necessary permit fees. The grant could be directed through an approved partner organization, such as Center City District, Friends of FDR, LA21, or others. A reasonable timeline for the pathway to compliance will need to be established

by Commerce and published for vendor awareness, e.g., 180 days to come into compliance.

2. **Second Warning:** The second warning for non-compliance comes with an extension of the initial grant timeline to comply. The local partner organization could possibly intervene on the vendor's behalf if the organization wants the vendor to participate in future markets. The extension duration is also at Commerce's discretion; the panel proposed 45 days for consideration.
3. **Final Warning and Penalty:** At the end of the second warning period, if the vendor is still out of compliance, the vendor is fined an amount equal to the grant amount and also charged for the permit application fees.

In lieu of providing grant funding to the vendors to facilitate compliance, Commerce may also consider issuing fee waivers. Using grant funds, however, could provide the local partnering organization with the opportunity to collect a ten-percent administration fee to help cover these operational costs.

Market Operators Resource Development

The organic nature of the city's ongoing operation and launch of new markets in Philadelphia means that a decision today may require new thinking tomorrow. To help the City and Commerce best meet the needs



of this ever-changing population, the panel recommends two key engagement strategies.

Activate a vendor Advisory Board. An Advisory Board of vendor operators, partners, and Commerce staff could create space for conversations on topics affecting the city's markets and vendor operations. This Advisory Board could identify areas requiring additional attention, such as policy improvements, and oversee the delivery of tools and resources that benefit vendors citywide, such as an online permitting portal.

Convene citywide market operators. In addition to the ongoing, high-level perspectives provided by the Advisory Board, a citywide convening of market operators could prove valuable to the operators and, by extension, to the city. Providing the operators with the space and a platform for meeting with one another and sharing information and best practices can help ensure that vendors are provided with every chance to succeed in reaching their goals, whether that is activating public space, helping launch new businesses or commercial areas, bringing food resources to a food dessert, or bringing community members together to celebrate culture, diversity, food, and more.

Market Cities Network

The Market Cities Network is an initiative of Project for Public Spaces, a New York-based nonprofit organization founded in 1975 to strengthen communities through public space.

Building upon Project for Public Spaces' long history of supporting public markets, the internationally-focused Market Cities Program enhances the regional systems behind the market stalls, connecting and supporting a diverse set of stakeholders through research, specialized training, and a network of peers.

The Market Cities Network brings together market leaders—including operators, NGOs, funders, researchers, and more—from around the world for stronger, more resilient communities.

For more information, visit MarketCities.org



Agency and Partner Collaboration

The complexities created by a complex network of market vendors, operators, market styles, and locations are further compounded by the rich network of partners and public agencies that play a role in the markets' foundation, operation, and success. Pulling all of these pieces together, particularly the agencies involved, can be incredibly helpful to the broader ecosystem and is a part that Commerce can play well.

To help Commerce envision and plan for this role in facilitating agency collaboration, the panel outlined seven key recommendations focused on establishing the underlying framework, providing training and other support for operators, aligning with the City's economic development goals, and ensuring access to Commerce staff along the way.

Set the Framework, Hire a Director

The panel recommends the establishment of a Senior Market and Vending Director within the Department of Commerce. This role would serve as the central coordinator for the City's vending and market ecosystem and act as the primary liaison between vendors, market operators, City departments, and City Council.

The Market and Vending Director's responsibilities would include coordinating across departments—such as Parks & Recreation, Licenses & Inspections, the Streets Department, and the Planning Commission—overseeing vendor programs, and ensuring the ongoing alignment of policies and enforcement strategies. This position could

also coordinate permitting of city-led projects or could manage a contract to do so.

To meet the needs of the city's market ecosystem, the position should be elevated to a senior level, as it is important that the position has the authority to marshal resources, navigate political dynamics, and ensure consistent implementation across City departments.

Interagency Coordinating Framework

To further establish a working framework, the panel recommends the addition of a formal interagency vending coordination framework. This new formal interagency coordination structure would be convened by the Department of Commerce and overseen by the Market and Vending Director.

This framework should bring together Commerce, Parks & Recreation, Licenses & Inspections, the Streets Department, and the Planning Commission, meeting regularly, perhaps quarterly, to align permitting practices, enforcement protocols, and programmatic priorities. This type of coordinating framework would help ensure consistent communication across agencies, reduce conflicting guidance provided to vendors, and create a shared approach to implementing vending policy citywide.

Provide Training

Stakeholders reported that vendors often receive different information depending

on which department or staff member they speak with. City staff would benefit from training on implementing the vending policies. Not only would this knowledge reduce questions across departments and facilitate faster permitting processes for vendors, it could also help reduce future non-compliance and questions from the field, as municipal staff are better equipped with relevant information upfront.

Periodic training sessions hosted by the Department of Commerce should be encouraged and potentially required for relevant City staff. The training could include an overview of vending laws, departmental roles, permitting pathways, and enforcement protocols.

This training protocol could help ensure that City employees have a consistent understanding of the rules and, again, has the potential to improve implementation and reduce confusion among vendors and market operators.

It is also important to note that the policies for the vendor markets should align with the City's other plans. In particular, the panel pointed to [Philadelphia2035](#), the [Landbank Plan](#), and the City's industrial reuse plans as important points of reference and alignment when considering sites for new markets.

Support Operators

Commerce is encouraged to expand its public-private partnerships in order to support and build the capacity of market

operators and managers. Successful markets often rely on strong operators who manage vendors, coordinate logistics, and ensure compliance, and these operators need help.

The Department of Commerce should explore ways to proactively fund the development of market operators through technical assistance, capacity-building grants, and market feasibility studies.

Investing in market management capacity can help ensure that markets function as sustainable community assets while also providing a structured environment for vendors to grow their businesses.

Launch a Support Program

The panel also recommends that the City establish a “Friends of the Market” support program to provide shared administrative and operational support to emerging markets. A Friends program or 501(c)3 organization could help smaller markets access shared services such as insurance, infrastructure support, vendor recruitment assistance, and event management guidance. Providing shared resources would reduce operational barriers for community-led markets and help them scale more successfully.

Align with Economic Goals

Aligning markets with citywide economic development goals is a critical ongoing process. Markets and vending should be viewed as tools for economic development rather than solely regulatory challenges.

Philadelphia could integrate markets into broader initiatives such as commercial corridor revitalization, workforce development programs, and neighborhood placemaking strategies. Positioning markets within the City’s broader economic development framework can help support entrepreneurship, activate underutilized spaces, and create new opportunities for local residents.

Host Office Hours

The Department of Commerce is encouraged to consider hosting office hours for vendors and market operators. This approach to

ongoing information sharing and access will improve communication between Commerce and the vending community, allowing vendors and merchants to directly access City staff, ask questions about compliance or permitting, and build relationships with the department. Using established market locations such as Reading Terminal Market or other frequent market sites for these open office meetings can help raise the meetings’ visibility, begin meeting vendors where they are, and create a more welcoming space than might be found in City offices. This approach could improve trust, reduce confusion, and strengthen communication between the City and the vendor community.



The Office of Economic Development in Seattle, Washington, uses a colorful and rather simple infographic to help potential market organizers and vendors understand how interested parties navigate municipal processes.

Summary

The City's Department of Commerce recognizes the benefits of the city's rich vendor market ecosystem. It also understands that it can play an important role in facilitating better decision-making as markets launch and continue their operations.

From site selection to build out, intended audiences to intended impact, there are a host of factors at play in the formation of a successful market. While some may view a pop-up market as a fun weekend adventure, others see the market as an important first public step toward launching a potential new business venture. The intentions are as varied as the shapes the markets take.

Establishing the market's goal(s) must be the first step. From there, potential operators, with guidance from Commerce and other partners, can begin to identify the unique

conditions of the potential venture and determine the path that is most likely to help the market meet its goals.

An easy-to-reference and easily understood flowchart can help all parties identify what is important, what is available, and what may still be needed as the market concept evolves.

Permitting remains a challenge. An online portal could provide more convenient access to the required information and guide applicants along a path that supports eventual permitting compliance. Additionally, an escalating warning system for non-compliance, one that can provide financial technical support to encourage and facilitate compliance, can help ensure that the markets operating across the city are doing so safely, with intention, and in full view of the Department of Commerce.

Finally, a market operators Advisory Board can be helpful to everyone involved, providing insights and guidance on how markets operate effectively and offering feedback to Commerce as it continues to develop its tools and resources to support markets and align efforts with the City's economic development goals.

With careful and thoughtful guidance from Commerce and the staffing capacity to support the efforts, the city's rich vendor market ecosystem can become even stronger, the decision making involving new markets can be made easier, and everyone involved—including the eventual market operator—can find the resources, support and guidance needed to bring vitality, energy, and commerce to the city.



Street fairs, festivals, and vendor markets bring residents and visitors together to enjoy the flavors, culture, and entertainment that makes a community unique.

Appendix: Case Studies

Downtown Container Park

Las Vegas, Nevada
Permanent Installation



With approximately 40 shipping containers, designed and installed with permanence in mind, the developer has transformed a downtown Las Vegas site into a shopping, dining, and entertainment destination.

Early challenges included zoning issues and municipal building codes did not account for modified shipping containers. The containers required the assistance of a structural engineer to ensure the containers met the City of Las Vegas's structural requirements.

The buildout of the individual containers, particularly those operating as restaurants, also required meticulous attention. Plumbing and electrical systems had to adjust to accommodate the constrained space while still meeting health codes. The existing plywood flooring, which had been treated with chemicals, had to be replaced with a new solution that could also accommodate the ongoing shifts that occur within the container while also ensuring safety and aesthetics.

downtowncontainerpark.com

Selden Market Norfolk

Norfolk, Virginia
Permanent Installation



The Selden Market was conceived as a business incubator and venue for the area's up-and-coming retailers and restaurateurs to launch their concepts. Located in a historic downtown Norfolk Arcade building, the market first opened in 2017 and recently completed renovations to upgrade exterior and interior signage, added custom-built vendor booths for pop-up businesses, expanded the community kitchen, and updated public restrooms.

The market offers a "low-risk environment with short-term leases, a supportive development program, and a community atmosphere that fosters learning and growth." The market leaders pledge to provide business owners with the space, mentorship, and resources to develop their business into a "thriving street-level" business.

seldenmarket.com

Union Market District

Washington, D.C.
Permanent Installation



With deep roots that link back to the city's Centre Market of the 1800's, Union Market reopened in its current format in 2012, featuring over 60 unique retailers, restaurateurs, and artisans. Today, the Union Market District encompasses 45 acres of independent shops, national brands and restaurants. The open-air Plaza sits below one of the city's largest public rooftops with 360-views of the area. The Union Market District is also home to La Cosecha, a 20,000 square foot Latin market that today serves as a "culinary embassy that celebrates centuries of heritage."

Developed by EDENS, the company seeks to "enrich community through human engagement" and is the owner and developer of over 100 open-air retail and mixed use places across the United States.

unionmarketdc.com

East NY Farmers Market

Food Access

Brooklyn, New York

Goal: Improve food access, community gathering

Structure: Pop-up market

Location: Street closure

Duration: Seasonal, Saturdays

The East New York Farmers Market, established in 1999, brings fresh food and economic opportunity to the community. The once-a-week market features community gardeners and NY farmers and is a popular gathering space for residents.

The prolific neighborhood gardens regularly produce more than the household can consume, so the market provides a retail outlet for this extra produce and supplements household incomes.

Through an associated paid internship program, neighborhood youth learn about urban farming, help manage the market, and operate their own produce stands, fostering future employment and entrepreneurship opportunities

The market has created economic opportunity for the youth and the elderly, while also providing healthy, fresh food for the community.

San Luis Obispo Night Market

Space Activation

San Luis Obispo California

Goal: Create opportunities for pop-up vendors and bring foot traffic to brick-and-mortar businesses downtown

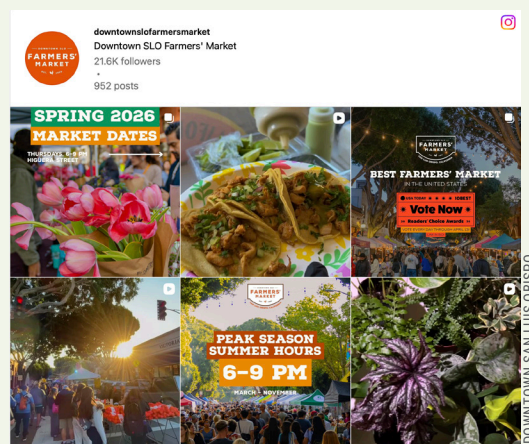
Structure: Pop-up market

Location: Street closure / open air

Duration: Thursday evenings year-round

In response to intrusive car cruising that drove away shoppers, downtown merchants and the Downtown Association shut the street down on Thursdays and set up tables outside to sell products. Soon farmers were invited to the market to sell their produce and entertainment and other special activities were added to the Thursday lineup.

Today, the Market is a regional attraction, drawing thousands of visitors every week to enjoy five blocks of 100 vendors offering fresh produce, meals, crafts, baked goods, entertainment, and more.



NewBo City Market

Small Businesses Support

Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Goal: Foster regional economic development through a business incubator, public programming, and community gathering.

Structure: Existing indoor permanent market with specialty pop-up markets inside and out

Location: Building and open air

Duration: Semi-regular, regular – open-air

NewBo City Market, in the New Bohemia District of Cedar Rapids, is a gathering place, business incubator, and event center serving a wide audience. Home to food and retail businesses, farmers, artisans, and events, the Market showcases local talent and resources and supports entrepreneurs and small businesses. Additionally, the Market aims to reduce food insecurity and provides nutrition and wellness education.

NewBo City Market strives to be a model for sustainable business practices. The Market showcases resiliency through the evolution of the building's history and reinvention, its renovations that address flooding hazards, and the construction of the Market Yard neighborhood park.

The Market was designed to “enlighten, inspire, and entertain,” and provide space for friends, neighbors, and out-of-town visitors to continue to return to live, work, and play in New Bohemia.



About the Panel



PANEL CO-CHAIR
Martha J. Cross
Principal
MAKE Advisory
Services



Martha Cross is a Principal at MAKE Advisory Services, where she advises clients on real estate strategy, space planning, and complex development projects. Martha previously served as Deputy Director in the City of Philadelphia's Department of Planning and Development, overseeing Boards and Commissions including the Historical, Art, and City Planning Commissions and the Zoning Board of Adjustment. She also led major initiatives spanning grant-funded programs, technology implementation, legislation, and consultant-led planning efforts.

Martha has held leadership roles at TRF Development Partners (now Rebuild Metro) and Group Melvin Design, directing real estate development and urban planning projects. Her expertise lies in navigating complex regulatory environments and building partnerships to advance equitable community development.

She has taught courses in urban design, real estate development, and planning at Drexel University and the University of Pennsylvania and is a national speaker addressing topics ranging from diversity and inclusion in public contracts to historic and cultural preservation and community redevelopment.

Martha holds an MBA from Villanova, a Master of City Planning from the University of Pennsylvania, and a Bachelor of Architecture from Carnegie Mellon. She also serves as Chair of the Steering Committee for the InKind Baking Project..

PANEL CO-CHAIR
Gina Lavery
Vice President and
Principal
Econsult Solutions, Inc.



Gina Lavery is an executive vice president and principal of Econsult Solutions, Inc. (ESI). Gina has led a range of projects for ESI, primarily focused on urban planning, real estate, and public policy—particularly where these areas intersect with economic development. This work has included developing economic and fiscal impact studies to support major development projects, providing advisory services on incentive programs and public financing for private and public sectors clients across the U.S., and supplying market insights for clients making real estate decisions.

Prior to joining ESI, Gina was a research analyst for Jones Lang LaSalle, where she was responsible for market research and analysis within the Greater Philadelphia commercial real estate market. From 2009-2016, she worked at the University of Pennsylvania, in various roles within the Office of Government and Community Affairs. At Penn, she monitored legislative and policy developments within city government, and implemented a strategic communications and outreach plan to advocate for the University's interests with local government officials and to find opportunities to communicate its economic and social impact in the region.

A native of Philadelphia, Gina is actively engaged in several organizations including ULI Philadelphia, LAI Philadelphia, the Philadelphia Real Estate Council, and CREW. Gina also serves on the board of the Riverfront North Partnership.

Gina received a BA degree in Political Science and European History from the University of Pennsylvania and earned a Master of City and Regional Planning degree from Penn's Weitzman School of Design.

Rebecca Cordes
Chan
Executive Director
Friends of the Rail Park



Rebecca Cordes Chan is the Executive Director of the Friends of the Rail Park, the organization dedicated to bringing the Rail Park— a vision for a 3-mile greenway and infrastructure reuse project— to life. Prior to joining the Rail Park, Rebecca was the program officer for the National Economic Development and Creative Placemaking programs at Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), where she managed a portfolio of projects focused on using arts- and culturally-based strategies as tools for inclusive economic development.

Rebecca is a 2022-2023 Fulcrum Fellow at the Center for Community Investment, and has been recognized as a Funders Network PLACES Fellow, and a Fellow and Co-Facilitator of the Salzburg Global Forum for Cultural Innovators. She received her MS from the University of Pennsylvania's Weitzman School of Design, and a BA from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

Kelly CG Edwards

**Manager Real Estate Operations
Southeastern Pennsylvania
Transportation Authority**



With 10+ years of experience in the urban planning and development space, Kelly's multidisciplinary policy background and practical experience in design and construction has brought her to the Manager of Real Estate Operations position at SEPTA which touches all segments of the transportation agency. She works with the Real Estate team to inform both long term business decisions and daily operations. Kelly is focused on running strategic acquisitions for Bus Revolution, Trolley Mod and RRR.

Working in the private sector prior to her current position at SEPTA, Kelly had been involved in all aspects of the development process from deal ideation through construction and leasing. After leading the development group's master planning process, she approached each new project as an integral piece to the long term goals of investments. Her hands-on approach ensured that development seamlessly coordinated with City and Commonwealth officials and offices as well as RCO's and place based organizations like the transformative Rail Park.

Kelly has a BA of Sociology, Environmental Design and a Master of Urban Planning from the SUNY University at Buffalo. She served on the City of Philadelphia's Historical Commission and was chosen to be a part of ULI Next. In 2023 she was recognized by the Business Journal in their Women of Influence as a Rising Star and more recently by City + State PA as a Trailblazer in Infrastructure.

Layla El Tannir

**Director of Entrepreneurship
The Welcoming Center**



Layla El Tannir is the Director of Entrepreneurship at The Welcoming Center, where she leads initiatives that expand access to capital, technical assistance, and growth opportunities for immigrant and small business entrepreneurs. Her work focuses on building inclusive local economies and supporting historically excluded communities in launching and scaling sustainable businesses.

With over a decade of experience in nonprofit leadership and market management, Layla previously spent nine years at the historic Reading Terminal Market, most recently serving as Director of Business Development. There, she led efforts to modernize operations, strengthen vendor sustainability, and diversify revenue streams while preserving the market's cultural legacy.

Layla has worked with public, private, and farmers markets in the U.S. and internationally, including consulting through USAID and IESC for Souk El Tayeb in Beirut, Lebanon. She is also the founder of Immigrant Marché at The Welcoming Center and has supported immigrant entrepreneurs through vending programs and market activations at sites including Christmas Village, the Bok Building, and Triple Bottom Brewing.

She supports market training and education through the Build from Within Alliance and serves on the Board of Directors for the Global Philadelphia Association and Phambassadors. Layla is also a member of the Philadelphia 250 Women's Committee. Her work reflects a commitment to equity, collaboration, and community-centered economic development.

Lauren Hamilton

**President
Bay City Management
Company**



Lauren works in community economic development at the local level in both Montgomery County and Baltimore City, she owns a small, family-operated food retail business, and runs a small commercial real estate company. Lauren has built strategic pathways for businesses—and the people behind them—to thrive. She led small business ventures and complex strategic initiatives inside large organizations—and in every case, success came down to strong systems, meaningful partnerships, and clear, trusted communication. Lauren specializes in planning and communications, building data-informed messaging strategies aligned with policy initiatives.

Lauren's experience includes supporting urban redevelopment in Downtown Baltimore, helping assemble a \$30 million public-private capital stack for a comprehensive revitalization plan adopted by City leadership, and designing economic and community development programs that support small businesses and arts-based placemaking through grants, promotions, and programming. Lauren has had the great pleasure of supporting or creating programming that includes: Taste of Bethesda, Bethesda Fine Arts Festival, The Pratt Street Market, Charles Street Promenade, Baltimore Restaurant Week, Downtown Baltimore Cherry Blossom Pop Up Bar, CIAA Food Truck Village, Bromo Art Walk, and more.

Kristine Kennedy

**Executive Director
Camden Special
Services District**

Kristine Kennedy is an experienced business improvement district leader specializing in data driven revitalization of walkable commercial corridors. She brings deep expertise in consumer insights, survey analysis, and market segmentation, translating complex findings into clear, actionable strategies for developers, city officials, and community stakeholders. In addition to her work with corridor cultivation, Kristine has hands on experience producing small and large scale street festivals and public events, giving her a practical understanding of activation, foot traffic generation, and the operational realities of growing small businesses and building vibrant public spaces.

She has a BA in Media Studies and is a graduate of Philadelphia's Citizens Planning Institute. Kristine lives in Fishtown where she and her family are lovingly restoring a Victorian rowhome.



Elizabeth Moselle

**Founding Principal
Places for People**

Elizabeth (Liz) Moselle is a strategist and facilitator focused on developing places where people choose to spend time. Her consulting practice, Places for People, LLC, helps teams generate activity, meaningful experiences, and human connection in their environments by centering real-life experience in design and planning. Elizabeth's background spans placemaking, economic development, and customer experience. She has over 20 years of experience at the intersection of public space, commercial corridors, and institutional environments, leading initiatives to create vibrancy that is both inclusive and economically viable. Before consulting, she led a multi-year initiative to improve the passenger experience at Philadelphia International Airport—aligning a large, decentralized workforce across 100+ organizations.

At Fairmount Park Conservancy, Elizabeth co-created the Parks on Tap traveling beer garden, introducing a new model for activating parkland and generating investment in city parks, which has become embedded in Philadelphia's social life.

Earlier in her career, Elizabeth directed a Main Street revitalization at Mt. Airy CDC, guiding physical transformation of the corridor, including a \$3.5M streetscape project, and its appeal as a destination, with events including the Street Fare food festival. She helped establish durable structures to sustain revitalization efforts, including the Mt. Airy Business Improvement District and the Business Association of Mt. Airy.

Elizabeth holds a B.A. from the University of Michigan and a certificate in Nonprofit Executive Leadership from Bryn Mawr College. She serves on the board of Live Work Philadelphia and as a member of ULI NEXT's 2025-2026 leadership cohort.



Esmat Ishag-Osman, Ph.D.

**Senior Advisor,
Jobs & Economy Team
City of Detroit
Mayor's Office**

Esmat Ishag-Osman is a Senior Advisor on the Jobs & Economy Team in the Mayor's Office for the City of Detroit, where he leads and supports major commercial, mixed-use, and industrial development initiatives totaling over \$1 billion in investment. His role includes shaping the City's long-term economic development strategy and advancing a robust legislative agenda in partnership with the State of Michigan to drive sustained economic growth across Detroit and the broader region.

Esmat's work centers on public-private partnerships, cross-departmental coordination, and collaboration with City Council, developers, and community stakeholders to deliver equitable, community-centered development outcomes. Previously, he served as Legislative Policy Director for Detroit City Council, overseeing policy development across housing, transportation, land use, and economic development, and equipping elected officials with research-driven analysis to support complex legislative decisions.

He has also worked as a municipal finance and policy researcher with the Citizens Research Council of Michigan and as a researcher and instructor at Wayne State University. Esmat holds a PhD in Political Science from Wayne State University and brings over a decade of experience across government, nonprofit, and academic sectors, with a focus on economic development, public policy, and community impact.



Careyann Weinberg

**Director of Economic Vitality
Downtown Norfolk Council**



Careyann Weinberg has proudly brought to life many of Norfolk, Virginia's most exciting and culturally important projects in recent years, including the creation of Norfolk's first arts district, the NEON District, the former Work | Release gallery and entertainment venue, Norfolk Street Museum mural festival, Alchemy NFK, and The Slowdive Gallery. Formerly the Director of Selden Market, she led the creation, operations, and strategic development of the award-winning retail incubator, working with hundreds of small businesses. Careyann currently serves as the Director of Economic Vitality for the Downtown Norfolk Council, supporting programs, services, and initiatives that sustain and grow the economy of Downtown Norfolk. Careyann has worked as a consultant and producer for a variety of visionary projects to help bridge the gap between artists, musicians, entrepreneurs and their community through practice and programming that embraces relevant art and culture. She's managed several large commercial renovations and has curated, managed, and directed countless exhibitions, public art programming, and large-scale events.

Careyann is an active member in her community, helping lead policy shifts such as the designation of creative districts, urban parking improvements, bikeability, and small business regulations. Careyann uses creative curation, active involvement, and public outreach to develop social, economic, and emotional investment in communities.

She holds a bachelor's degree from Batten University (formerly Virginia Wesleyan University).

Kurt Wheeler

**Senior Program Manager
Project for Public Spaces**



Kurt Wheeler is an urban planner with over 10 years of experience leading public market planning and placemaking initiatives. As Senior Program Manager at Project for Public Spaces, she manages all activities of the Market Cities Program, including projects, training, events, and resources, while contributing to strategic planning and communications. She has led program and logistics planning for four International Public Markets Conferences in Milwaukee, Toronto, London, and Barcelona.

Kurt holds a Master's in City and Regional Planning from Pratt Institute, where she focused her research on street vending policy.

Josh Yeager

**Partner
Bright Brothers Strategy Group**



Josh is seasoned strategist with over 30 years' experience in marketing, communications, and business consulting. He is the account lead for Bright Brothers' clients; handling marketing, communications, planning, events, activations and overall strategy. He is a "man of letters" and works in tandem with the teams project manager to deliver exceptional results and placemaking deliverables.

Throughout his career, Josh completed seven terms on the Tempe Tourism Office's Board of Directors, is the former co-chair of the TAPs Committee for ULI Philadelphia, and is active in volunteering with local advocacy groups, and International Downtown Association (IDA) within the MarCom, Placemaking, Policy & Advocacy and Econ Dev verticals. Josh was tapped as a curriculum development SME for IDA's AICP-accredited Leadership in Place Management (LPM) certification, is a four-time IDA Pinnacle Award Juror, and on the Top Issues Council for Placemaking & Branding.

Josh is a frequent public speaker, including: IDA, Delaware Prosperity, BIABC, and DMA West, Destination Marketing Association.