

New Features For Historic York Farmers' Market

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movable tables, allowing for them to be pushed back to the sides for a large meeting area," Leese explains. He relates a story he's been told of a revival once held at the market, with a reported 5,000 attendees seated, and an additional 1,000 standing around the sides. Stands have since been made permanent, with cooking and refrigeration facilities added to some of the vendor sites.

Leese notes that administration of many city markets has been assumed by their municipal governments, or are publicly owned. Central Market, however, continues to be a privately-run entity, but with public stock, most of which is held by local business people who see it as a good investment. The board of eight directors determines the financial and operations policies, while Leese oversees, on a part-time basis, the physical operations of the market. He also works with the board in developing and implementing its vision for the market's future.

Part of that vision is already implemented, with the recent purchase of an adjoining house where Leese visualizes a courtyard setting to be designed, and perhaps some office space. Ground will be broken in March for the construction of a two-level parking facility to serve market customers. To accommodate the trucks which many of the vendors use to handle their produce and merchandise, as well as avoid that "claustrophobic" sense of many multi-level parking structures, the lower level and drives will have higher-than-usual ceiling clearance and extra lighting.

Central Market's board also visualizes expansion of the mezzanine area, currently used for seating for the downtown office workers and students who frequent the market for their lunch breaks. Along with added mezzanine seating capacity could be the addition of a few upscale "boutique" vendors. With no space for expansion outward, due to the surrounding downtown buildings, Leese quips that "the only way we can go is up."

Enhancing the "fragrance" of Central Market will be an on-site bakery currently in planning, sending the enticing aroma of freshly-baked bread, rolls and buns through the market's soaring inner space. Upgraded lighting, including the possible lighting at night of the market's towers, are also under consideration.

"All ideas are on the table" is the board's philosophy as they study and plan to upgrade and revitalize market physical facilities, to continue attracting future generations to its unique setting.

"We are very committed to keeping the farmers here that we have now," Leese emphasizes. In addition to local re-

tailers of fresh fruits and vegetables, several butcher-vendors offer fresh meats and deli items, along with locally-produced potato chips and related salty snacks, baked goods, eggs, candies, flowers and plants, dried fruits and nuts. An array of vendors offer "fast food," fixing fresh-sandwiches to order, along with tempting hot soups, a variety of salads, freshly-brewed hot beverages and cold drinks.

Many of the vendors are from families which have been "tending" market for decades, their history closely intertwined with that of York's market traditions.

Names like Hartman, Fitz, Henry, Miller, Godfrey have hung over some of the stands for several successive generations, who in turn serve succeeding generations of customers they come to know as friends.

Central Market saw a serious downturn in occupancy during the late 1960s and early 1970s, with almost half of the stands vacant at its lowest point. But the mid-1980s brought a drive to revitalize the area — and the market — and entice people back to spending time in downtown York. Today, the market is fully occupied with more than 70 vendors, though some of the

stands are seasonally closed during the winter months, and would-be vendors are being turned away for lack of space.

To further enhance "marketing" of the market, consideration is being given to expanding its days of operation beyond the present, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday schedule. Tuesdays and Thursdays are heavily patronized by employees of downtown businesses, who line up, often several deep at vendor stands, for quick lunches.

"On Saturdays, there's a different crowd of customers, those who are here for the more traditional market experience,"

Leese says. Saturdays also spur more stands to open which feature fresh produce and baked goods, as well as those held by craft vendors.

Central Market is located at 34 West Philadelphia Street, with parking available across the street at the Philadelphia Street Parking Garage. Free parking is available on Saturdays at a lot near the corner of North Beaver and Philadelphia streets.

For more information on York Central Market, call (717) 848-2243, or access their website at: info@centralmarkethouse.com.

Oldest York Farmers' Market Granted A Facelift

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when the city of York hired an employee to work on revitalizing the downtown, out to the 300-blocks. Our market is one of the bigger draws in this area," explains Andrew Miller, president of the vendor-owned York Farmers' Market.

"We had been talking about adding a store in the market, where vendors could sell their excess produce and have it processed into value-added products, like jams and jellies. Then we ran into electrical problems; the present wiring couldn't handle the kind of processing kitchen we were considering."

The market's board of seven directors, all current or former vendors, had hoped for the grant funding for the rewiring to become available during fiscal 2001 first quarter. Since rewiring will require a brief complete shutdown of the market, and summertime is the busiest season, the electrical revamping may go on hold until next fall.

York Farmers' Market is primarily owned by the vendors who utilize it to market their fresh meats, seafood, produce, plants, flowers and handcrafted items every Tuesdays, Friday and Saturday. The vendor-owners bought out the market's previous private owner when it was put up for sale in 1975. Andrew Miller, 23, assumed the presidency in 1998, when his great uncle, Charles Ilyes, retired from the position he had held for many years.

About 50 vendors rent space at the west-end market, filling it to about 80 percent of capacity. A maintenance employee handles routine cleanup, opening, and closing of the market, while an area contractor tackles more complex repair jobs.

"It's a good social meeting place," observes local customer Henry Debes, who has been coming to the market since he was 15. "You don't see your neighbors on the street, but do run into them here at market."

Debes is one of many who stop by the produce and meat stand tended by Andrew Miller, if not to buy on a particular day,

then at least to trade jibes with the smiling, easy-going market president.

"I get abused," Miller jokingly laments, while several regular customers gather to tease the young man who has been helping at his grandparents stand since he was 12. His grandparents, William and Kitty Miller, opened their stand in 1947, offering fresh, home-grown vegetables and chicken, both products still being marketed by their grandson more than a half-century later.

Debes recalls the market's earlier days, when local youngsters often frequented the market with their wagons, earning perhaps a quarter a trip for hauling shoppers' purchases back to their homes.

A row or two of stands away in the old market building stands another long-time family establishment, the meat and produce vendor area of John and Margaret Ilyes Krape. Margaret is the first-born of a family of six children, four of them still continuing farmers-market sales at various locations.

Margaret remembers coming to market with her parents when she was just a small child, especially the ice cream cones they received as treats. The Krapes began tending market in the tradition of her family when they married 55 years ago, returning three days weekly, every week, since they were newlyweds.

One of the premier summer market crops at their Leiphart Mill Road farm, near Hellam, was strawberries. Today, they

still grow much of their own produce during the growing-season months.

The Millers and the Ilyes personify the tradition that has made York's farmers' markets so popular with their steady customers, who return regularly to their favorite stands for meats, seafoods, produce, and baked goods they consider fresher than what they find in supermarkets. Up and down the aisles hang modest signs noting families who continue to keep that tradition, names like Chronister and Hartman, Lehman, Godfrey, and Weaver, who has been selling meats there for decades.

"You get to know the people here and it's convenient," affirms regular market shopper

Marie Fischer, York.

Shoppers Janet and Bill Stockwell, also of York, echo that sentiment, adding that they can call vendors like Andrew Miller with an order, and it is all ready for them to pick up when they arrive.

"I like supporting the local farmers," Janet Stockwell says. "You know where this food comes from."

Reinforced by the financial assistance of state and federal funding, along with the determination of its board and supportive vendor-owners, the guiding fathers of the York Farmers' Market plan that it will continue to bring local farmers and consumers together for many more generations.



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