

May 13, 2020

**To:** Carmichael Board of Directors, Carmichael Parks District

**From:** Don and Marie Hall, Living Smart Foundation and Farmers Markets

**Objective:** To save the Carmichael Park Farmers Market.

**Background:** The Carmichael Park Farmers Market has been providing a year round farmers market in the Carmichael Park for 12 years. The market utilizes two different layouts in the park, one for winter months (November-April) and one for the summer (May-October). In the winter the weather is colder, wetter and smaller, so the market moves to the blacktop road near the tennis courts and in the summer it moves back onto the grass triangle area near the baseball diamond because the weather is warmer, the market expands in size as more produce becomes available and it offers room for people to move and enjoy their park. The two layouts provide seasonal benefits to the vendors and patrons who attend the market every year.

The Farmers Market provides an essential service to the Carmichael community to provide local produce, attract residents to use their park in a fun healthy way, keep commerce local, support small businesses, provide summer jobs for local teens and create a family friendly destination and culture. Locals who frequent the market enjoy the unique quality of having their community market in the “park under the trees.” It has been referred to as the “jewel” of Carmichael and is the only community service activity in the park that attracts a diverse demographic of patrons of all ages and socio-economic backgrounds. In the past, pre-Covid-19 the market provided free annual community events that coincided with the market to include the Mother’s Day Tea Party, The Peach Festival, the Tomato Taste Off and the Falling Leaf Festival. These events were free, engaging, fun and healthy. We have over 8,000 subscribers to the Carmichael Park Farmers Market newsletter and have over 5,000 people following us on Facebook with a 4.9/5 star review rating.

Due to Covid-19 pandemic, the District required us to close the market in March. At the time we closed we were still in our winter set-up. However, because we were an “essential service” we asked if we could return to the park in April with a modified layout that would not only adhere to the COVID-19 required protocols, but to also address the additional health and safety concerns of the park. We had already addressed these issues in March with the park as we had already instituted protocols in all of our markets as early as March 11 (see attached memo and COVID-19 mandates **EXHIBIT A**). The park did not want to do that, but instead offered to move the market to the La Sierra parking lot for the month of April as a temporary solution but the costs for new permits and insurance was just not possible, and changing the location temporarily was not a sustainable solution. Permits are location specific and cost \$2,500-3,000 to obtain, so we opted to wait until the restrictions would loosen and we could re-open in the Park when allowed. In May, we got permission to re-open in the Park, but only if we moved our location and followed the plan/layout required by the park staff that was not suitable for the longevity and sustainability of the market (See Carmichael Parks Conditions and Plan **EXHIBIT B**). We were prepared to re-open for the summer months in our usual location on the grass in the triangle with a layout that would meet all of the required COVID-19 mandates and protocols by the CDC, Department of Health and the Department of Agriculture as we have already done and been doing in our other markets. We have been told that we would not be allowed to return to our usual location on the grass and that we would have to use their plan and layout.

We have agreed to try it in the spirit of cooperation, but we know after 15 years of running farmers markets what conditions can determine the success or failure of a farmers market. The issues and concerns we have with this change will indeed cause the perfect conditions to kill the market. There is a vicious cycle that will cause vendors to stop participating and patrons to stop coming as a result of the hardships caused by the issues and requirements of their plan. It has been our experience that it usually takes a season of this for a market to have to close down permanently. This is obviously our biggest concern as it jeopardizes not only the survival of the Carmichael Park Farmers Market, but our entire business, which will force us to close markets we offer in three other communities. The Carmichael Park is the flagship of our markets as it was our first and has been the most successful. Due to the COVID-19 however, we are running at 40% less revenue across the board with 50% fewer vendors in order to comply with all mandates and spacing requirements. This combined with the additional conditions placed on us by the parks staff under their plan jeopardizes our survival.

The U.S. government did a nationwide study to determine the reasons a Farmers Market will either fail or succeed. The results showed that the number one reason a market will fail or succeed is based on their location and the number two reason is management. Living Smart has a reputation for excellence in both the operation and management of our Farmers Markets. We have run over six markets a week, 52 weeks a year successfully without incident. And, more importantly we have been running and managing the Carmichael Park Farmers Market for 12 years successfully in the same location. Changing the location and the layout from a plan we know works to one that we never would have considered or planned ourselves, will have dire consequences to the survival of this market.

We have communicated all of these concerns and issues with the parks staff. They are as follows:

1. **Loss of ambience.** A major attraction to the Carmichael Park Farmers Market is the location on the grass under the trees. Removing us from this location changes the complexion of the market entirely and the experience of the shoppers in the community. This will eventually play a role in the loss of vendors and patrons. The new layout and location addresses only our space minimum space requirements we need to stay in business, but does not allow for any expansion during the summer months as the season grows to include additional farmers. The additional revenue is necessary to help us catch up from our losses and save up to for the winter months when the market size and revenue is much less.
2. **Patron Utilization and Distance.** The new layout does not work functionally with the way the patrons shop and utilize the market. It would require the shoppers to start at one end (at the entrance) to shop and gather their produce and travel over a half mile with their bags of groceries on the blacktop around the baseball field to get back to their cars in the community parking lot.
3. **Disc Golf Danger.** Closing down the two Disc Golf holes closest to the market will not stop disc golfers from playing there. We have had direct experience with disc golfers playing through with discs flying through the market and hitting people and damaging booths even though the holes were closed. We must take the physical harm that results from this very seriously as it will happen.

4. **Heat.** Sacramento summers are brutal. Being in direct sunlight for either the vendor or the patron is going to be extremely difficult especially now that the park is also requiring the vendors to wear face masks and gloves. The temperature on the black top can actually be up to 20 degrees hotter than the ambient temperature outside. In a 100 degree day, it can be up to 120 degrees in that location. This presents a very real health hazard to anyone wearing a mask in this heat.
5. **Managing one directional flow.** We can encourage it, but we will not be able to enforce it. Because people will take the shortest route to return to their car, they will cut across the triangle area and there is no ADA access on that side. This is most hazardous for those that have mobility issues, i.e. wheel chairs, walkers and canes.
6. **Change in Dog policy.** We are not aware of any COVID-19 mandate policies that would require this change to the market, however, it will take a while to change the habit patterns of our patrons given that this has been a deeply established routine for them for the past 12 years and there is a dog park right next to the market.
7. **Vendor/Customer participation.** The vendors who are placed half way down and all the way to the end of the market will experience a decrease in sales volume the further from the entrance they are placed. Because of the distance of the market many people will not bother to go visit the other farmers. This will eventually result in their dropping the market and not returning, which affects our revenue and decreases the variety in the market and will eventually affect the number of patrons who will shop the market. Fewer options equates to fewer patrons and it just becomes a vicious cycle.

**Result:** It is important to note that prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and since last July, 2019, Mr. Blondino has been trying to move the Farmers Market off the grass and onto the blacktop. We had several conversations and communicated our concerns again in November 2019 (See Letter to Mr. Blondino EXHIBIT C) Through the remainder of the year we worked together to explore other options and he agreed to a modified layout on the grass where we would just move the market down and away from the areas where the most compaction of soil had resulted from use, much like “crop rotation.” Since we are only on the grass for 5.5 months, once a week for 6 hours, out of the year, there would be plenty of time for the area to get a break from use and recoup. However, when COVID-19 happened, things changed.

So, unfortunately the plan the park staff is requiring us to use that includes a half mile loop around the park will affect the sales revenue for the vendors who are placed further from the entrance around the loop. Oftentimes patrons, especially when having to shop in the heat of the summer, will not travel the length of this market to make their purchases and will result in decreased sales for these vendors. These vendors will be the first ones to drop the market if they are not making any money. This then affects the variety in the market and along with the other issues we’ve already stated, shoppers will stop coming. The combination of these conditions will cause a negative cycle. Less vendors = Less patrons = More vendors dropping = less revenue for the market to survive. We have already experienced this exact

same scenarios in Roseville when our location was moved into the sun. It took the market one summer to decline and close. It has been closed now for three years.

**Our Solution:** Allow Living Smart to continue to use the pre-existing Market location on the triangle on the grass for the summer as we have now for past 12 years. We will adhere to all of the COVID-19 mandates and protocols required by the CDC, the CA Governor, the Department of Health and the Department of Agriculture. We will spread the vendors out over the entire corner location resulting in far less vendor and shopper density which equates to fewer people in the market at one time. This also allows more parking in the park and not limit people to the community parking area to create more social distancing opportunities when parking. It also has the ramp so handi-cap can get into the market easily and it give people room to move around and social distance without the one direction constraints. People will now be closer to the parking lot and won't have to walk a long trek in the sun to get to and from their cars. Dogs become less of an issue in this set up too since there will be more room. And the most obvious advantage is that the community can go back to enjoying their market in the park under the trees.

Once the social distancing requirements abate, we will adjust our layout to push the market back away from the compacted areas as previously agreed to with Mr. Blondino in December 2019, to give the turf the relief needed for the next year. This would allow the park staff the space to work on these areas and time to recoup.

Please see attached our proposed layout for now during COVID-19.

We thank you and appreciate your consideration and look forward to your decision.



Exhibit A

***Eat Healthy, Buy Local!***  
**Certified Farmers Markets**

***Supporting Farmers, Youth, Small Businesses & Our Communities***

**Precautions for Vendors at the Farmers Markets**  
**For additional health and safety**

March 11, 2020

Dear Vendor:

In light of the health concerns regarding the spread of the COVID-19 Virus, the following additional precautions will be required to protect yourself and others:

The farmers markets will NOT CLOSE, but instead offer the following precautions in addition to the required procedures of both the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Environmental Health :

- 1) NO SAMPLING—Sampling will no longer be available on an open table until further notice. All vendors will be required to use food gloves at their booths when handling food.
- 2) All VENDORS will be required to use gloves at their booths while serving customers. Food, specialty and crafters are included in this requirement.
- 3) Vendors will NOT be allowed to touch food and money with the same gloves.
- 4) ALL Vendors will be required to have disinfectant wipes or spray and paper towels at their booth and will be required to clean all open surfaces (tables etc.) while at the market.
- 5) Vendors who have compromised immune systems and/or health condition should consider staying home and put off participating in the markets until your health is better.
- 6) Vendors will be required to have complimentary Hand Sanitizer at their booth for customers to use as necessary.
- 7) Picnic Tables and benches will be temporarily removed from the markets until further notice.

We ask that Vendors take extra care in washing your hands often, stay home if you are sick or have a compromised immune system. Please take time to disinfect and wipe down all of your table surfaces and use gloves while serving at the market. Money should be handled separately, and gloves should not cross contaminate. No food samples will be offered until further notice.

We appreciate your assistance in following these procedures to provide a safe and clean environment for yourselves and the customers.

These procedures will commence Saturday, March 14.

Thank you—Stay Healthy!



# Your Health and Safety is Our First Priority!

## Instituted Additional Precautions

In lieu of the COVID-19, the health and the safety of all of our customers, vendors and employees continues to be our top priority. And that means you can shop with us with confidence.

Here are some measures we've taken at the markets in addition to our already rigorous health and safety policies to protect you even further:

- We are again reinforcing our health and hygiene practices and policies as required by the Environmental Health Department and the Department of Agriculture regarding how we handle produce and products. Our goal - in this time and always - is to ensure a clean, safe, and sanitary environment, and our vendors and managers are exceeding the guidelines for cleanliness set in place by the CDC.
- We've increased the frequency of our cleaning of open tables and areas where people gather and have temporarily removed picnic tables and benches to avoid additional areas for germs.
- Our vendors are wiping down their tables before and during the market with disinfectant to enhance our health and sanitation guidelines.
- We are posting hand sanitizer at the vendors booths throughout the market and at the information booth for your use.
- Open sampling of produce and products will no longer be available until further notice to avoid any chance of cross contamination.
- We're providing our managers, employees and vendors with up-to-date information to keep them - and their families - informed, aware and protected throughout this situation.

## Certified Farmers' Markets

Exhibit A

- Space booths accordingly to increase social distancing among patrons in line and walking about the market.
- Ensure that social distancing of six feet per person for non-family members is maintained and make clear that family members can participate in activities together, stand in line together, etc.
- Limit the number of customers at any given time as necessary to reduce outdoor/indoor crowding and lines to meet social distancing guidance.
- Eliminate events/marketing that target individuals that CDPH has identified as [higher risk of serious illness for COVID-19](#).
- Encourage activities such as pre-bagging to expedite purchasing.
- Suspend sampling activities.
- Increase frequency of cleaning of tables, payment devices, and other surfaces.
- Eliminate non-essential/non-related services, such as bands or other entertainment.

# CARMICHAEL PARK CONDITIONS TO RE-OPEN

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Carmichael



5750 Grant Avenue • Carmichael, California 95608-3744  
(916) 485-5322 • (916) 485-0805 fax • www.carmichaelpark.com

Exhibit B

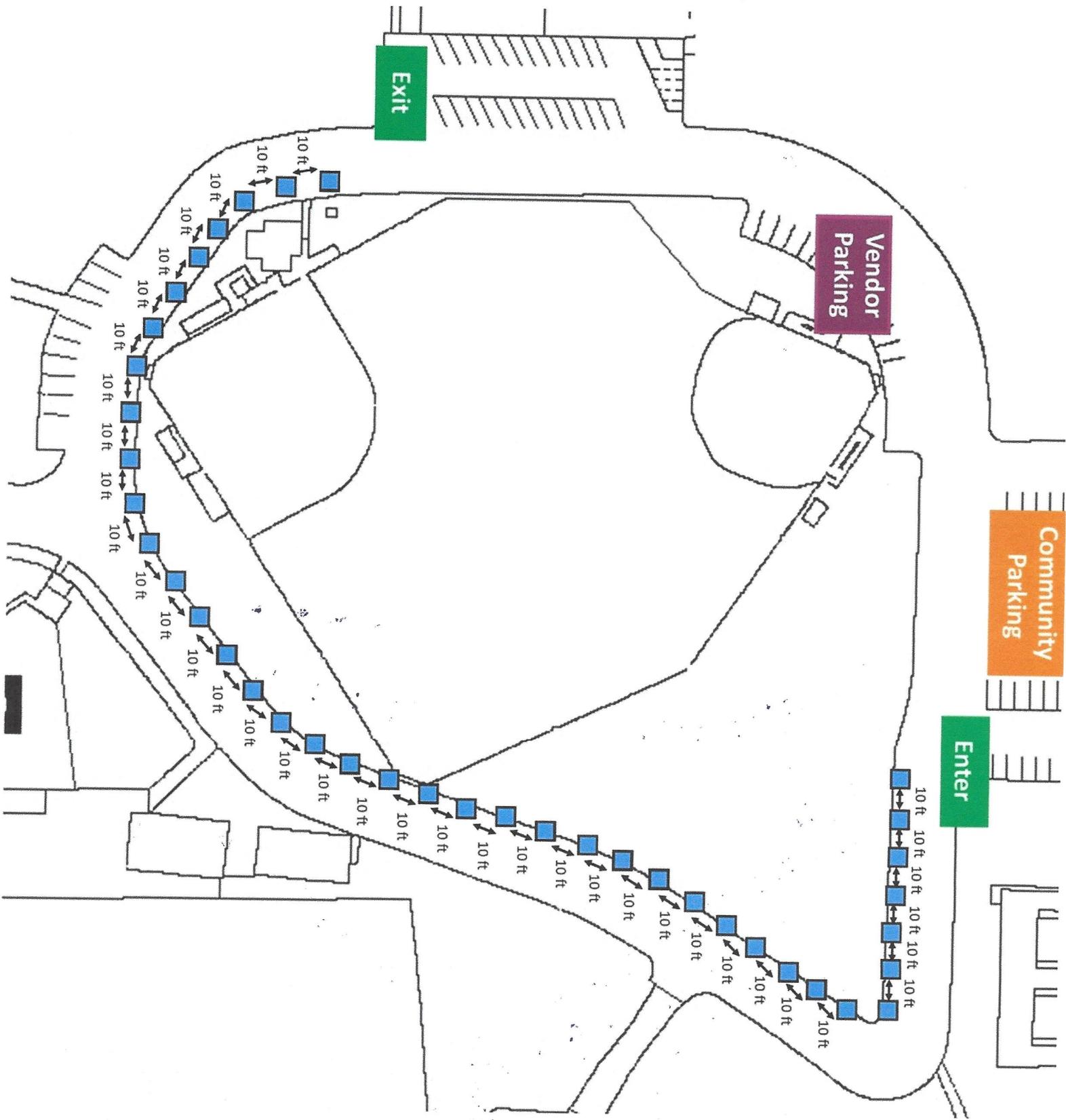
Carmichael Recreation and Park District (CRPD) supports permitting the Living Smart Farmers Market to reopen on Sunday, May 17<sup>th</sup> if the following terms and safety precautions can be agreed to and enforced by Living Smart:

- 1) Only farmers and specialty food vendors will be permitted to sell at the market. No arts, crafts, music, or other type of non-essential vendors or entertainment are permitted.
- 2) CRPD staff and at least one staff member of Living Smart must meet at the site location to walk through vendor booth placements, vendor parking, public parking, etc. The meeting will occur in person and will follow social distancing guidelines as well as staff wearing masks.
- 3) Market and Vendor Booth Layout
  - a. There will be one market entrance and one exit (diagram attached). Living Smart must staff the entrance and exit points to ensure one-way traffic is occurring properly.
  - b. Vendor booths must have a minimum of 10 feet of separation between each other. Vendors with more than one booth space may have the booths next to one another without the 10 feet of separation.
  - c. Vendor booths must be located on one side of the road at Carmichael Park (diagram attached) and can curve around the corner to continue along the same side. No setup on grass is permitted.
  - d. Living Smart Staff will monitor and limit the amount of customers in the market to ensure proper social distancing is able to occur.
  - e. Living Smart is not limited in the number of vendors or booth space as long as 10 feet of separation can occur. Attached diagram represents 40 vendors.
  - f. Living Smart must put tape or chalk markings six feet apart on the ground marking an "in line area" that does not protrude into the walkway.
  - g. Living Smart will provide, advertise, and enforce a Senior Hour to occur during their first hour of operation or to open an hour earlier for this to occur.
- 4) Vendor Requirements
  - a. No sampling allowed.
  - b. Vendors must wear a mask and use gloves at all times.
  - c. Vendors are not allowed to touch food and money with the same gloves.

- d. All vendors are required to have disinfectant wipes or spray and paper towels, with solution documented to be effective on killing the coronavirus and will be required to clean all open surfaces (tables, etc.) while at the market.
  - e. Vendors are required to have complementary hand sanitizer at their booth, with at least 60% ethanol and 70% isopropanol (CDC recommendation).
  - f. Vendors are encouraged to pre-bag items into bulk amounts to make it easy for customers to quickly grab and go.
  - g. Vendors can have no more than two customers at their booth at a time to ensure proper social distancing.
  - h. Vendors who have compromised immune systems and/or health conditions must stay home.
  - i. Vendors must stay home if sick or demonstrating any symptoms such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath.
- 5) The following Customer Rules must be posted on the Living Smart/Farmers Market website as well as in large print throughout the market area and enforced by Living Smart Staff:
- a. Come to the market in good health only.
  - b. Face coverings are strongly recommended
  - c. Please only send one person per family to shop at the market, if possible.
  - d. Touch only what you are buying
  - e. Enter and Exit at designated locations only
  - f. Follow social distancing guidelines and remain at least 6 feet apart from others.
  - g. No animals allowed.
  - h. No more than two customers at a time per booth. Please use markings to appropriately wait 6 ft. apart from others in line.
  - i. No gathering allowed (i.e. walkways, picnic tables, benches, vendor booth areas, parking lot, etc)
- 6) Clean-Up Requirements
- a. All vendors must place trash in the CRPD provided dumpsters.
  - b. Any overflow garbage cannot be left at the site and must be removed by Living Smart.

CRPD will permit the use of its facilities for the Farmers Market if all terms and safety precautions described above are met and maintained throughout the term deemed necessary by CRPD in accordance to recommendations and orders of Governor Newsom, the State of California, Sacramento County, and the CDC. The permit for this event can be terminated if Living Smart, including its representatives and vendors, violate any listed terms or safety precaution requirements.

# Carmichael Park District Plan Exhibit B





## Exhibit C

***Eat Healthy, Buy Local!***  
**Certified Farmers Markets**

***Supporting Farmers, Youth, Small Businesses & Our Communities***

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November 6, 2019

Mr. Blondino  
District Administrator  
Carmichael Recreation Parks District  
5750 Grant Avenue  
Carmichael, CA 95608

Dear Mr. Blondino:

It was a pleasure talking with you about the weekly Carmichael Farmers Market. As a follow up to our conference call on Wednesday, October 30, 2019, we wanted to provide you with additional information for your consideration to keep the Farmers Market on the grass during the peak season from May 10, 2020 through November 15, 2020.

At this time you are recommending that the Farmers Market be moved to the asphalt along the curve of the street, which is presently our winter set-up, to continue through the summer season. The reasons for this change is due to concerns of the compaction of the turf and the effect on the redwood trees. Also you brought up the issue of liability due to uneven terrain.

We understand and appreciate your position on this matter and have worked very hard to be good stewards of the District property. We wanted to explain in more detail our reasons for requesting consideration to leave the Farmers Market in its current location and provide a bit of history about the program.

In 2008, the Carmichael Recreation and Park District completed a large scale community survey. The number one highest rated request was to have a farmers market in their community. The Living Smart Foundation 501c3 (formerly known as BeMoneySmartUSA) was asked by the District to bring our Farmers Market into Carmichael Park. It became (and is today) a focal gathering place for the community. We have been successfully operating this market for eleven years and fulfilled the request by our community. It has become a staple of the local community as it offers far more than just a place to shop for produce; it provides people with a unique experience that is wholesome, family friendly and it's attendees represents all sectors of the community.

It is the only one of its kind within 100 mile radius. A unique Market located under the beautiful redwood trees offering shade during the summer months. The event is well attended and well-represented by all residents within the community. We even host our local politicians who hold their office hours in order to connect with the community. Annual free events hosted alongside the Farmers Market also includes the Mother's Day Tea Party, the Peach Festival and the Falling Leaf Crafts Festival. All providing experiences that enriches and connects our community and their families.



We at Living Smart (501c3 local non-profit) are not just employees, we are also residents of this community who take deep pride in providing a safe, healthy, quality event. We are a Carmichael based non-profit and La Sierra tenant, that focuses on providing free education and employment programs to local youth that offers them opportunities to engage with their community and to learn while they earn at the Farmers Market. The mission of Living Smart is to connect businesses and youth to our communities through financial and entrepreneurship education and opportunities. By providing a venue where small local businesses can sell their produce and products provides youth with employment opportunities and offers small businesses with a place to sell locally which directly benefits the local economy, establishes professional and personal relationships and helps to build our community.

For the health, sustainability and continued benefit of the Carmichael Recreation and Park District, the Farmers Markets wishes to be allowed to continue to operate on the grass under the trees for the summer months for the following reasons:

- **Parking.** Parking is an issue. In the winter, we can be on asphalt because the market decreases in size and so does the shopping base which does not affect the parking as much.
- **Size of the market.** The market size increases by almost triple in the summer months as produce and farmers come back for the season. The shopping base also gets larger and the need for parking in the park becomes essential. As long as we are on the blacktop in the summer we cannot grow the market and we cannot accommodate the additional parking needed. As soon as baseball season starts too, it makes the parking an even bigger nightmare. The blacktop cannot be blocked as it uses up possible parking in the summer and access to the dog park.
- **Disc Golf Danger.** In the summer more disc golfers come out to play and use the large grassy area by the blacktop and throw discs during the market. These projectile discs fly through the market on the black top. They are dangerous and can cause damage and injury to people, booths and cars. We have first-hand experience with this as we have had issues in the winter months already that has resulted in our closing down two disc golf nets during market hours for safety.
- **Heat.** Summer heat is intense and will affect the shopping experience of patrons as well as ruin vendor produce and products. The shade and grass lowers the high intense summer temperatures, making the experience for the vendors and the shoppers much more desirable.
- **Add On Events.** No additional events Living Smart presently hosts will be possible on the blacktop because both vendor space and parking will be limited.
- **Loss of "Experience".** The experience of the market being on the turf will be severely impacted as it will lose its ambiance and it will no longer be a "gathering place" for families to come and stay in the park to enjoy music, food and activities.
- **Loss of Integrity.** All of these factors will greatly impact sales for vendors therefore also affecting vendor participation, the experience lost by patrons will also cause a decrease in patronage by constituents, and therefore jeopardize the over-all stability of the farmers market. Alternative locations outside the park to move the market like La Sierra Community Center parking lot will kill the market altogether.



To address your concerns about turf and liability here are some ideas:

- 1) Move the market closer to the other end of the turf area for the season. This will give the turf some relief in the front area.
- 2) It has already been established that the area does not lend itself to having turf due to soil and sunlight conditions. We could protect the base of the trees through mulch and pathways.
- 3) Tripping hazards are easily mitigated with bark on walking paths and some minor maintenance
- 4) Tripping hazards are no more or no less a liability to the park during the farmers market as any other time the market is being used.
- 5) The farmers market is never on the grass during the rainy season.
- 6) Hazards are now less likely to occur during the farmers market on the grass as the farmers market will now posts signs during the market warning patrons of uneven terrain.
- 7) Only two complaints on record have received regarding the terrain in over 10 years
- 8) Consider using decomposed granite to create more stable walking paths or bark as a solution to actually prevent further compaction from happening. We could help promote a fundraiser for decomposed granite or the bark and/or help with labor (through our youth volunteers) to aerate the soil and spread the bark.

Having an arborist check out the health of the redwoods is a good. We understand the trees could be compromised due to the compaction of the soil in that area and we look forward to hearing the results. My husband Don also works in a maritime forest preservation so he has some practical knowledge. Over the past years we have seen these trees flourish by their growth in size and canopies. No signs of limb breakage or obvious signs of tree droppings other than the normal seasonal pine needle shedding. No odd wounds to the trees exteriors or excretions.

As I've mentioned, there is much more to your request than just moving us to asphalt. This Farmers Market is very special and the location is what makes it unique. It is in the heart of Carmichael where people come to enjoy the park, buy healthy food, connect with farmers and get inspired. It's one of the events that makes our community the best!

I hope this information proves useful. Please consider these items as you complete your assessment and know that we support CRPD in your endeavors. Thank you for your time and consideration to this matter and I hope you get a chance to stop by and visit us soon!

With Gratitude,

*Marie V. Hall*

Marie V. Hall  
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Living Smart Foundation  
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# Living Smart - Proposed Layout Exhibit D

