

Farmers' Market First Steps: Connecting with City Council

Starting a new business can be challenging, especially when it comes to non-traditional retail like farmers' markets. It's often difficult to know where to begin. For many new markets, reaching out to your local City Council office is a crucial first step. City Council offices can offer valuable support by connecting you with local community organizations, providing historical context about the location, and helping to get your market added to the [Philadelphia City Code Section 9-213](#), if needed. This section in the Code lists approved farmers' market locations, and to have yours included, legislation needs to be introduced and passed by City Council. Your local office can assist in drafting, introducing, and advocating for your market's inclusion.

To help new markets get started, the Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH) has prepared key questions to consider before reaching out to your City Council office. You don't need to have every answer prior to reaching out, but thinking about these in advance will help streamline the process:

- Is this market legalization or expansion of an existing one, or is it entirely new?
- Does your organization (or a partnering one) already operate in the neighborhood?
- If not, what community stakeholders are involved?
- What makes the location particularly appealing?
- What is your target market size and expected visitor numbers?

If you have hosted previous events like other markets, pop-ups, or street fairs, sharing photos and statistics from those events to show your past successes can also be helpful.

If you're unsure about other organizations operating in the area, Council staff may be able to connect you with relevant groups. They can also discuss the unique challenges and strengths of your market, as every location is different.

Before meeting with Council staff, spend some time observing activity on your chosen block, particularly at the intended time and date of your proposed market. This preparation will help you address common operational challenges such as **crowd control, double parking, and litter cleanup**. Council staff will want to know how you plan to deal with these possible issues before approving your market location.

Ultimately, the most important question for your local City Council office is: **Will your market (operator, vendor, patrons) treat the community as if it was their home?** If you can demonstrate how your market will positively engage with the surrounding community, Council will likely support your efforts.

You can find contact information for your local City Council office [here](#) and a map to find your City Council office location [here](#).

Farmers' Market Location Approval Process

1. Identify Market Location

Decide where you want to operate your market. If in the right-of-way, be sure to note the exact location such as the side of the street and whether you plan to close any sidewalks, curb lanes, or streets. Visit the [Farmers' Market Planning Tool](#) to help determine what type of location approval your market would need to operate.

2. Reach Out to the Local City Council Office

You can find contact information for your local City Council office [here](#) and a map to find your City Council office location [here](#).

3. Request that a bill be introduced to update Philadelphia City Code Section 9-213(7)

If your market location is in the right-of-way, the first step in the legislative process is for one or more Council members to introduce a bill describing your location. This will most likely be the Council member representing the district where your market will be located. This must occur while City Council is in session, as they recess during the summer months.

4. Prepare Testimony on Why the Bill is Needed

Once the bill is introduced and referred to a committee, public testimony can be provided in support of your market location. City Council recommendations for public testimony can be found here: [Offering Public Comment at Council Stated Meetings](#). Your testimony should emphasize the benefits your market will provide to the local community. Your local Council office can help you prepare your remarks.

5. Attend a Committee Hearing with City Council Members

A bill introducing a farmers' market location will likely go before the Committee on Streets and Services. The hearing may include testimony from the public and City departments. Committee Hearing Schedules are available here: <https://phila.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>.

6. Attend Full City Council Meetings

Once the committee approves your bill, it will receive a "First Reading" at the next scheduled full Council meeting. After passing the first reading, a Council member must call for a "Second Reading" within the next four scheduled sessions.

7. Wait for City Council to Approve Your Bill

To pass, the bill must receive a simple majority vote. If approved by Council, it goes to the Mayor within three days.

The Mayor may sign or veto the bill.

- If signed, the ordinance takes effect, and you are authorized to operate a farmers' market at that location.
- If neither signed nor vetoed, it takes effect after 10 days.
- If vetoed, the bill returns to committee. Council has 10 days to decide whether to vote on the bill again. If the bill receives 12 votes, it becomes law without the Mayor's approval.

This entire process can take several weeks to a few months, so we recommend starting as soon as you've confirmed your desired location.

Once your legislation has been introduced you can check its status at: [City of Philadelphia - Legislation](#)