



## **PRESENTATION TO THE CITY OF NANAIMO PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION**

**NOVEMBER 25, 2015**

### **Introduction**

The Island Roots Market Co-operative seeks to build and operate a year-round, indoor/outdoor farmers' and community market that will promote the sale of locally produced and sustainably harvested food and other locally made items. The market, to be located at Beban Park, will include a food preparation and education center and a distribution facility (food hub).

The proposed farmers' and community market will contribute to meeting goals and objectives identified in Nanaimo's Official Community Plan, 2008; the Beban Park Master Plan Update, 2015; and the Regional District of Nanaimo's Agricultural Area Plan, 2012.

### **What is the Island Roots Market Co-operative (IRMC)?**

The Island Roots Market Co-operative was registered July 17, 2012, under the British Columbia Co-operative Association Act, with the objective of establishing a year-round indoor market in Nanaimo and to be open five or six days a week. The proposed Beban Park farmers' and community market will provide Nanaimo and region residents with greater access to locally produced and sustainably harvested food. It will provide regional Vancouver Island farmers and other vendors a predictable location from which to sell what they produce.

Our Co-operative began operating a once a week winter farmers' market in October, 2014, in the Pleasant Valley Social Center at 6100 Doumont Road in Nanaimo. IRMC began its second year of operation in the same location in October, 2015. Each weekly market has had 25-30 vendors and an average of 450 consumers. Numerous vendors have been turned away for lack of space, and parking is always a challenge. All revenue generated at the Market stays in the community because everything sold at the market is grown, baked, made, or caught by people living in the area.

Membership in Island Roots Market Co-operative is comprised of consumers, producers, supporting organizations and employees. As of October, 2015, there were 279 members, including 66 producers and 5 supporting organizations. Rules of IRMC specify that employees will be paid at least a living wage with no one being paid more than three times that amount. Profits made by IRMC will be returned to the members in patronage refunds.

### **Meeting Food Security Goals**

The City of Nanaimo Official Community Plan, 2008, identifies food security as an important goal. It lists several objectives: developing sustainable local food systems, encouraging partnerships for food security, and ensuring access to food. The Island Roots Market Co-operative believes that it can contribute significantly to meeting these objectives. Moreover, the proposed farmers' and community market at Beban Park is in line with policies identified in the Official Community Plan, including the following:

- improving access to healthy and affordable foods,
- supporting urban agriculture,
- building understanding "...about the principles of food security that link a prosperous economy to a healthy community" (OCP, Section 3.4), and
- developing "...an educational program to promote awareness around food production, health, and impacts on the community" (OCP, Section 3.4).

With respect to the wider central Vancouver Island area, the Regional District of Nanaimo developed an Agricultural Area Plan (2012) titled "Growing Our Future Together." The farmers and community market proposed by IRMC will be ideally situated to make a significant contribution to meeting several goals identified in "Growing Our Future Together." For example, consider "Goal #2 - Strengthen the Local Agriculture and Aquaculture Economy" and "Goal #6 - Promote Awareness and Value of Local Agriculture and Aquaculture" (p. iii). The Island Roots Market Co-operative is also in agreement with the benefits of a localized or regionalized food system that are presented in "Growing Our Future Together."

The Agricultural Area Plan explicitly states, "Local seasonal farmers' markets are successful, and there is demand for a year-round market in the RDN." (p. 1) "Growing

Our Future Together” further suggests Beban Park as a site for a year-round indoor farmers’ market for the region and gives it a high priority rating for action. (p. 33)

The Beban Park Master Plan Update 2015 begins with a brief history that recognizes the agricultural heritage of the park. The plan update also pays attention to the pillars of the City’s Corporate Strategic Plan: economic health, environmental responsibility, social equity and cultural vitality. In addition, the plan update discusses the importance of fostering community partnerships in implementing “the community’s plan for the park”. (p. 6)

With regard to the policy context, the 2015 plan update mentions a food strategy being developed by the City. The update states that “The goal of the Food Strategy is to focus on the specific needs, assets, and desires of the community in achieving a healthy, prosperous and sustainable food system.” (p. 8)

The Island Roots Market Co-operative believes that its proposal for a farmers’ and community market will fit well within the wider plans for Beban Park.

### **The Proposed Farmers’ and Community Market**

We are at the earliest stages of development and want to work with you, your staff and other community organizations to put the meat on the bones of this community project. As we see it the market will be located inside and outside of a community building in a central area of the park. The precise location needs to be determined in consultation with your planning staff and others. Ideally it will include the following:

- Fixed Sales area - 50 indoor market (10x10) spaces. These need to be lockable so vendors can leave products and equipment on site.
- Temporary Floor sales - Space for an additional 30 - 50 vendors at tables
- Space for a Food Hub (drop off area for assembly and distribution to restaurants, retailers etc)
- 800 sq ft office space plus a boardroom (share with other community organizations)
- Commercial Kitchen that can be used for training, education and preparing bulk food for sale ie canning, freezing, baking etc (Nanaimo Foodshare and VIEx also wants this so it can be shared with them or located in a VIEx building)
- Cooler - walk in
- An indoor Children's play area
- Entertainment spaces for buskers etc inside and out
- Indoor seating area - coffee, snacks, market food consumption (or restaurant seating)
- Washrooms, storage and other common areas
- Check out stations (cash registers) to be used at times when vendors are not present.
- Covered outdoor spaces for up to 100 additional seasonal vendors.
- Picnic benches, trees etc.

We have worked with an architect to determine that a 9,000 sq ft building with access to temporary space and covered outdoor space will meet our initial requirements for the functions listed above. Through effective scheduling, and heeding the Beban Park Master Plan calling for flexible multi-use buildings, we estimate a cost for a first phase building of about two million dollars. The actual uses, size and cost, however, need to be determined in conjunction with you, your staff and community organizations that include Nanaimo Community Gardens Society, Nanaimo Foodshare Society, The Bowen Road Farmers' Market Society and others who will choose to participate.

### **Our Request**

The Island Roots Market Co-operative requests that the Parks and Recreation Commission:

- 1) Agree that the farmers' and community market project is in the community's interest and helps to achieve the food security goal of the City.
- 2) Instruct staff to assist The Island Roots Market Co-operative's efforts to move this project through Step 2 - Approval in Principle - of the City's Guidelines For Community Capital Projects.

**Respectfully submitted by,**

### **Island Roots Market Co-operative Board of Directors:**

Larry Whaley, President

Tomazs Hoekstra, Vice President

Chris Semrick, Secretary

Elaine Wade, Treasurer

Leah Snobelen, Market Manager

Chris Brown, Director

Lorne Ebel, Director

Barbara Ebel, Director

**Volunteer Consultants:** C. Michael Hill, MAIBC BArch; Susan Nelson, Ph.D.