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## Farmers' Market Coming to Lafayette

*By Cathy Tyson*

Fresh local fruits, vegetables, flowers and crafts could be coming to downtown if organizers have their way. If approved as expected at the next City Council meeting, a unique farmers market is poised for a trial run later this summer at Lafayette Plaza, on the corner of Mt. Diablo and Moraga Road.

The pilot program dates are scheduled for Friday August 21 and the following Friday, August 28 to coincide with Rock the Plaza, then moving to the next three Thursday evenings - September 3, 10 and 17, running from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

The idea was to start small with twenty to thirty stalls and keep it that way. If all goes well this year, a weekly farmers' market could run from May through October in 2010. "Groups like Sustainable Lafayette and the Environmental Task Force Local Foods Group really embraced the market and opened doors. They have wanted a farmers' market in Lafayette for many, many years," said Jessie Neu, Executive Director of Contra Costa Certified Farmers' Markets (CCCFM).

"We truly feel that this weekly event will enrich the quality of life in the Lafayette community in many ways," said Neu. Having run successful markets for the past 27 years in Martinez, Orinda, Pleasant Hill and Walnut Creek, CCCFM's experience will be helpful in ironing out any difficulties that may arise. Parking is always a problem in Lafayette said Neu, so they are keeping all of their options open. She added that allowing farmers to off-load their produce is an additional issue.

At a recent City Council meeting, concerns were raised ranging from insurance coverage to street closures to porta-potties.

"We take care of all that - the clean up, we maintain the insurance - the cost to the city is negligible," said Neu.

Vendors pay fees to cover costs associated with running the market.

"There is quite a bit of enthusiasm. We'd love to have a market in Lafayette," said organizer Janet Thomas, noting that a farmers' market is also consistent with Lafayette's environmental goals.

"There is tremendous interest in local food - the 'eat local' people are the same 'shop local' people," said Steve Richard, Co-founder of Sustainable Lafayette, about the overlap of residents that prefer to eat fresh, local produce and also attended the Shop Lafayette First Thank You Party. "A trial run is a perfect way to get our feet wet."

Given its warm reception, the Lafayette Farmers' Market is expected to be approved at the next city council meeting on July 13. Check the Lamorinda Weekly website for an update at [www.lamorindaweekly.com](http://www.lamorindaweekly.com). See related story for merchants' reaction to the market on page 17.

Reach the reporter at: [cathy@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:cathy@lamorindaweekly.com)

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