

How to host a NEIGHBOURHOOD MARKET



What are neighbourhood markets?

Neighbourhood markets offer food and/or crafts for sale, in places like community centres, parks, strip malls or parking lots. They are usually seasonal and can run from monthly to weekly or just one time.

We often call them “pop-up” markets because these temporary markets don’t require expensive physical infrastructure. Everything can be set up and taken down the day of the market.

Benefits of neighbourhood markets

The biggest benefit is providing your neighbourhood with convenient access to fresh, local food or locally produced crafts. But there’s more!

Neighbourhood markets offer a unique social experience for neighbours to enjoy. Especially when combined with live music or other entertainment, neighbourhood markets create comfortable ways for neighbours to get to know each other and add to the rich fabric of neighbourhood life.

About this guide

We’ve put together all of the common tasks and approvals necessary to host a pop-up market and laid it out in a simple, step-by-step format.

Along with this guide, we also have a number of resources and templates to guide you through the process with ease, including: site evaluation checklist, market kit booking, volunteer roles and tips, checklist of daily duties, license application form, inventory template, Kitchener Market vendor profiles, public health forms and marketing templates. Just ask city staff when you’re ready to dive into the finer details.

Introducing the pop-up market kit

A major barrier to neighbourhood markets is the up-front cost of purchasing the equipment you need. To help you test the viability of your market, without purchasing all the expensive equipment, we’re providing a bookable pop-up market kit.

The kit has all the items you’ll need, including tents, tables, tablecloths, baskets, calculators, marketing materials and more.

Just book the kit in advance and pick it up at the Kitchener Market.

Who do I contact to get started?



City staff is here to help.

Lauren Burr
Neighbourhood Development Office
lovelyhood@kitchener.ca
519-741-2200 ext. HOOD (4663)

This information is available in alternative formats upon request.

Please call 519-741-2200 ext. 7083 or TTY 1-866-969-9994 for assistance.

How much will this cost?

It's hard to say exactly, as the size, scale and frequency of your market is up to you. What's really important to understand is that you are operating a taking on some financial risk to run a neighbourhood market that includes the buying and reselling of food.

In our experience working with farmers, they tell us that they are unlikely to recover their costs from setting up a booth at a neighbourhood market, as the volume sold isn't a lot. Connecting with local farmers to buy their produce to resell at your market is a better option. Accounting and inventory management templates are available to help!

What approvals do I need?

If your market is on city-owned land, you will need city staff to approve your proposed location. For markets on non-city-owned land, you will need to provide written approval from the landowners.

Markets selling food need a Pop-up Farmers' Market license from the city and Public Health approval from the Region of Waterloo.

Markets selling arts and crafts do not need a license from the city (and neither do the vendors themselves) as long as the vendors designed and made their own arts and crafts.

How long will this take to organize?

We recommend starting to plan your market about six months in advance of when you hope to host it. January is a great time to start for summer markets.

Some tasks require approvals, so keep in mind:

- If your market is on city-owned land, we need 4-6 weeks to approve the location
- It takes 2-3 weeks for your Pop-up Farmers' Market license to be processed
- Provide at least 45 business days for Public Health to process your application

The size and scale of your market is up to you, so it's hard to estimate how many hours it might take to plan your market. Of course, there will be more effort the first time around, but once you've hosted the market a few times, it gets easier.



10 steps to host a neighbourhood market

Getting started

1. Form a planning group and contact city staff

Bring together a group of three to five people who are eager to be involved and help plan your market. Together, identify a vision for your market and some key goals you hope to achieve. It's also a good idea to identify a main market coordinator who can help keep everything on track.

Contact our staff team to arrange a meeting where we'll explain this guide in detail, share additional resources and answer any questions you may have.

2. Decide when and where to host your market

Use our site evaluation checklist to evaluate options, like community centres, parks, closed roads, schools, not-for-profits, commercial areas, strip malls or parking lots. Residential properties, fire routes or hazardous lands are not permitted.

Choose a time and location where things are already happening, rather than convincing people to come to you. Join an existing event and attract customers by offering a unique social and local shopping experience. Avoid competition with other markets in Kitchener.

Share up to three locations with our team and we can help evaluate the suitability, especially for any city-owned locations.

Once you've decided, get permission from the land owner before going any further.

3. Build partnerships and support

To build enthusiasm and a base of potential customers, share your vision with groups like neighbourhood associations, schools, faith communities, sports teams and businesses – especially in the food sector.

This is also a time to recruit volunteers. You'll need a reliable volunteer base for things like setting up tables, selling produce and more. We have some tips to help but most important: hosting markets is physically demanding so make sure you have enough volunteers ready to do some heavy lifting.

Organizing logistics

4. Get start-up funds and set up a budget

Develop a budget of expected expenses and sales. Seek out start-up funds and remember to always have some extra cash flow on hand, in case sales aren't what you predict.

Our [Neighbourhood Matching Grant](#) could be a source of start-up funds. You can also seek donations from partners or businesses.

Set up a bank account and a basic accounting system. You'll also want to track inventory over time, to help you order wisely. We have templates to get you started!

5. Source your product

This is the fun part – choosing all the delicious food to sell! Keep in mind the tastes of your potential customers and the demographics of the neighbourhood. What's the simplest choice? Order from our Kitchener Market vendors! They are public health approved and we provide contact information to make it easy to form a working relationship with your farmer supplier.

Fruits, vegetables and flowers have the simplest public health requirements. Baked goods, preserves, honey, maple syrup and prepackaged snacks are more involved. Meats, cheeses and eggs require strict protocols, refrigeration and inventory challenges. This might not be the best choice if you're just starting out.

For craft markets, you will likely invite vendors to set up booths to sell their product, rather than purchasing and reselling product yourself.

6. Take care of the paperwork

Insurance will protect you, just in case. If you're already a business or not-for-profit – or partnering with one – you may already have coverage. Contact your insurance provider to find out, or ask city staff for assistance.

For public health, complete the [Farmers' Market Application Form](#) and follow its instructions. Lastly, complete an application for a Pop-up Farmers' Market license and submit to city staff.

7. Book the pop-up market kit

The kit is stored at the Kitchener Market. Contact our team to reserve and arrange pickup. Keep in mind you will need a large vehicle to transport the equipment.

Getting the market ready

8. Plan your market day

Use our checklist of daily duties to create a plan of who does what on market day. Create clear roles for everyone, through volunteer descriptions and training.

This is also a good time to decide what to do with leftover product that you might not sell. You could re-sell it to local businesses, sell at discounted rates the day after, store for next week (talking root vegetables here!), donate to a local food bank or simply compost it.

9. Promote the market

Options include advertising, social media and flyers or posters around your 'hood. Leverage your personal networks to encourage others to help you spread the word. We have some marketing templates to help.

10. Run the market

Set things up. Greet your customers. Have fun! Don't forget to take pictures and share on social media – using #lovelyhood!

After the market finishes up, wrap-up by:

- Taking down equipment and cleaning up
- Thanking your volunteers – a lot!
- Completing financial accounting and analyzing how your sales went so you know what to order for next time
- Returning the pop-up kit
- Reflecting on how everything went and sharing what you learned.

Neighbourhood markets



The **Highland-Stirling Neighbourhood Market** runs from June to August on every Wednesday, 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., at the Mill Courtland Community Centre. It is hosted by a dedicated group of volunteers with the Highland Stirling Community Group.



The **Belmont Local Food Market** sets up its produce stands in the middle of Belmont Village on Tuesdays, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the summer months. Along with fresh produce, they often sell baked goods from the local restaurants, bakeries and stores.

Kitchener Market



The Kitchener Market is more than just a building. It brings people together. It has always been an icon for fresh, local food. Now, an urban central market, it's become a place where communities connect, and where businesses launch.

The Kitchener Market is open every Saturday from 7 a.m. - 2 p.m., with more than 70 vendors offering fresh produce, meats and cheeses, flowers, baked goods and more. Plus, the International Food Court is open every Tuesday – Saturday for breakfast and lunch.

We want to use our expertise in the local food sector to help weave a vibrant food culture throughout Kitchener's neighbourhoods.

Visit kitchenermarket.ca.