

FRESH IDEAS: POP-UPS AND PLANNING FOR THE CITY OF CALGARY FARM STAND PROGRAM



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Stephanie Cantlay | School of Urban and Regional Planning

Direct food distribution such as farmers markets, farm stands, and u-pick stands are alternatives to conventional food models like grocery store chains. The City of Calgary's Farm Stand Program aims to provide places, in the form of pop-up stands, to sell fruit and vegetables to simultaneously support local farmers and offer improved resident access to healthy food options. This report assesses and evaluates the successes and challenges of program implementation and illuminates the role of municipal governments in direct food distribution. By using a case study methodology, research questions are centred around a single case and answered through spatial analysis, document analysis and key informant interviews.

Why and for what purpose was the Farm Stand Program created in Calgary?

- The Farm Stand Program's purpose is to support farmers and residents by bringing more locally grown food into communities across Calgary. Its objectives are to promote food system resiliency, bolster the local agriculture economy, and improve food access.
- The purpose and objectives are strongly influenced by internal municipal plans like imagineCALGARY and CalgaryEATS!

How has the Farm Stand Program been implemented in Calgary in terms of locations, scope, and objectives?

- Municipal plans and policies permit the Farm Stand Program on city-owned property including CTrain stations, community associations, and other community facilities.
- Farm stands operate in all four quadrants of Calgary, with a large proportion concentrated in the Northwest quadrant.
- Farm stands create opportunities for small-scale local and regional producers to sell vegetables and provides an alternative for residents to purchase healthy food options.

What challenges and strengths have characterized the implementation of the Farm Stand Program in Calgary?

- Participation from local, small-scale farmers and producers facilitates product diversity and consistency across stands. However, there are not enough producers to meet program demand.
- Stands must be in high-pedestrian volume locations and placed strategically to encourage customers to stop and shop.
- Consistent advertising and marketing are required to promote stands and ensure vendors have a consistent customer base.
- The program is adaptable, and the City is willing to make changes to meet the needs of vendors and improve access for residents, however these changes take time to implement.

To what extent is the Farm Stand Program accessible to socioeconomically deprived communities?

- The program's main goal is to improve food security by improving resiliency and promoting local and sustainable produce.
- Embedding food insecurity in its objectives could enhance program inclusivity. The program has attempted to reduce economic barriers through the introduction of more affordable vendors and locating in more deprived neighbourhoods, particularly in terms of ethnocultural composition and residential instability. However, at present, there is a higher concentration of farm stands in less deprived neighbourhoods.

The main recommendations that emerged from this research are as follows:

1. A Farm Stand Program requires Food Systems Planners for **coordination**.
2. **Small-scale producers** are best suited to a Farm Stand Program due to the pop-up nature of the farm stands and educational programming opportunities.
3. A Farm Stand Program can be achieved through **zoning** that permits direct food distribution.
4. A Farm Stand Program must be **visible** and stands should be set up on properties where there are already gatherings of people
5. A Farm Stand Program should be **consistent** both in terms of scheduling as well as the types of products offered across vendors and stands.
6. A Farm Stand Program requires **advertising** for customers to know about the program, as well as where and when a farm stand near them is operating.
7. A Farm Stand Program should be **flexible** where stands can be implemented quickly and adjusted based on feedback.
8. A Farm Stand Program should be **equitable** where all residents have affordability and proximity access opportunities.