
The Houston Downtown Management District

Market Square Park Farmers Market Producer Selection

-REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL-

Houston Downtown Management District
1221 McKinney Suite 4250
Houston, TX 77010

OUR VISION FOR DOWNTOWN HOUSTON

At the intersection of global commerce and local culture, Downtown is Houston's heart of opportunity, excitement, and joy.

OUR SHARED MISSION

Champion and enhance Downtown Houston as a connected and thriving place for everyone.

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Farmers Market Producer RFP - Key Data

Farmers Market Location:

Market Square Park
Houston Downtown Management District
301 Milam Street
Houston, TX 77002

Written Proposal Recipient:

RFP@DowntownHouston.org
SUBJECT LINE: Farmers Market RFP

Digital Proposals Only (PDF)

Contact Information for Questions:

RFP@DowntownHouston.org
SUBJECT LINE: Farmers Market RFP

Selection Process + Project Schedule:

RFP Issued	Friday, Feb. 2, 2024
Site visit for Prospective Market Producers 1:30 - 2:30 pm	Thursday, Feb. 15, 2024
Questions due from Prospective Market Producers 5:00 pm	Friday, Feb. 16, 2024
Final addenda and responses to questions posted by 12:00 Noon	Tuesday, Feb. 20, 2024
Proposals due 12:00 Noon	Friday, Feb. 23, 2024
Notification & Vendor Negotiation	Monday, Feb. 26, 2024

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1. Invitation to Submit Proposal

A. Invitation

1. You and your team are invited to submit a proposal to produce a seasonal, weekly farmers market, including recruiting farmers /vendors, obtaining City

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of Houston permitting for the farmers market at Market Square Park (“the Park”) in Houston’s historic and bustling Downtown north-side.

2. The Park is operated and maintained by the Houston Downtown Management District (HDMD or “the Downtown District”). Programs and events in the Park are managed directly by the HDMD and through third-party Agreements and range from movies and music, bingo, exercise classes, family fun and games, night markets, and our seasonal Saturday Farmers Market.
3. This is a unique service opportunity for a provider to participate in the Park’s amenities and to align with, and contribute to, HDMD’s vision of Downtown as Houston’s heart of opportunity, excitement and joy, a cherished place at the intersection of global commerce and local culture.
4. With this exciting opportunity, the Downtown District looks to elevate both the function and experience of the Park, strengthen community bonds among Downtown residents, and create a draw for visitors from nearby neighborhoods and the greater Houston region.
5. The Park is a critical part of Houston’s Downtown vibe, and the Downtown District seeks a farmers market Producer who will elevate the Park as a destination and anchor for Downtown’s Historic District. The provider will advance farmers market operations for the Park’s patrons and contribute to positive experiences in Downtown. The Downtown District currently assigns a Park attendant and a Public Safety Guide between the hours of 7:00 am and 11:00 pm daily to support the Park experience and overall maintenance.
6. The Park attracts a range of clientele, from passersby looking for a green, urban oasis, to attendees of activations provided by the Downtown District, to residents who visit for dog parks, to those seeking a place for a meal, snack, or beverage in a shaded outdoor setting. The Park also serves as a meeting locale for area workers and friend gatherings. Over the past twelve months, the Park has averaged 4,700 visitors per week. Users are drawn to the Park’s programmed events, food offerings, and historic urban ambiance.
7. The Park’s location, size, amenities, and the Downtown District-led programming ensure this is a place to celebrate and enjoy Downtown’s urban ambiance and diversity.
8. The Park was donated by Houston’s founders, the Allens, in 1854 and was the original open-air fish and produce market, as well as the location of the first City Hall. It has been a community gathering place and heart of Downtown for almost 170 years.

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B. Proposal Submission

1. All Proposals must be received by email on or before Friday, Feb. 23, 2024, by **12:00 noon**. Proposals and modifications received after this deadline will not be considered.
2. Candidates must respond and adequately answer all requested informational components. Omissions, inaccuracies, or misstatements could result in the disqualification of your proposal.
3. The Downtown District shall be the sole owner of all submitted proposal packages. Candidate materials will not be returned.
4. Expenses incurred in the preparation, development, and submission of any proposals in response to this RFP shall be the sole responsibility of the interested candidates.
5. The Downtown District reserves the right to reject any of the Proposals without cause and at its sole discretion.

C. Additional Information

1. A tour of the Park and facilities for prospective Producers will be conducted on Thursday, Feb. 15, 2024 from 1:30 - 2:30 p.m. Prospective Producers are also welcome to visit the Park during its operating hours from 7 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.
2. Questions relating to this RFP and the process should be directed *in email only* to RFP@DowntownHouston.org with the subject line: Farmers Market RFP. Questions from Prospective Market Producers are due by 5:00 p.m. on Friday Feb. 16, 2024.
3. A written response to all questions received will be made available to interested parties and posted on posted to www.downtowndistrict.org/procurement-rfp-opportunities/ on Tuesday, Feb. 20th, 2024 at 12:00 p.m. noon.

End of Invitation to Submit Proposal

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2. Overview of Downtown Market Square Park

A. Profile of Park and Park Visitors

The Historic District's original town center, Market Square Park remains a destination for those who live, work, and visit Downtown Houston. Users of the Park include passersby, participants in programming and events spearheaded by the Downtown District (e.g., Movies Under the Stars, work out classes), residents of residential towers immediately adjacent to the Park: Market Square Tower, Aris, Brava, as well as residents of condominiums and apartments in Downtown neighborhood, and most recently, the seasonal Saturday Market Square Park Farmers Market, led by the Downtown District.



Example use of Park space.

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Example of Fall 2023 Farmers Market Pilot.

3. Description of Services and Deliverables

A. Aspirational Goals of this RFP

1. Seek a Producer to work collaboratively with Downtown District staff to activate Market Square Park with a successful Saturday morning Farmers Market in the Spring and Fall.
2. Seek a Market Producer who is recognized as a leader in providing access to healthy, locally-grown and made organic foods, as well as health and beauty, and homecare products.
3. In as much as possible, offer Park patrons and Downtown residents, workers, and visitors an experience that contributes to *our mission to champion and enhance Downtown Houston as a connected and thriving place for everyone.*

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4. Seek a Producer that is open to helping shepherd the Park toward a new level of activation, recognition, and appreciation.
5. Seek a committed partner willing to participate in community outreach and cultivation of a loyal following through marketing and media placements generated by Downtown District.

End of Description of Services

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4. The Downtown District's Responsibilities

The Downtown District shall assume the following responsibilities:

- A. Host the Farmers Market in Historic Market Square Park, with ample shade, turf, onsite security, and staff support, as well as a built-in customer base of Downtown residents.
- B. Staffing support, including a designated Downtown Houston+ team member to coordinate vendor communications:
 - **Prior to market opening:** confirm vendor and booth assignments. Update market layout weekly with booth assignments.
 - **During market days:**
 - Ensure vendors have parking permits and designated areas for unloading and loading.
 - Communicate with vendors about parking in garage.
 - Ensure vendors set up in their assigned booths.
 - If complimentary coffee and water are provided, distribute vouchers / water bottles to vendors.
 - Ensure staff responsible for attendance count is ready and records attendance hourly.
 - Troubleshoot any issues that arise with vendors, working with Producer staff and other team members onsite to resolve as needed.
 - Distribute parking vouchers and troubleshoot any other issues requiring additional support from security or park staff.
- C. Maintain Market Square Park lawn, dog parks, kiosk area and seating areas. This includes trash pickup and pet waste clean-up.
- D. Provide Downtown Public Safety Guides, Park Attendant, off-duty Houston Police Dept. Officers and S.E.A.L. security presence.
- E. Provide up to 30 10'x10' tents and 6' tables for booths and set up and tear down tents and table at no cost to the market vendors.
- F. Ensure complimentary on-street parking is available for vendor unloading and loading, provide parking permits for bagged meters during specified times for unloading and loading, and provide parking vouchers for complimentary off-street parking during market operations.
- G. Marketing support: paid and earned media outreach with visibility on web and social media outlets with hundreds of thousands of visitors and followers, PR campaign, signage and outreach to neighboring residential high-rise buildings and office towers.

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- H. Hire, at its own expense, live music, and other activations to boost attendance, extend visitor dwell times, and create a positive, community-building atmosphere.

End of The Downtown District's Responsibilities

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5. Farmers Market Producer's Responsibilities

The Market Square Park Farmers Market Producer shall assume the following responsibilities:

- A. The Producer will be responsible for fulfilling its responsibilities for **9 markets held in the Spring**: March 30, 2024, April 6, 2024, April 13, 2024, April 20, 2024, April 27, 2024, May 4, 2024, May 11, 2024, May 18, 2024, May 25, 2024, and **12 markets in the Fall**: September 7, 2024, September 14, 2024, September 21, 2024, September 21, 2024, September 28, 2024, October 5, 2024, October 12, 2024, October 19, 2024, October 26, 2024, November 2, 2024, November 9, 2024, and November 16, 2024, from the hours of 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
- B. The Producer shall be responsible for Farmer & Vendor outreach, recruiting and coordination.
- C. The Producer will be responsible for ensuring the Farmers & Vendors it provides to the Market Square Park Farmers Market will maintain a clean, professional environment and abide by all Park rules.
- D. The Producer will ensure all Farmers & Vendors it provides will have any permits or licenses required for them to sell their items in a City of Houston public Park.
- E. The Producer will participate as much as reasonably able in press interviews and marketing opportunities the District generates to promote the Farmers Market—such as, but not limited to: cooking classes or sampling opportunities.
- F. The Producer will support the success of the Market Square Park Farmers Market raising awareness among its existing community of Farmers, Vendors & Patrons about the Market Square Park Farmers Market.
- G. If it is certified by City of Houston as a Minority Business Enterprise (MBE), it will abide by all rules and regulations governing that certification.
- H. The Producer shall be responsible for all health permitting necessary for operation of a Farmers Market.
- I. The Farmers Market Producer will be responsible for acceptance of the Loan Star Card EFT payment system to serve customers participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) food assistance benefits program.
- J. The Market Producer will be responsible for providing a minimum of 25 Vendors and cannot exceed 40 Vendors without prior approval of Downtown District. The Producer will maintain a balance of 75% Food / 25% other vendors—with the non-food vendors being within the Acceptable Vendor Categories as follows:

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Acceptable Vendor Categories include:

Agricultural Producer:

Produce that has been grown on the producer's land (including leased land) located within 150 miles of the market attended. Should certain agricultural products not be available within that distance, the Market Producer will be responsible for procuring those items from sustainable Texas farms.

Examples of such agricultural products may include but are not limited to fruit such as citrus, apples, cherries, and vegetables such as tomatoes, onions, and others that are considered staples and which are popular, but which may not always be available within that distance.

Additionally, should any items such as onions, potatoes, and other vegetable staples not be available seasonally, those items will be procured from a certified organic source and labeled as "Non-local organic".

Other items such as bananas, coffee, other popular tropical fruits will be labeled as "Non-local organic" as well.

Meat (excepting fish, fowl and feral animals), that is from animals born and bred on the producers' land (including leased land) and processed at a USDA inspected facility as well as processed meat products such as bacon, jerky and sausage, or products such as eggs, cheese, yogurt, honey, soap or yarn from these animals.

Foraged and wild-crafted items where the producer responsibly wild harvests a raw agricultural product from their own land, leased-land or public land (where foraging is allowed) and packages the item(s) with minimal additional ingredients. Example products include yaupon tea, chile pequin, henbit or ramps.

All agricultural producers must maintain least 50% of products/items sold at market comprising their own agricultural products to maintain this vendor category. Examples: Farmers, Ranchers, Beekeepers, Foragers

Value-Added:

Culinary products from any operation that has changed the form, flavor, blend and/or the substance of raw products using as many market products as available, preference given to those vendors who use local products.

Organic ingredients must be incorporated when available. Commercial kitchen must be within 150 miles of the market attended.

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Value Added vendors operate under a Class A or B City of Houston Market Permit or as Cottage food producers. Examples: Salsa, Hummus, Cider, Dog Food & Treats, Baked Goods, Herbal products

Prepared Food:

Vendors offering freshly made food and drinks available for sale and immediate consumption on-site at the Market Square Park Farmers Market.

These products may be hot or cold ready-to-eat foods or drinks under a Class B City of Houston Farmers' Market Health Department permit. Preference given to those vendors who use local products, and \ as many market products as available.

Organic ingredients must be incorporated when available. The commercial kitchen must be located within 150 miles of the market attended. Must be inspected by the health inspector and have the health inspector permit present at every market. Examples: Waffles, Brisket, Juices.

Artisan:

Materials from outside the area of the farmers' market when integrated with other local products or created by a local artisan located within 150 miles of the market attended.

Examples: Beauty, skincare, or homecare products--NO JEWELRY OR CRAFT VENDORS

K. The Farmers Market Producer will provide a weekly report on each individual Farmer's & Vendor's dollar sales and transaction volume no later than the Wednesday following each week's market.

End of The Farmers Market Producer's Responsibilities

6. Terms and Conditions

Within the proposal, candidates shall address the following key points. Additional points may be included at the candidate's discretion.

A. Overview

1. Producer shall be granted the exclusive right and privilege to provide Farmers & Vendors to the Market Square Park Farmers Market for the term of this agreement.
2. Producer shall coordinate activities with the Downtown District or its designee.

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B. Use of Facilities

1. The Park's foodservice facilities (e.g., kiosk) shall not be used by Farmers Market Producer or Farmers or Vendors it recruits to prepare and sell food items for any off-premises operation, purpose, or event not related to Market Square Park.
2. The foodservice facilities (e.g., kiosk) may, depending on availability and mutual agreement between the Farmers Market Producer and Downtown District, be used for temporary activations—chef demonstrations, cooking classes, etc. during the market's operation.
3. The Producer will be responsible for ensuring its vendors have secured and maintain any required permits and comply with any other health dept. requirements for food preparation or sampling conducted by its Farmers & Vendors in the Park during the market.
4. Producer shall bear the expense for repair or replacement of property, furnishings or equipment damaged or destroyed because of Producer's acts/omissions or those of its employees or suppliers.

C. Security & Conduct

1. Producer and its employees and vendors shall comply with all Downtown District's rules and regulations governing access and conduct at the Park.

D. Term of Agreement Period

1. The commencement date of the Agreement will be negotiated with the selected Producer.
2. The Agreement shall be for a one-year term consisting of Spring and Fall Markets, or a greater period to be agreed upon.

F. Identity

1. The Downtown District owns the branding and name of the Market Square Park Farmers Market.

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G. Texas Law

1. The executed Agreement shall be governed and construed according to the laws of the State of Texas and is performable in Harris County, Texas.
2. Producer shall always comply with all applicable laws, rules, and ordinances.

H. Permits and Licenses

1. Producer shall, at its sole cost and expense, obtain and keep in force any/all permits and licenses, including alcoholic beverage permits, required for the execution of the Agreement and performance of its duties there under.
2. Producer will be responsible for all necessary health permitting.

End of Terms and Conditions

7. Proposal Requirements

A. Confidentiality

1. Sensitive information provided by candidates, and so identified by the candidate, shall be held in confidence by the Downtown District; provided, however, that the Downtown District shall not have any liability to candidate for any failure to keep such sensitive information confidential under any applicable Open Records Act request.

B. Completion

1. The proposal shall be prepared in accordance with the instructions provided in this RFP. Substantial deviation from the required format or incomplete information may result in the disqualification of the proposal.

C. Proposal Organization

1. Without exception, proposals shall include each of the sections described herein.

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2. Written portions of proposals shall be organized in the following order. Candidates wishing to provide additional text/information are invited to insert such information after the last required section.
 - a. Narrative discussing the following:
 - i. How your farmers market offering will enhance the experience of those using the Park;
 - ii. Why you want to associate your brand with the Park and with Downtown Houston;
 - iii. What success looks like for you as the farmers market Producer within the boundaries of the Park;
 - iv. How your farmers market offering may complement other food and beverage businesses immediately adjacent to the Park;
 - v. How your brand remains distinctive should the District incorporate mobile foodservice vendors on the Park's edges during events and as a matter of course.
 - b. Proposed staffing levels and job descriptions for the Producer's team.
 - c. Evidence of community and/or Downtown involvement relative to other projects. Examples may include a) board participation by senior leadership, b) corporate sponsorship or participation in charitable and civic activities or c) in-kind services provided to civic, educational, or social organizations, d) other marketing related activities.
 - d. Letters of reference from three long-term trade entities (vendors, suppliers, clients, and/or collaborators).

D. Financial and Accounting

1. Candidate's proposal shall include outline of recommended accounting/bookkeeping policies, procedures, and reporting schedules of Producer's (Farmers & Vendors) sales and transactions. Full backup documentation may be requested later. Operator will be responsible for sales taxes for all farmers market operations.

E. Criteria for Contract Selection

1. The Downtown District shall examine each proposal according to a set of objective and subjective criteria. Consideration will be given to:

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- a. Proposal's responsiveness to the area offerings and description of how the Producer will benefit the customer profile of the Park.
 - b. Candidates' experience with comparable farmers market operations, and its ability to demonstrate familiarity with / brand recognition in the organic, sustainable, locally grown food community in Houston.
 - c. Candidates' ability to leverage existing farmer and vendor relationships, as well as its own profile in the Houston community, to enhance the brand recognition and acceptance of the Market Square Park Farmers Market.
 - d. Proposed agreement's terms and conditions.
2. All proposals meeting both *the intent, aspirations, content, and deadlines* of this request for proposal shall be considered for award.
 3. Proposals shall be evaluated on a variety of quantitative and qualitative criteria, including proposal completeness, proposed financial arrangements, and proposed operations structure and strategy.
 4. Proposals will be reviewed and evaluated by a Downtown District review committee. The findings and recommendations of the evaluation and selection committee will be presented to the Downtown District Board for approval on March 7, 2024.

F. Award of the Right to Negotiate Final Agreement

1. The Downtown District reserves the right to accept or reject any proposal without cause. The Right to Negotiate the Final Agreement with the Downtown District will be awarded to the candidate determined to be the best suited and qualified to achieve the goals of the Market Square Park Farmers Market.
2. The Downtown District may award an agreement based on initial offers received without a discussion of such offers. Therefore, initial offers should be submitted to the Downtown District on the most favorable terms. Terms and provisions of the proposal must be complete, clear, and accurate.

G. Late Proposals

1. Proposals received by the Downtown District after the submission deadline shall be considered null and void and summarily rejected. The Downtown District shall not be responsible for lateness or non-delivery of email.

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H. Alterations

1. Proposals shall not be altered or amended after the submission deadline.

I. Addenda

1. Any interpretations, corrections, or changes to this request for proposal shall be made by addenda, issued by the Downtown District, and placed on the Downtown District's website at <https://downtownhouston.org/do-business/procurement-rfp> by 12:00 noon on Tuesday, Feb. 20th, 2024.

End of Proposal Requirements