



Downtown Becomes a ReMARKETable
Destination for Food Shoppers

MARKET

THE MARKETABLE
MARKET

By Kelly Moore

WHILE THE CONVENIENCE OF THE SUPERMARKET LURES AMERICANS AWAY FROM SUPPORTING THE HEALTH OF THE UNITED STATES ECONOMY, LEADING DES MOINES INNOVATORS ARE ATTEMPTING TO MEET EASE AND ACCESSIBILITY WITH STANDARD SHOPPING IN THE LOCAL MARKET DISTRICT. WHILE SUPERMARKETS OFFER SIMPLICITY, THEY DO NOT OFFER GOURMET QUALITY, INTERNATIONAL CHOICE, AND IN THE LONG RUN, CONTRIBUTION TO OUR COUNTRY'S WEALTH. BUT WHAT EXACTLY IS A "MARKET," AND WHAT WILL THEY CONTRIBUTE TO THE CITY?

The average Farmers' Market enthusiast describes a model familiar to Des Moines—vendors selling local produce, cut flowers and crafted arts from E-Z Up-sheltered tailgates.

The leading innovators of Des Moines's downtown markets are not attempting to line themselves with the overwrought demand of overly accessible food brands. The cultured minds behind these markets are not attempting to toss their chef's toque in the ring to propose a launch of another "supermarket." Rather, they're targeting a slightly higher-browed set, offering true quality to a City ripe with global potential.

Marcus Walsh, who opened The Village Market alongside partners Tom Howard and Steve Logsdon, describes the market as "convenience in the heart of the East Village." Walsh acknowledges that access to staple groceries is a major desire of most downtown dwellers—as evidenced by a quick read-through of blogs posted on Gateway Market's Web site. According to Walsh, the East 5th Street store will sell everything from toiletries and frozen foods to boutique wines and eventually house a juice bar for trendy smoothie drinkers.

Walsh states, "We are looking to create a place to get you through the week so you don't have to make that extra trip to the grocery store."

Paul Rottenberg of Gateway Market, an 18,000 sq. ft. European-style market at the corner of Woodland Avenue and Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway, paints a picture of the Des Moines' market as a European bazaar hosting everything from fresh produce to local artisan breads and pastries. "Our customers are folks interested in expanding their horizons in great food and wine."

Jeff Bruning, co-owner of the Riverbend Trading Company located in the former Plush nightclub building on Court Avenue, views the market as a daily stop for hungry downtown inhabitants buzzing along Court Avenue. "We hope to become the everyday grocery store for folks living downtown." However, Bruning aims to bring an air of sophistication to the term "grocery store." While he acknowledges it will be a work-in-progress, Bruning promises "the most unique wine offering in the city, and state."

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When asked if Riverbend Trading Company will be a competitor of Gateway Market, Rottenberg said, "We believe there is enough demand for fresh, quality products in the metro for both of us."

Location plays a major factor in the market's success. Rottenberg reports, "According to statistics from the Greater Des Moines Partnership and the Food Marketing Institute, households within a three-mile radius of Gateway Market spent \$203 million on groceries last year. Additionally, 35 to 40,000 commuters drive by our convenient location each day."

The question is, just how many markets - especially specialty groceries - can downtown Des Moines support? Advocates of the trading post boom point to statistics that suggest survival is not only possible, but imminent.

In recent CORE interviews, the downtown neighborhood is all in favor. For one, Isobel Osius, member of the Downtown Neighborhood Association and a Water Street Brownstones resident says she will continue to make trips to the market. "I love to be able to walk and pick something up for dinner, or make a weekly trip for items I currently run all over town for."

Will the new downtown groceries promising convenient, daily access to fresh, local products threaten the success of the Downtown Farmers' Market?

Kelly Foss, director of events for the Downtown Community Alliance says, "Absolutely not!" Foss explains that Farmers' Market customers are not only those living downtown, or even in Des Moines. "They are people willing to travel in pursuit of delicious food."

While each of the new groceries plans to carry products made by Farmers' Market vendors, Foss believes the added availability of imported, gourmet, and quality food will only stimulate interest in the Farmers' Market. Similarly, she anticipates, the Farmers' Market vendors will create a buzz and competition for the groceries.

"Farmers' Market vendors are smart to be offering their products in both places," said Foss. The Market couldn't agree more.

core





find it!

Gateway Market

2002 Woodland Avenue
Des Moines, IA
515.243.1754
Monday through Friday
6 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Saturday and Sunday
8 a.m. to 9 p.m.
www.gatewaymarket.com

Village Market

325 East Locust
Des Moines, IA
Monday through Saturday
7:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.;
Sunday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Riverbend Trading Co.

202 Court Avenue
Des Moines, IA
515.286.4950

Downtown Farmers Market

May 12 through October 27
Historic Court Avenue District
Every Saturday from 7 a.m.
to Noon
www.knowdowntown.com/events/farmersmarket/