

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New Structures Rising Up at Winter Farmers Markets Across Massachusetts

Locally sourced & fabricated market stalls to provide a new selling & shopping experience for vendors and shoppers

WALTHAM, MA (updated on Feb 12, 2021) - Mass Farmers Markets is proud to launch the unveiling and installation of 10 wooden, winterized market stalls at five winter farmers market sites across the state beginning on February 11, 2021, as part of its 2021 Winter Farmers Market Initiative. These stalls will be the first of its kind in Massachusetts, with hopes for more to come in later months of 2021.



The market stalls have been six-months in the making. Motivated by the heightened food insecurity rates across Massachusetts due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Edith Murnane, Executive Director of Mass Farmers Markets, set out to find a solution to keep farmers markets open as critical food access points for SNAP-eligible individuals and families this winter. In previous years, there were only 40 or so farmers markets open during the winter, compared to 200+ farmers markets during the summer.

“The food-insecurity rate in Massachusetts has increased 53% since before the pandemic, according to Feeding America. One in seven people are expected to not have access to enough food for three healthy meals a day, and one in five children in Massachusetts now live in food-insecure households, an increase of 81% over pre-COVID-19 food-insecurity levels. The jobless rate in Massachusetts also hit 16.1% last month, the highest in the country.” - Boston Herald, [“Food insecurity surges with unemployment in Massachusetts.”](#) Aug 29, 2020, by Marie Szaniszlo.

Keeping farmers markets open also means keeping marketplaces open for local growers, ranchers and fishermen to do business and stay afloat during the difficult economy. Farm vendors are typically in an older age bracket and more at risk of being infected with COVID-19. Many have reduced their market attendance in order to minimize their risk, prioritizing larger markets that are more profitable, leaving smaller markets in smaller communities without much fresh produce options.

Inspired by the famous Christmas markets in Europe, Murnane and a team of local professionals - designers, architects, engineers, green builders and planners - set out to devise a solution that would create a hospitable outdoor vending environment at farmers markets. The team, made up of Sarah Howard, LEED AP and Steven Nutter, AICP of *Place Practice* in Somerville, MA; Rick Williams and Phil Lemarche of *Exhibit Technology* in Leominster, MA; and Arick Dyrda, a military veteran and owner of *Design Build Boston*, created a set of modular market stalls that can be set up at the beginning of the winter season and easily disassembled in early spring for storage. Most importantly, all materials and fabrications are locally sourced and produced to invest back into the local economy.

The initial Pilot Phase of the project has received funding from the state in Governor Baker's FY2021 budget and is sponsored by House Representative Liz Malia representing 11th Suffolk District, and State Senator Becca Rauch representing Norfolk, Bristol and Middlesex Counties. The funding was critical to provide the market stalls at no cost to the six markets. While farmers markets in Massachusetts are deemed essential, they are often volunteer-run and lack funding for infrastructure purchases, especially when a systemic crisis arises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This important investment in our local food system infrastructure will provide for greater food access, security, and resiliency in Massachusetts.

In Phase 2, the team is working to expand the program to municipalities throughout the state, especially Gateway Cities. To make this a reality, the team is actively seeking funders, sponsors and partners to contribute to and help build a more resilient regional food system.

The five sites slated for the unveiling and launch of the market stalls in 2021 include:

- Dorchester Winter Farmers Market - Thursday, Feb 11, 2021
- Wayland Winter Farmers Market - Saturday, Feb 13, 2021
- Orleans Farmers Market - Saturday, Feb 20, 2021 (to be confirmed)
- Central Square Farmers Market (Cambridge) - Monday, March 1, 2021
- Springfield Farmers Market - To be determined

****Due to current MA COVID-19 gathering restrictions, the launch events are invitees only. Please wear a mask & keep 6 ft social distance.**

More details of the 2021 Winter Farmers Market Initiative and launch sites/dates are available at <http://massfarmersmarkets.org/2021winterinitiative/mediabrief>

Farmers markets interested in Phase 2 should complete an inquiry form at wintermarketstalls.com

Sponsors interested in partnering with the Winter Farmers Market Initiative team should email sponsor@massfarmersmarkets.org

MASS FARMERS MARKETS / Waltham, MA

<http://massfarmersmarkets.org>

Edith Murnane, Executive Director

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Mass Farmers Markets (MFM) is a 501(c)(3) charitable non-profit organization that partners with farmers, consumers, and communities across the state to improve the health of individuals, strengthen community vitality, and enhance local farm viability. The organization was founded in 1978 with a partnership between the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, the University of Massachusetts Extension Service, and farmers from across the state. In addition, the organization directly runs three markets, in Copley Square, Central Square, and Davis Square.

Executive Director Edith Murnane leads a team of 10 at MFM using her deep expertise in developing food systems that support farmers, food businesses and all enterprises along the food chain while creating food access for Massachusetts residents. Previously as part of Mayor Menino's administration, Edith established the Office of Food Initiatives, launching the Micro Urban Farming Initiative, the Urban Agriculture Re-zoning work, the Restaurant Roadmap, the Food Truck Initiative, and the Food System Resiliency Initiative.

PLACE PRACTICE / Somerville, MA

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Sarah Howard & Steven Nutter

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MFM is working closely with Place Practice consultants Sarah Howard, LEED AP and Steven Nutter, AICP to coordinate project delivery. Howard and Nutter have over 40 years combined experience helping communities, municipalities and non-profits conceptualize, develop, and deliver needed built environment projects, from affordable housing and heritage trails to net-zero energy homes and community farm infrastructures.

EXHIBIT TECHNOLOGY / Leominster, MA

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With over 55 years of collective experience in the industry, Exhibit Technology is a leading source of fabricated custom exhibit and millwork. They work directly with design firms, general contractors, retailers, architects, exhibit companies and event planners to take ideas and develop them into fabricated products. Their manufacturing facility is well equipped to produce projects from one of a kind to roll-outs for multiple locations.

DESIGN BUILD BOSTON / Somerville, MA

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A veteran and minority-owned and operated company, owner Arick Dyrdal brings a commitment to community and leads a team with a focus on building net-zero, multi-unit contemporary developments, especially those involving modular construction. He holds an Unrestricted Construction Supervisor License and Home Improvement Contractor License, is Passive House Certified, and is in the process of taking his Registered Architect exams.

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