

WITHROW PARK  
**FARMERS'**  
**MARKET**



**2024 Season Report**

# End of Season Reflections

Accessibility has been a key guiding point for us since we started planning for this farmers market two decades ago, as we were driven by wanting to make fresh, healthy organic produce accessible to city people. Our striving for accessibility extends to vendors: our policies and practices try to make the market's cost accessible to as many vendors as possible, including those who are just starting out.

We understand that achieving our key goal of strengthening community connection requires such intentional efforts around accessibility. And that our efforts must continue. We're pleased that this season we enhanced accessibility for customers and volunteers in a few ways:

- We ran a coupon program for seniors, to make it easier for local seniors to come to the market to purchase food and socialize with neighbours

- We made some operational changes to enhance accessibility for volunteers
- We hired an external accessibility consulting firm to review our policies and procedures and recommend improvements, which we will be implementing

We are committed to continuing to learn and act to make the market accessible, inclusive, welcoming and joyful for all. We welcome your thoughts on our progress.

With thanks for the vendors, volunteers, community members and customers who help make us better.

- Estelle Taylor, Board Chair





## 2024 – Images from the Market



# A Snapshot of our Accomplishments in 2024



The Market generates almost half a million dollars in local economic activity benefiting our farmers, prepared food vendors and the local community.



The Market welcomed 20 new vendors in the 2024 season.



Our dedicated volunteers logged almost 970 hours over the Market season.



Over 87 full or part-time small farms, prepared food vendors or artisans appeared at the Market this season.



# Feedback from the Community

"Withrow Market is the best market ever. The sense of community is huge and the support from volunteers, staff, neighbours and other vendors has been like a family."

- Stacey, *Live on Chocolate*

"I love going to the market as my regular Saturday morning routine. Love the fresh produce, friendly faces and lively music."

- Pia, *regular customer*

"I so enjoyed helping at the Market every week. So great getting to know the vendors and being part of the community."

- Yan, *volunteer*

"My favourite place...many great memories growing up."

- Dusty Rose *via Facebook*

"I'm so grateful for the support you've shown my small business! My sincere gratitude to the Withrow Park Farmers' Market team - every weekend you put on such an engaging, inclusive and fun event!!"

- Diana, *Rueneau*

"I love coming to the Market, to get up early and interact with people. A great market with all the activities - swaps, recycling, etc. Great way to start the weekend."

-Pauline, *coming since the Market began*



# 2024 Market Events

## Swaps

- ✓ June 15 - Clothing
- ✓ July 20 - Kitchen Things
- ✓ Aug 17 - Kids' Stuff
- ✓ Sep 21 - Clothing 2
- ✓ Oct 5 - Winter gear, Halloween costume, Holiday Decor

## Food Festivals

- ✓ July 6 - Strawberry fest
- ✓ Aug 3 - Corn fest
- ✓ Sep 7 - Tomato fest
- ✓ Oct 12 - Pumpkin fest

## Repair Clubs

- ✓ June 8 - Bike checks
- ✓ July 13 - Visible mending workshop
- ✓ Aug 10 - Appliance repair
- ✓ Sep 14 - Jewelry repair, bike repair
- ✓ Oct 5 - Knit repair/learn

## Other

- ✓ July 13, Sep 14, Oct 12 - Toronto Master Gardeners Clinic
- ✓ Sep 14 - Bike donation drop-off



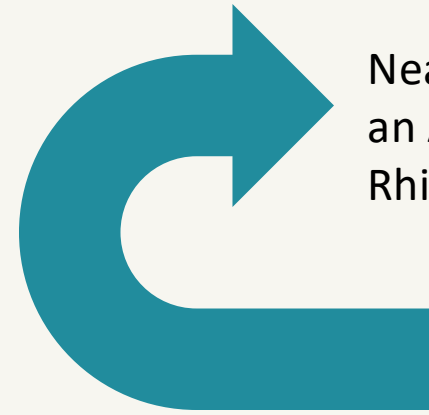
# Free Community “Swaps”

Diverting our unwanted clothing, textiles, kids’ stuff and household goods from landfill is only the first step. Getting it to someone who can use it is the ideal solution. Directly in our own community is best.

We hosted five free community “swaps” this season, separated into broad categories like clothing & textiles, kids’ stuff and kitchen things. We introduced a “seasonal” swap in October for costumes, decorations, winter gear, and personal care items.

To make our events financially accessible, our swaps did not require a donation—everything was free. To make it fairer to everyone, we introduced a “one bag until 12 noon policy”, ensuring that items could be more evenly distributed among customers.

Swaps were well-attended, with most of the collected goods distributed into the community. Leftovers were donated to pre-selected local thrift stores and non-profits.



Nearly as much as  
an American  
Rhinoceros!



2024 season:

# 1,733

**kilograms diverted**

	<b>Total Donated</b> (kg)	<b>Total Swapped</b> (kg)	<b>Leftover for Donation*</b> (kg)
<b>Clothing 1</b> (June 15)	349	275	74
<b>Kitchen</b> (July 20)	333	301	32
<b>Kids’ Stuff</b> (Aug 19)	469	412	57
<b>Clothing 2</b> (Sep 21)	254	205	49
<b>Seasonal</b> (Oct 5)	328	274	54
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,733</b>	<b>1,467</b>	<b>266</b>

\*distributed to thrift stores and non-profits



# WHY WE Swap



Every year, 85% of unwanted textiles (worth ~\$100 billion USD) ends up in landfills



Clothing in landfills releases toxic greenhouse gases



Textile dumping costs municipalities \$375 million



Textile recycling already funds 17,000+ jobs (US)



One garbage truck of textiles is landfilled or incinerated every second

In 20 years, we've increased our clothing consumption by

# 400%



We buy 70 new pieces of clothing every year in



Making a pair of jeans creates as much CO2 as driving a car 115 km



Making one shirt consumes 2700 litres of water

## THIS Week

In the 90s, fast-fashion brands introduced micro-seasons with new designs hitting stores every week



But fast fashion is designed to be worn only a few times and then discarded

For a circular economy, we need all hands on deck, including consumers, non-profits, social enterprises, for-profit companies, small business owners and entrepreneurs. We need system change!



When we swap, we share our bounty with our neighbours



## What Can I Do?



repurpose

repair



RENT



sell or swap

## Repair Cafes at Withrow

- **Repair Cafés:** This year we partnered with Repair Café to bring repair events back to the market. These events are in line with our aim of fostering a more circular and sustainable economy. This partnership included a bike tune-up, a visible mending workshop, a household appliance repair, a jewelry repair and another bike tune up event. We look forward to doing this again next year and engaging our community in learning how to do repairs.
- We also partnered with **Cycle Toronto** for a bike tune up event to kick our season off, and they hosted a Bike Match event, collecting 13 bikes to redistribute to people who need them.



# Food Festivals



We organized food festivals on long weekends again in 2024, in an effort to draw in more customers. We will revisit festivals again next year, with a focus on seasonality, focusing on a Spring Festival and a Harvest Festival.

Every market is a celebration of local food and seasonal eating in our beautiful part of the world.



# Gardening At WPFM

**Withrow Park Farmers' Market is fundamentally a celebration of the things we can grow and eat.**

In that spirit, we want to empower our customers to try their hand at growing things too. This is why we continue to offer our **Seed Library**, where all seeds are free. We have many people who donate to our Seed Library, but we would like to give an extra big shout out to Annie who pops by most weeks to browse through the library and to donate seeds! If you've taken any tomato seeds from our library they were probably grown by Annie.

Our Seed Library enjoyed its fourth season at the market! In addition to being at the market every week, it has also travelled to Seedy Saturday at the Brickworks as well as the Carrot Common Green Roof for Urban agriculture week.

Thanks to donations from many community members we now have 193 different plant varieties in our seed library. We had a group of dedicated volunteers manning the seed library this year, dispensing knowledge about growing plants as well as best seed-saving practices.



Additionally, we were pleased to partner with **Toronto Master Gardeners** to offer monthly gardening clinics. We are so grateful to their knowledgeable, friendly volunteers who were happy to answer any and all questions related to gardening in Toronto.

If that wasn't enough, our **urban grower program** entered its fourth year. We were pleased to welcome three new urban gardeners to our market!



# Market Music

We're known for our stellar vibes, made possible by the talented musicians who play at each market.

This year we welcomed back the following musicians:

- Major Flavour
- Accordion player Patrick O'Neill
- Folk duo Hobo Soles
- Jorge from Osoleo Wildcrafters

And welcomed several new musicians:

- Solo country singer Kate Gillespie
- Pierre Gautreau
- Psychedelic funk duo Wayne & Tamas
- Mother and son duo Amy & Theo Faba



# Community Groups at the Market

Each market season, we host several community groups. This year we welcomed the following community groups:

- The Pine Project, Ontario's leading nature connection organization
- Fetch & Release, a GTA-based volunteer-run dog rescue
- Toronto Nature Stewards, a grassroots nature restoration group
- Market City TO, a market & community advocacy group
- UofT Child Study Centre
- Volunteer Toronto, connecting volunteers to opportunities
- The Ravina Project, a solar powered radio station
- Energy Neighbour, providing expert advice on clean energy retrofits



# Market Merchandise

This season we created and launched our inaugural **cookbook** “Market Days”. This bound tome contains over 75 recipes contributed by our patrons, volunteers, vendors and community members, and features custom illustrations by local artist Bayla Blevis.



With over 100 cookbooks sold to date, this first edition has been deemed a great success.



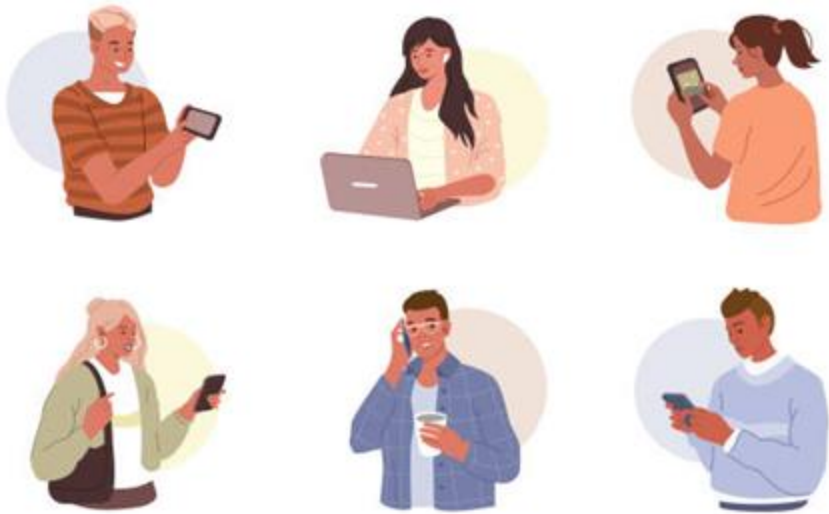
Also available for purchase this year were WPFM-branded denim **baseball caps**, camping-style **mugs** and a custom **herbal tea** blend “Bees & Butterflies”. All items were either completely or nearly sold out by the final October market.

*100% of profits from our merchandise sales go directly to the Market.*



# Digital Reach

## Our Customer Base



### Instagram

- **4,900** followers
- **11%** increase from 2023
- **78%** women
- **86%** between 25-54 age group

Each year, we see consistent growth in our social media and newsletter followers.



### Facebook

- **3,830** followers (~67% Toronto)
- **83%** women
- **75%** between 25-54



### X (formerly Twitter)

- **2,150** followers



### LinkedIn

- **126** followers
- Connections in food production, non-profits, environmental services, or higher education



### Newsletter

- **over 1,800** subscribers in 2024



### Withrowmarket.ca

- **~1000+** unique visitors per month



# New Projects and Policies



## Accessibility Audit and Review

We retained a local company to conduct an accessibility audit for the Market. The report, completed in October, provides recommended actions to address accessibility and inclusivity pertaining to market policies, website, social media and in-person activities.

## Bullying & Harassment Training

We're working on a bullying and harassment training program to help volunteers deal with undesirable behaviour from patrons, vendors and other volunteers.



## Lost Child Strategy

This summer, the Operations Committee established a lost child approach called "Safety first!", which encourages families to establish a meeting place and provides information to volunteers and staff on how to help a lost child.

## New Waste Diversion Approach

We reinvisioned our zero waste policy to have a broader focus to create a new Low Impact, Zero Waste Policy. A low impact market focuses on activities that cause minimal harm to the environment or what is commonly referred as having a low environmental footprint.



# Volunteering: By the Numbers

This year, our **total number of volunteers rose 74%**, from 38 to 66. While some volunteered occasionally, a core group of 32 “rockstars” contributed an average of 26 hours this year, up 21% from 21.5 hours last year.

**Total hours from all the volunteers were up almost 18% over last year, from 817 hours to 969.5!**

(That’s Neeka on the left, our top volunteer, who racked up 108 hours!) >

Yay to the volunteers!



# Volunteers 2024

- The volunteer sign-up system was modified to reduce cost, and continues to allow volunteers to choose their shifts and be responsible for attending
- Treat tokens remain a popular perk
- A bowling and pizza party to thank the volunteers for the season was held in the historic bowling alley in Eastminster United Church. Over 20 volunteers, committee members and staff attended – not to mention some new bowling techniques were discovered!



# Our Volunteers...

- |                        |                               |                          |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Pitch Tents            | Sell merch                    | Get water for dogs       |
| Strike tents           | Set-up tables                 | Roll trolleys            |
| Catch runaway tents    | Answer questions              | Put out the blanket tub  |
| Help unload            | Mind the seed library         | Put away the blanket tub |
| Help load              | Monitor the zero waste dishes | Write newsletter blurbs  |
| Direct people          | Weigh swap donations          | Engage visitors          |
| Direct traffic         | Sort swap donations           | Earn treat tokens        |
| Direct waste into bins | Help people                   | <i>Make friends!</i>     |





# Our Vendors

Our success wouldn't happen without the commitment and enthusiasm of our vendors. This year, we had almost 90 full and part time vendors offering delectable foods, floral bouquets and unique artizan goods to our patrons.

Combining farmers, prepared food and artisans our vendors generated almost **\$480,000** in sales this year.

- In 2024, the market operated for 21 weeks with the farmers and prepared food vendors averaging **\$930 per week**. This is comparable to 2023 in which vendors averaged \$960 per week.
- This year, the market operated one additional day at the end of October to offer vendors and patrons an extended market experience. Vendor sales for that day confirmed this was a good idea.

Note: Farmers include wine, beer and cider vendors



Many thanks to our new Vendor, the Fritter Shop, for providing delicious coffee and fritters and helping the Market continue its low waste program.

The Market conducted an Accessibility Audit, the first of its kind for an Ontario farmer's market.

The Market welcomed 20 new vendors



Our Market Manager and Market Assistant are the best!



Michael P. Nevin  
1943 - 2022  
"To love another person  
is to see the face of God."  
(Victor Hugo, Les Miserables)

In June, people attended a tree planting ceremony to honour the life of Michael Niven (a.k.a. compost Mike). A bur oak has been planted (with a plaque) in the northwest corner of the market.



# It Wouldn't Be Possible Without Financial Support

Exclusive Market Partner



## Claudio Cerrito+Co

COMMITTED · CREATIVE · CONNECTED



# It Wouldn't Be Possible Without Your Financial Support



## INDIVIDUAL DONORS

This season, Withrow Market received direct donations from our patrons totalling: **\$2,441**



# Recognition

This market could never happen without the dedication of key people, including:

**Board of Directors** – Kathryn Ellis, Mary Fragedakis, Clemence Leveau-Vallier, Janet Robins, Jessica Sonberg, Estelle Taylor (Chair), and Mary Vallis, all of whom shepherded the market through another successful season

**The Operations Committee** – Lauren, Stacey, Janet, Kathryn, Mary and Kadence, whose dedication saw the market run smoothly in 2024

**Laura** – our beloved Market Manager, who ensures that every market is a pleasure to attend

**Maddie** – our unwavering Market Assistant, who brought her enthusiasm and roll-up-the-sleeves attitude to each market day



*Thank  
you!*





**See you and our furry (and not so furry!) friends ...**

**next year!**



Who's a  
gooooood  
dog?

