

# FRENCH MARKET<sup>®</sup> DISTRICT

## Flea & Farmers Market Study Recommendations Report

July 7, 2021



concordia



Transformative Approaches To Leadership



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This document was developed in collaboration with Concordia, Think Like Pirates, Gilbert & Associates, and **trepwise**.



# Project Overview

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Concordia, Think Like Pirates, Gilbert & Associates, and **trepwise** have worked collaboratively with the French Market Corporation's (FMC) staff and stakeholders to develop recommendations around policies, programs, and place-based capital improvements at the FMC's Flea and Farmers Market Sheds through this FMC Flea & Farmers Market Study.

The goals of this Flea & Farmers Market Study are to:

- Envision a French Market that supports local culture bearers and advances the city's cultural economy;
- Develop programming and operations that serve the local public and promote sustainable tourism; and
- Identify short, medium, and long-term capital investments at the French Market.

With these objectives in mind, our process for this study began with a review of past studies performed by Project for Public Spaces, in order to identify key insights from past work that are still relevant today and in the future. Our team also drew from insights gathered through pedestrian planning initiatives at the French Market and French Quarter, led by the City of New Orleans over the past year. We have built on these findings through additional research, analysis, and stakeholder engagement to develop recommendations that are informed by past, present, and future considerations. The following pages provide a detailed summary of our process and recommendations distilled from this collective research and feedback from FMC leadership, partners, and stakeholders.



# Building on Past Studies

The 1990 and 2004 studies conducted by the Project for Public Spaces are both exceptional. They include constructive analysis of the French Market with recommendations and insights that are still useful today. Unfortunately, some recommendations were either not pursued or proved too difficult to incorporate into plans. Below are a few insights that are either **useful today** or are worth stating specifically because they are **no longer useful**. The historic food market has been organically dominated by tourists during the past several decades. Consequently, now is the time to set conscious strategies to continue to serve tourists effectively and smartly in order to maximize revenue and public benefit; two efforts that are core to FMC's mission and founding purpose. To this end, the recommendations contained in this report describe a current, post-pandemic approach to reintroduce food and culture at the French Market.

## Useful

### *Actionable today*

In 1986, the FMC budgeted to install floor drains in the Farmers Shed; however, they were not installed until the 2006 renovations. While this deferred maintenance was finally addressed, it does raise important questions and possible next steps:

- How effectively are the food vendors using the grease traps and floor drains? Are they monitored by FMC staff? Is it a management priority?
- Are vendors without access to waste water and grease management disposing of waste properly? If not, the FMC may opt to evaluate the current conditions to ensure that liquid waste and detergents are not simply disappearing down street drains. This provides an opportunity for technical training for vendors.
- Lastly, efforts to evaluate and improve the solid and liquid waste of vendors should be a priority on an ongoing basis; however, there is an opportunity to package an upgrade in efforts around larger “greening of the market” steps to fulfill the market’s commitment to the public good, like solar panels on roofs, improved bicycle parking, biodiesel pick-up, and so forth.

The 1990 study recognizes how the two sheds in question have “very few internal landmarks to orient shoppers.” Possible steps to address the need for landmarks at the French Market include:

- Rename the piazza (or Yard) that defines the unsheltered vending space between Barracks and Governor Nicholls Streets. The 1990 study offered the idea to dedicate this area to Mike Stark, a pivotal vendor who embodies the culture of tolerance and innovation of the public Market and whose legacy included serving those without resources for free.
- Borrow a successful tact from Seattle’s Pike Place Market, where Rachel (the piggy bank) is a popular spot for selfies, cash donations, and functions as a meeting place. Not only does the pig raise \$10,000 in contributions each year, it grounds visitors with a point of orientation.
- The seating areas between the two sheds have evolved into a natural landmark; however, there is still untapped potential to activate this space further, in a more intentional way.
- The public restrooms act as a meeting place, albeit a functional and not celebratory one. Existing plumbing infrastructure can be used to build out additional water features which highlight New Orleans’ connection to water. Water features, like the family-friendly fountain outside the [Denver Union Station](#), have proven to be very popular public landmarks.



## Not Useful

### *So much has changed*

The 1990 study recognizes that the FMC's wholesale vegetable business decreased considerably, but with some support, could be saved. As a result, PPS recommended that "the FMC separate, as much as possible, food selling from all other categories..." This may help to explain why the current rules and regulations place so much emphasis upon drawing lines between flea and food, rather than recognize how both Sheds contribute to one outdoor experience. This approach no longer appears relevant. The FMC no longer needs to protect wholesale and retail food activity from the flea market activities.

The 2004 study provided the FMC with sound tools to attract both grocery shoppers and retailers. These were met with limited success. The weekly farmers market innovative retail (i.e., cheeses, breads, etc.) were unable to sustain enough local foot traffic to continue. The community stakeholder discussions confirm that the French Market brand does not resonate with shoppers as a grocery destination. To change this, we recommend new strategies in an era that rewards new retail.

The 2004 study hinges on a bet that if the FMC can identify the numbers and locations of food shoppers, then the Market can attract new food stallholders, who sell breads, cheeses, and groceries, to serve everyday needs. To assemble this valuable information, the authors utilized the "gravity model," a tried and tested method to map the location and demographics of potential shoppers and competitive retailers, to make a compelling case that a reliable number of shoppers exist. Unfortunately, the FMC has not yet been able to attract a critical mass of new fresh food vendors to attract enough shoppers who would sustain grocery shopping at French Market. Aside from the reliable presence of tourists, the location is challenging to attract locals. Draw a circle around the sheds, and half of the geography of potential dwellers who may shop regularly, is in the river. Learning from the lessons of the past decade, we recognize that identifying clusters of residents does not create a strategy. Instead, it will take more community organizing efforts on behalf of the FMC, to initiate new relationships with locals.





# Starting with People

## Stakeholder Engagement





# Stakeholder Engagement Summary

## Round 1: Culture & Mission

- Provide variety through pop-ups & collaborations with other markets.
- Serve visitors, locals, and engage families and youth through events and activities.
- Highlight French Market's history and culture through educational programming.
- Prioritize local New Orleanians and Equity.

## Round 2: Programming & Operations

- Prioritize vendor support programs, live performances, and kids' activities.
- Focus on developing event-based programs to activate the space more regularly.
- Improve the market's infrastructure, so that a variety of program ideas can be implemented.

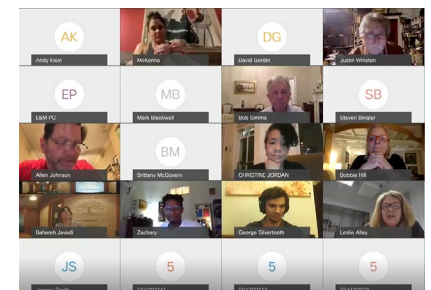
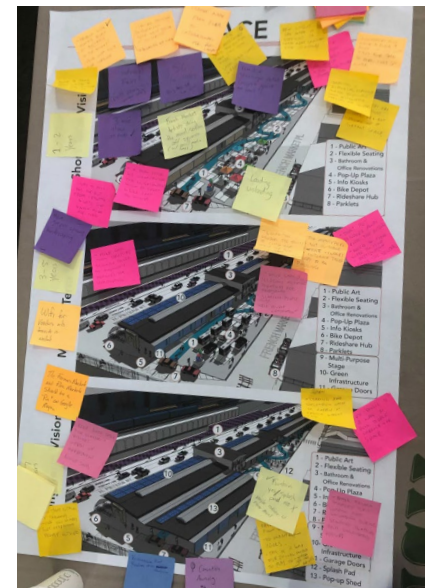
## Round 3: Preliminary Recommendations & Visioning

- Develop equitable Policy recommendations that address vendor needs, local community needs, and tourist needs
- Regularly scheduled pop-ups will help the Market as a whole
- Move forward with place-based recommendations as soon as possible, especially at the restrooms, FMC offices, and exterior plaza
- Preserve the French Market's history while building on its character to improve it
- Proposed construction projects should be coordinated with minimal disruption to current market operations

# Stakeholder Engagement



From beginning to end, people are the center of our study. Placing people at the center of this work is integral in creating a French Market that serves the public good by instilling a sense of ownership and belonging in the people whom the Market is meant to serve. Our stakeholder feedback is the foundation and inspiration for recommendations proposed in this document. We held three rounds of stakeholder meetings with French Market vendors, local culture bearers, and the general public between January and April of 2021. Meetings included in-person sessions under the Market Sheds with vendors, public virtual sessions, surveys, polls, and one-on-one conversations. Each round of engagement was designed to build on previous feedback; topics included **Culture & Mission**, **Programming & Operations**, and **Preliminary Recommendations Review & Visioning**. Summary reports, documenting stakeholder feedback, were issued after each round of engagement and published on the [French Market's website for public review](#).





## Round 1: Culture & Mission

The first round of stakeholder engagement included feedback that would inform the French Market's evolving Culture and Mission.

Current vendors, public stakeholders, and local culture bearers participated in this first round of community meetings.

Vendors emphasized that the French Market should celebrate the diversity of its vendors while highlighting products; increase advertisement; prioritize serving tourists; empower vendors through business and technical support; implement sustainable and green practices; and highlight the historical, cultural, and economic value that the French Market brings to New Orleans.

Public stakeholders wanted to see the French Market highlight local arts and crafts; provide variety through pop-ups and collaborations with other markets; engage visitors, locals, and youth; make the market feel safe and clean; and highlight French Market's history and culture through educational programming.

Culture bearers expressed a strong desire for the French Market to prioritize local New Orleanians with a focus on equity. Suggestions included offering more paid opportunities for local culture bearers; offering cultural events that share and teach about BIPOC traditions; and creating a family-friendly environment through activities and events.

For detailed documentation of round 1 feedback see the [Round 1 Stakeholder Engagement Summary Document](#) in the appendix.



*"To get me to come more when visitors aren't in town, I would like a more scheduled event/activity that is the start of spending the evening in the quarter."*  
-Round 1 Engagement Participant



*Example of virtual board used for meetings. Complete results can be found in the appendix.*

**history of the trade of goods**

### Round 1 Main Takeaways

- Provide variety through pop-ups & collaborations with other markets
- Serve visitors, locals, and engage families and youth through events and activities
- Highlight French Market's history and culture through educational programming
- Prioritize local New Orleanians and Equity

## Round 2: Programming & Operations



In this second round of stakeholder engagement, we received more specific feedback around programming and operations at the French Market Sheds.

Approximately thirty public stakeholders participated in this virtual meeting. Approximately 70% of participants in this meeting indicated that they had participated in the first round of engagement and 30% were joining the process for the first time.

This meeting's goals were to invite stakeholders to review and build on stakeholder ideas collected from round 1 to inform the French Market's programming and operations.

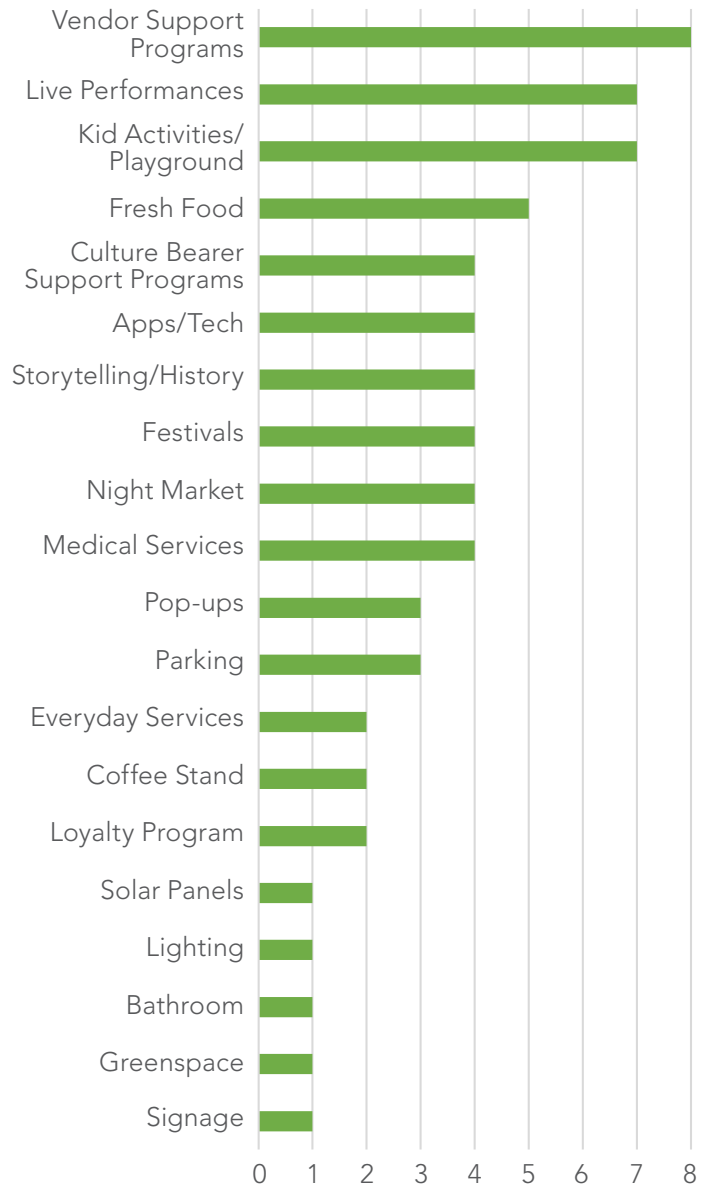
After reviewing a [Theory of Change](#) developed based on round 1 feedback, meeting participants reviewed, prioritized, and added to programming and operational ideas. Meeting participants felt aligned with the program ideas shared in round 1 and prioritized programs that related to vendor leadership and support, art and night markets, fresh food offerings, parking and transportation, and creating a physically welcoming environment.

More detailed documentation of feedback collected in round 2 can be found in the [Round 2 Stakeholder Engagement Summary Document](#).

*"Empowering the vendors with tools to manage and grow their business in a way that is equitable and consistent with FMC branding creating a cohesive ecosystem."*

-Round 2 Engagement Participant

Program themes most commonly discussed included:



### Round 2 Main Takeaways

- Prioritize vendor support programs, live performances, and kids' activities
- Focus on developing event-based programs to activate the space more regularly
- Improve the market's infrastructure, so that a variety of program ideas can be implemented



## Round 3: Preliminary Recommendations & Visioning



A third round of stakeholder engagement was held to share preliminary recommendations around policy, programs, and place, which were developed based on research and feedback collected in the first two rounds of engagement. Stakeholders were asked if these preliminary recommendations aligned with their vision for the French Market.

An in-person session was held under the Market Sheds in the morning during vendor stall selection and set-up time and a virtual session was held in the evening for the general public. Approximately forty people participated collectively between the in-person and virtual sessions. Approximately half of those who participated in this third round of engagement indicated they had participated in rounds 1 and 2 and the other half were joining the conversation for the first time. Most people's vision aligned with the preliminary recommendations: 53% absolutely or mostly agreed with Policy, 77% absolutely or mostly agreed with Programming, and 63% absolutely or mostly agreed with Place.

Detailed documentation of [round 3 feedback](#) can be found in the appendix of this document.



*"The innovation and inclusion of pop-ups, diverse food & product options, marketing strategies for vendors, and shipping availability brings the French Market into the 21st Century!"*  
-Round 3 Engagement Participant

### Round 3 Main Takeaways

- Develop equitable Policy recommendations that address vendor needs, local community needs, and tourist needs
- Regularly scheduled pop-ups will help the Market as a whole
- Move forward with place-based recommendations as soon as possible, especially at the restrooms, FMC offices, and exterior plaza
- Preserve the French Market's history while building on its character to improve it
- Proposed construction projects should be coordinated with minimal disruption to current market operations

# Policy

## Recommendations





# Policy Recommendations Summary

## French Market Leadership Structures

**GOAL 1:** Reinforce the old by improving the FMC's services to existing vendors. If new staff is brought on to curate new activities, then existing staff will be able to better address the needs of internal customers (flea vendors and food stallholders).

**Action A:** Maintain some of the emergency measures due to the pandemic, in order to signal that the state of transition to new and better systems is under way.

**Action B:** Migrate the vendor selection software to one that accommodates a better user experience for vendors, shoppers, and staff.

**Action C:** Facilitate community-building efforts popular among vendors.

**Action D:** Promote the diversity of the vendors via creative marketing that captures the dozen or more languages present in the sheds.

**Action E:** Establish focus groups and working groups with vendors, food tenants, and neighbors on an as-needed basis.

**Action F:** Conduct internal cycles of service training to determine if, how and where management can improve the internal hand-offs that deliver better service to vendors and to the internal departments.

**Action G:** Incorporate vendor needs into the bathroom renovations.

**GOAL 2:** Grow the new by building the capacity of new staff to forge partnerships and curate new activity and commerce.

**Action A:** Create a new staff position.

**Action B:** Utilize pop-up events to cultivate new loyalists to the French Market.

**Action C:** Learn from new activity and share learnings to shape the rest of the FMC.

## Vendor Tools & Policies

**GOAL 1:** Reduce staff time and resources it takes to operate the Flea Market.

**Action A:** Maintain the existing "emergency protocols."

**Action B:** Update the market management and event software.

**Action C:** Loosen the control existing vendors have on product mix.

**GOAL 2:** Assist the market staff to work smarter via new technology and business partnerships.

**Action A:** Expand the utilization of the new market management software.

**Action B:** Expand business technical assistance partnerships to include: grants, financing, and training.

**Action C:** Develop a packing and shipping depot available for vendors to accommodate visitor purchases.



## Expanding Staff

**GOAL 1:** Enlist the talent necessary to curate the public space (while other departments manage the existing community of vendors).

**Action A:** Hire new staff skilled in cultural curation and community organizing.

## Security

**GOAL 1:** Integrate the senior security staff into the culture and operations of public markets.

**Action A:** Seek training for senior staff in the art of managing security in public markets.

**Action B:** Bring security staff into the planning process of the new pop-ups.

**Action C:** Design the expanded market hours to accommodate pop-ups, with safety in mind.

**GOAL 2:** Utilize the new captain's skillset to design training and safety mitigation measures among vendors that adds little additional costs to the operating budget.

**Action A:** Introduce a buddy system for vendors who participate in evening slots.

**Action B:** Investigate how security mechanisms can be embedded into the new vendor space allocation software.

**GOAL 3:** Develop greater coordination between various public and private safety operations.

**Action A:** Utilize the expanded market hours as an opportunity to engage with neighboring associations to plan for safety, rather than respond to crises.

## Addressing the Unhoused and Disruptive Street Life

**GOAL 1:** Identify practical services that deliver dignity to the unhoused.

**Action A:** Accommodate personal hygiene.

**Action B:** Equip FMC staff and vendors with useful, printed information for the unhoused, seeking social services.

**GOAL 2:** Partner with professional service providers who can serve the unhoused.

**Action A:** Partner with local experts to equip FMC staff and vendors with updated policies, procedures, and training.

**Action B:** Replicate the DDD's neighborhood-based approach to addressing the unhoused needs.

# Policy Recommendations



Public markets allow for individuals to learn through experience, whereas shopping malls and supermarkets tend to rely upon centralized marketing and communications. Market vendors are out front, expressing their individuality directly to the public. Collectively, they provide the voice for a market's values, purpose, character, etc. Former Pike Place leader and public market expert, Aaron Zaretsky, describes managing a market as “akin to controlling chaos.” They may appear chaotic; however, beneath the surface, someone is managing the critical control points. Success requires constant evaluation, adaptive refinement, and solid internal and external communications. In other words, it requires balance.

The glue that holds the figurative market umbrella in balance is **good management**. On the following page is a proposed **theory of change** that we developed with stakeholders during the engagement process. The **theory of change** describes a process of planned social change, from the assumptions that guide its design to the long-term goals it seeks to achieve. A theory of change frames an organization's desired impact and serves as a link between those outcomes and the strategies or interventions it pursues. In order to hold staff, vendors, partners, and governance accountable; the theory of change begins to serve as a shared direction toward which all involved with the FMC is pointing.

The **theory of change** can also assist management when making decisions about policy changes, by defining the purpose of all action within the market. Markets are complex and fast moving. To assist staff to move forward and change policies, it will be important to keep balance in mind. Move quickly, but if too quick, vendors and shoppers, leaseholders and partners may voice discord for new directions. In order to help staff move forward, it is important to achieve balance by considering how new steps:

- a) conform to the **mission**
- b) can be **managed**
- c) are **marketed**
- d) are **measured**.

The four-Ms can help staff navigate these exciting changes to a beloved New Orleans institution.





# Theory of Change



Public market management, even adaptive leadership, requires an end goal and a plan. Otherwise, management lacks direction and alignment. The theory of change defines the preconditions, interventions and the desired outcome. It is set up like an if/then formula:

**When we preserve historic structures & make public spaces safe, we create the conditions to attract the public, provide useful services, & animate public space, so that people feel they belong, vendors earn money with dignity, & people and businesses flourish, resulting in the FMC serving the PUBLIC GOOD!**

While this theory is useful internally to communicate operating principles (to hold actions and people responsible within and between departments) around a shared project, it is also useful externally. This theory of change helps to build support from new shoppers, vendors, and partners, and informs stakeholders why the French Market Corporation (FMC) makes decisions.





# French Market Leadership Structures



As a public benefit corporation, the French Market **serves the public good**. Large or small, flea or food, all public markets require management to balance the interests of vendors, shoppers, and the often-difficult-to-define community. The “community” may be as near as the surrounding neighborhood and as far as a region. Even in a highly-functioning market, this balancing act is a challenge. Shoppers want more choice, while vendors may want to limit choice (so as to protect their market share).

The FMC is in transition: new leadership, changing neighborhood, and tourist demographics, and the major shifts in how people animate public spaces during and after a pandemic all contribute to changes that place additional stress upon the FMC to serve internal (vendors and tenants) and external (shoppers and partners) stakeholders.

This stress also provides the FMC with the impetus to evaluate how its current management structure addresses growth, vendor and tenant retention, and if resources are devoted to achieving mutually-reinforcing goals that contribute to the public benefit. While the larger strategic planning process provides recommendations as to how best to structure the chain of command, departments, and measures of success, the Food and Flea Sheds provide the FMC with opportunities to experiment now and point towards a new organizational posture that **grows the new**, while **securing the old**.



**GOAL 1:** Reinforce the old by improving the FMC's services to existing vendors. If new staff is brought on to curate new activities, then existing staff will be able to better address the needs of internal customers (flea vendors and food stallholders).



**Action A:** Maintain some of the emergency measures due to the pandemic, in order to signal that the state of transition to new and better systems is under way.

The pandemic required swift and creative action by management to shorten hours, provide rent relief, and reduce vendor density in vendor space allocation. While some of these measures have been relaxed and normalcy is returning to the FMC, we recommend maintaining the climate of a continued emergency (in particular as it relates to the heightened communications between staff and vendors). It is important to signal that these continue to be unprecedented times, that the FMC will not return to business-as-usual. Maintain a sense of urgency with existing vendor concerns like leaking roofs, potentially dangerous individuals who frequent the Sheds, and internal systems for set-up and take-down.

**Action B:** Migrate the vendor selection software to one that accommodates a better user experience for vendors, shoppers, and staff.

Current vendor software places far too much responsibility upon staff to assign, alter, and then reassign spaces. Options exist — especially ones that provide shoppers with more real-time details about products and vendors, and vendors with more control and responsibility for space selection. And, if these databases are linked, market staff can spend more time managing the market and less time conducting duplicative work.

**Action C:** Facilitate community-building efforts popular among vendors.

Vendors are a community. This contributes to their rationale to keep returning. Efforts include reviving pot-lucks and the advent of working groups to help shape future market efforts.

**Action D:** Promote the diversity of the vendors via creative marketing and storytelling that capture the dozen or more languages and cultures beneath the sheds.

This lends itself to radio promotions and can be incorporated into future marketing strategies. It also engages vendors where they are and with the cultural/linguistic assets they possess.





**Action E:** Establish focus groups and working groups with vendors, food tenants, and neighbors on an as-needed basis.

With most vendor/staff relationships based upon serving vendor needs to generate income, approve products, etc., they are prevented from carving out the space to imagine new possibilities together. Responsibility to “grow the new” will land on the shoulders of the new cultural liaison position, it will be exceedingly helpful for the entire market staff to be involved with identifying new opportunities to cultivate new vendors, new activities, and new local loyalists.

We recommend bolstering the leadership of vendors who recognize early that they can help shape this new direction via short-lived working groups, focus groups and other engagement methods to bring shoppers, vendors, and staff together as a community of interest. In the medium- and long-term, they can support the growth of pop-ups, and in turn incubate leadership among vendors via informal leadership pathways. This requires skills among staff to identify potential for leadership among vendors.

**Action F:** Conduct internal cycles of service training to determine if, how and where management can improve the internal hand-offs that deliver better service to vendors and to the internal departments.

The pace and pressures upon market staff to serve vendors requires many complex internal hand-offs. Are these managed well? Are they even visible to fellow staff and vendors alike? Changes in software, space allocation, and product mix should not be made in isolation. Instead, we recommend utilizing sound management techniques to identify how these changes rely upon clear internal and external communications.

**Action G:** Incorporate vendor needs into the bathroom renovations.

These include:

- Vendor/staff toilets;
- Wudu showers for religious rituals (for Muslim vendors);
- Vendor kitchenette for meals, to dissuade eating at stalls.

**GOAL 2:** Grow new activities and audiences by building the capacity of new staff to forge partnerships and curate new activity and commerce.



**Action A: Create a new staff position.**

Success will be defined by how well the new staff:

- Conduct a scan of potential competition and partners within a calendar year
- Develop a calendar of weekly, monthly, annual programming that rebuilds trust with locals, brands the FMC as a convener, and delivers a set number of events, attracting a set number of attendees, and develop measurable objectives of success
- Forge partnerships with strategic cultural organizations and individual culture bearers to animate public space adjacent to the Sheds
- Build support for new programming among existing vendors
- Assemble a team of stakeholders, organizational partners to provide financial and human resources to properly curate the historic public market as a forward-looking gathering place.

**Action B: Utilize pop-up events to cultivate new loyalists to the French Market.**

These new loyalists can be anyone from culture bearers to forward-leaning vendors, local shoppers, and partner organizations. Develop a “run-of-show” of events devoted to user-experiences that: welcome newcomers with seating (and informal social interaction), educate via experience and instruction, and offer products for sale by rosters of guest vendors.

**Action C: Learn from new activity and share learnings to shape the rest of the FMC.**

Activities that build a new base of loyalists for the FMC cannot be conducted as separate extensions of the FMC. Rather, they serve as vehicles to introduce new talent and people into the FMC’s community of vendors and shoppers; and help existing staff (responsible for improving service to existing vendors and shoppers) learn and adopt the new sit/learn/sell principles for placemaking.



# Vendor Tools & Policies



The FMC must recognize the Flea Market as an economic force. Past strategic planning processes imply that the Flea Market intrudes on the traditional operations of a food market. Instead, today, the Flea Market is part of the FMC's tradition. It should be viewed as a **vibrant expression of multicultural microenterprise** (with dozens of cultures, neighborhoods, and languages present), a source of significant revenue for the FMC, and an economic incubator for a community of vendors.

In order to balance this mission-driven work to generate new activity whilst securing existing vendors and their transactions, we recommend the following steps in the Flea Market and surrounding environs.

**GOAL 1:** Reduce staff time and resources it takes to operate the Flea Market.

**Action A:** Maintain the existing “emergency protocols.”

This is in order not to slide back into business-as-usual. This moment of transition must be recognized and sustained.

**Action B:** Update the market management and event software.

While the current software may be adequate, we advise migrating to another (most notably, [MarketSpread](#)). Presently, far too much time is devoted to manage the vendor space selection processes. Software migration also enables the FMC to bake into the new vendor selection process incentives that reward original craftsmanship/artwork (with discounts or artists' rates). A change at this juncture enables the FMC to reduce staff exposure and increase vendor control over the process (with a vendor dashboard, pre-selected preferences, and a shorter horizon for tenure).

**Action C:** Loosen the control existing vendors have on product mix.



While the list of approved products may allow for the FMC to curate a healthy product mix in theory, in reality it instead allows existing vendors to prevent new entries with new ideas. Coordinated with the introduction of new market management software:

- Require each vendor to display and sell the products they are approved to sell in order to retain their right to sell their approved products. Otherwise, they lose their stake in the product category.
- With use of new technology and requirements from vendors to use their dashboard, they affirm the consistent presence of selected categories of products daily. This new procedure helps to cut down on years of product stagnation (as vendors approved for products they rarely bring to market lose the right to limit competition).



**Action C:** Loosen the control existing vendors have on product mix. (con't)

- Over time, vendors who do not devote table space to approved products, lose that “exclusive right” and open the opportunity to invite newcomers keen to market products under-served by the existing roster of vendors.

This idea mirrors the City of New Orleans’ code for Conditional Non-Conforming business. In order to operate, the business must consistently provide that service or product. If not, they lose the right to sell it. Staff can devote more time to enlisting new vendors, rather than policing the static roster of vendors and products.

Introduce acute business technical help to vendors and food tenants, provided by partner organizations and aligned with resources made available by the federal American Rescue Plan.

**GOAL 2:** Assist the market staff to work smarter via new technology and business partnerships.

**Action A:** Expand the utilization of the new market management software.

This is to better utilize technology and to empower vendors to promote themselves via their dashboard.

**Action B:** Expand business technical assistance partnerships to include: grants, financing, and training.

- Options include, but are not limited to:
- [Delgado](#) (Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses)
  - [Fund 17](#)
  - [Go. Be.](#)
  - [Propeller](#)

**Action C:** Develop a packing and shipping depot available for vendors to accommodate visitor purchases.

This was a suggestion made in one of the stakeholder meetings in response to visitors frequently citing challenges to transport products bought at the market.

The above actions will equip the FMC with the incubation tools to serve as the city’s premiere platform for retail excellence, social inclusion, and product/service innovation. Whereas the pop-ups may initially help the FMC experiment with new products and people, they could grow into city- and region-wide contests that reward excellence among entrepreneurs.

# Expanding Staff



**Community organizing** does not just happen. It must be the responsibility of an office, a staffer, or a team. The French Market has enjoyed mixed results employing staff to take on similar activities in the past. The Market's festivals are successful and popular. Festivals attract a multiplicity of activities on select weekends. While these events may provide important peaks in customer counts, they may do little to cultivate a loyal base of support who returns regularly. Just as the temperament for pop-up organizing may differ from festivals, so too may the staffing.

There are options: each comes with its own pros and cons. Hire a full-time employee (FTE), or explore partnerships with other anchor institutions to host a fellowship. While a fellowship has the added value of defining a job description with clear end-product deliverables (for instance, the creation of cultural and educational assets useful beyond the tenure of the fellow), it may be more difficult to carry relations and lessons learned forward with each new fellow. While the FTE (by design) fits clearly into the chain of command, a 12-24 month fellowship affords the FMC to keep experimenting until it finds the right chemistry in the right individual. Moreover, partners bring additional assets – such as interns and academic rigor — and the fellowship can be a coveted and competitive assignment that attracts a higher skillset than otherwise available to the FTE talent pool.

**GOAL 1:** Enlist the talent necessary to curate the public space (while other departments manage the existing community of vendors).

**Action A:** Hire new staff skilled in cultural curation and community organizing.



*Members of Bamboula 2000 at a Summer Solstice event at Asb  Cultural Arts Center.*

This call-to-action requires a highly-skilled individual possessing the following expertise:

- **Retail anthropology:** To understand the flow of people in public spaces, why they buy, and how the institution leverages its history, space, and public benefit assets;
- **Intercultural communications:** To give voice to partner organizations who encounter the French Market as a platform to share their narrative;
- **Community organizing:** To identify partners who have the capacity to exhibit skills, and products at pop-up events. Where capacity is lacking, it is critical to determine how to overcome obstacles;
- **Event planning:** To deliver quality pop-ups that meet measurable goals with a team of staff, volunteers, and interns. In other words, this is not a research position, but one that tests a theory of how to attract and sustain a local following for culturally-relevant programming (sit/learn/sell).



# Security



In keeping with the [theory of change](#), the bare minimum of the FMC's commitment to New Orleans is to preserve the historic market structures and to provide personal safety and hygiene for its shoppers and vendors. This provides the platform for additional public benefits in and around the market. The FMC's challenge is that the physical footprint is itself public and exposed. It is no simple feat to protect public space. Even if the area is blanketed with police presence, the FMC's open Sheds are open and vulnerable to petty crime, the unsheltered, and individuals participating in anti-social behavior (due to mental illness and/or substance abuse). In order for the FMC to balance safety with inclusion, it requires levels of public safety professionalism greater than what it has had.

We acknowledge that the FMC has made recent and major changes to how security is managed in and around the French Market. In the past, the FMC security office has struggled to defend a porous location on its own. The recent decision to alter the chain of command to the Department of Homeland Security — and to place leadership into the hands of a 20-year veteran of the NOPD (a sergeant whose career centered around training and the police academy) — not only upgrades the professional capacity of the department but also integrates French Market security into that of the surrounding neighborhood and the array of security forces.

While the presence of security may help to make some feel secure, others may feel less than welcome. In this regard, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Consistently, security concerns are raised by vendors, whose dual concerns include personal safety and their livelihoods. Also, unsurprisingly, shoppers cite safety as a major obstacle to attend the French Market. It is also important to remember that security concerns are not confined to the physical “campus” of the market itself. In this regard, security at the Market is also security in the parking lots and in the streets between parking and the sheds. Despite the overwhelming and positive interest in expanding the market hours to accommodate evening pop-ups — night markets — the specter of crime and personal safety may contribute to attendees' calculations for attendance (this may be especially the case for seniors and families). For these reasons, we recommend the following:

**GOAL 1:** Integrate the senior security staff into the culture and operations of public markets.

**Action A:** Seek training for senior staff in the art of managing security in public markets.

While it may be true that no other North American police force is better equipped to handle the complexities of large crowds than the New Orleans Police Department, due to its comfort level managing Mardi Gras and an endless parade of festivals, markets are different. Vendors and stallholders return daily/weekly. This provides opportunities to forge lasting partnerships, and insights for preventing crime. On the other hand, also repeating is the presence of disruptive individuals, petty thieves, substance abusers, the mentally ill, and the unhoused. Training can come in the form of distance learning from market experts, peer-to-peer learning with large market operators, and site visits.



**Action B:** Bring security staff into the planning process of the new pop-ups.

With this programmatic activity led by new staff, it is important to utilize pop-ups to identify risks and mitigate them during these off-hour events by involving guest vendors unfamiliar with the safety precautions in markets. Senior security staff should develop safety checklists for guest vendors, the pop-up staff and volunteers, and conduct training in advance of pop-up events.

**Action C:** Design the expanded market hours to accommodate pop-ups, with safety in mind.

Manage risks carefully. The more the FMC is able to attract locals to evening events, the quicker news will spread that activities are fun and safe. The early adopters will inspire others to attend.

**GOAL 2:** Utilize the new captain's skillset to design training and safety mitigation measures among vendors that adds little additional costs to the operating budget.

**Action A:** Introduce a buddy system for vendors who participate in evening slots.

This controlled, smaller group is useful to field-test new ways to engage vendors as partners, not just as tenants. It may yield an alternative pathway for leadership development among vendors and food stallholders.

**Action B:** Investigate how security mechanisms can be embedded into the new vendor space allocation software.

Senior security staff and senior market staff can develop this investigation together. These may include broadcast texts, published security measures visible only to vendors, and download documents useful to pop-ups and seasonal vendors. These may also provide opportunities to share intelligence with other security agencies in the area.



**GOAL 3:** Develop greater coordination between various public and private public safety operations.

**Action A:** Utilize the expanded market hours as an opportunity to engage with neighboring associations to plan for safety, rather than respond to crises.

While it may be attractive to neighbors for the FMC to patrol the neighborhood, there are not enough resources to accomplish this goal.

Over the next few years, as the physical boundaries of the French Market become more clearly defined with infrastructural improvements, it may become easier to protect the Market’s “campus.” However, this does not address the question of safety to and from the Market. While collaboration with nearby businesses, districts, etc. may begin to create informal collaboration to underwrite security for public safety, the incorporation of the Department of Homeland Security may accelerate the adoption of formal measures to better protect the area. As a public market, the French Market is a public space. It is always better to protect public spaces by activating the space for longer hours with more people. **People bring safety.**





# Addressing the Unhoused & Disruptive Street Life



As a public benefit corporation, the FMC is charged to benefit the public. This requires making public spaces safe, providing useful services in them, and animating them so that people feel they belong. These goals are articulated in the new theory of change and may require the FMC to sometimes balance competing interests. This would be difficult enough to accomplish within the confines of an enclosed space. However, the FMC operates out in the open-air, and in a neighborhood known to attract pleasure-seekers and individuals unable to conform to societal norms. One community that has long found the French Market to be open and accessible is the unhoused. Of course, location is everything. Some find quiet places to sleep. Others seek day labor, helping vendors unload, and most find the public restrooms essential. This provides the FMC with an extraordinary opportunity to reframe its social contract — to extend its publicly-accessible infrastructure to all — by making strategic decisions that improve the conditions for the unhoused community at the FMC, which also improves the business climate for vendors, and expands the FMC's capacity to understand and act upon disruptive, yet admittedly permanent, presence of an unhoused community at the FMC. In keeping with the rhythm of a public space that operates with different seasons, days, and hours, we recommend addressing these issues from the stand point of how best to mitigate competing interests and needs in one facility, perhaps best at different hours of operation.

**During off-peak hours**, vendors trust the FMC security team to protect goods left overnight. This demonstrates a notable level of trust between Market and vendor. After all, the sheds remain vulnerable overnight to individuals who wish to pursue mischief and anti-social behavior. As a result, the security team deploys critical thinking and discipline to determine which battles to fight: sleeping in public, petty crime, violence, or preventing individuals, including the unhoused, from using electrical outlets to recharge phones at all hours. While the FMC demonstrates remarkable deft at handling these issues, more investments can be made to strengthen the capacity to manage off-peak hours.

**During peak market hours**, vendors demand safe and clean environs in order to conduct business. This places the entire market staff with the responsibility to balance safety with social inclusion. This is no easy feat; however, equipped with skills and a commitment to the theory of change, it can be achieved. In many regards, it is being achieved every market day, without the benefit of walls or entrance gates that festivals enjoy.

The FMC is currently exploring how to manage and serve the unhoused in partnership with the Travelers Aid Society and the New Orleans Downtown Development District. The Travelers Aid team has conducted interviews and observations that yield the following insights:

- The unhoused at the French Market are a community. They are drawn to the location for personal, rather than structural reasons. They value amenities, like bathrooms and opportunities for casual labor, but are drawn there for the friendships. This should provide considerable caution to unrealistic efforts to “move them on.” They will return.
- With this recognition of geography and community in mind, so, too, are the solutions. The FMC should explore methods (pursued by the DDD just a few blocks away) that take a place-based case management approach to serving the needs of the unhoused.
- The scale of the community is considerable: as many as 50 sleep at night; and as many as 70 inhabit the Market during the day.
- In interviews, few indicate any interaction with social services agencies, but recount many interactions with law enforcement. This speaks to an opportunity to connect a population seeking services but unable to do so on their own.

We recommend that the FMC continue to engage Travelers Aid, learn from findings, and design policy changes that reflect their professional insights.



## **GOAL 1:** Identify practical services that deliver dignity to the unhoused.

### **Action A:** Accommodate personal hygiene.

When FMC bathrooms are renovated, incorporate multi-use public showers into the design to serve the unhoused, Wudu for Muslim vendors, etc. There are many useful precedents from near and far that are worthy of study. (See the appendix for a link to “Public Bathing Research Document” for reference). Within the context of the Market, improved hygiene brings dignity, just as it reduces shopkeeper animosity. It is important not to disrupt the core operations of the market, as a safe and stable place for commerce. However, showers should not represent mission creep. Moreover, there is an opportunity to share this physical infrastructure with local partners to program and provide staffing support. These can be provided in a space and at a time that is less disruptive to commerce. Much as the pop-ups are intended to fill under-utilized times and spaces, so too can the showers. Like ships passing in the night, the FMC can fulfill its public benefit mission by providing access to showers during off-peak hours. This same approach can be explored with other amenities identified in the Travelers Aid surveys such as: electrical outlets for mobile phones, health screenings, and access to other social safety net services, like SNAP.

### **Action B:** Equip FMC staff and vendors with useful, printed information for the unhoused, seeking social services.

Interviews with the unhoused, conducted by Travelers Aid, indicate a genuine interest to seek social services. However, many unhoused individuals indicated that they are unable to find them on their own. Providing staff and vendors with these tools may help them to deescalate tense situations in the Market and make concern and solidarity a social norm. Developing an ethos of solidarity for all people is important for a public benefit corporation like FMC.



**GOAL 2:** Partner with professional service providers who can serve the unhoused.

**Action A:** Partner with local experts to equip FMC staff and vendors with updated policies, procedures, and training.

Partner expertise should work with FMC security leadership to research and evaluate how to diffuse combusive situations within the market. This evaluation can be used to develop updated policies, procedures, and training for FMC staff and vendors to be equipped with, when needed. A united front will help to secure relations with the unhoused and mitigate disruption to market operations.

**Action B:** Replicate the DDD's neighborhood-based approach to addressing the unhoused needs.



“Latrobe Park looking towards the French Market.”

source: Helen Martin, Tom Martin <https://tomhelenmartinblog.com/2021/03/>

This approach recognizes that the unhoused are a permanent community within the French Quarter. Mobilize resources to hire professional social worker expertise to address this community's needs:

- Explore neighborhood-wide funding and governance/support for social worker(s) to serve the community.
- Explore different avenues for structuring necessary staffing. These may include FTE civil service positions and fellowships in partnership with learning institutions.
- Design the position so that they are not alone. Ensure that the position has access to UNITY's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS); is not funded to fill out paperwork instead of walking the neighborhood and building trust; and has the authority to provide referrals to other social service agencies.



# FRENCH MARKET

## Program Recommendations



# Program Recommendations Summary

## Existing Successful Programs

**GOAL 1:** Confirm that all existing festivals are valuable moving forward.

**Action A:** Evaluate the efficacy of staging festivals in/adjacent to the two Sheds within the framework of the theory of change.

**Action B:** Define the objectives, budgets, and the weight that the FMC will put into each.

**GOAL 2:** Evaluate how these potentially lucrative events serve culture bearers.

**Action A:** Hire culture bearers as talent.

**Action B:** Enlist culture bearers as experts to shape the programming.

**Action C:** Distribute customer service surveys afterwards to partners, contractors, talent.

## Pop-ups & Seasonal Specials

**GOAL 1:** Provide the FMC with signature products to lure locals for an extended period of time.

**Action A:** Devote available space for extended stays to temporary vendors who help to brand a market's season.

**Action B:** Establish unique partnerships for extended stays with key vendors and partners.

**GOAL 2:** Reinforce seasonal specials with curated pop-up events.

**Action A:** Curate and stage pop-up events during off-peak hours.

**GOAL 3:** Compensate artists, musicians, and culture bearers fairly for their talents; provide them public recognition, and forge an ongoing relationship with the FMC (to continue to perform for the FMC's banner festivals).

**Action A:** Curate pop-ups through an equity lens.

## Focus on Food

**GOAL 1:** Relaunch the weekly farmers market in Crescent Park.

**Action A:** Re-engage Market Umbrella to explore the viability of restarting the weekday Crescent City Farmers Market at Crescent Park, next to the Rusty Rainbow bridge.

**Action B:** Establish a multi-year partnership with Market Umbrella to fulfill mutually beneficial goals.

**GOAL 2:** Explore new food distribution models for the French Market.

**Action A:** Meet with key food box distribution partners to determine if FMC can add value to existing efforts.

**Action B:** Develop a working group to explore the funding and business viability of partnerships.

**GOAL 3:** Make food a priority when staging pop-ups with partners to promote seasonal and cultural foods.

**Action A:** Develop a calendar of seasonal foods that can be offered by existing food stallholders or new pop-up vendors.

**Action B:** Accompany food pop-ups with ticketed experiences that include pre-ordered boxes.

**Action C:** Incorporate existing food stallholders into the planning process.

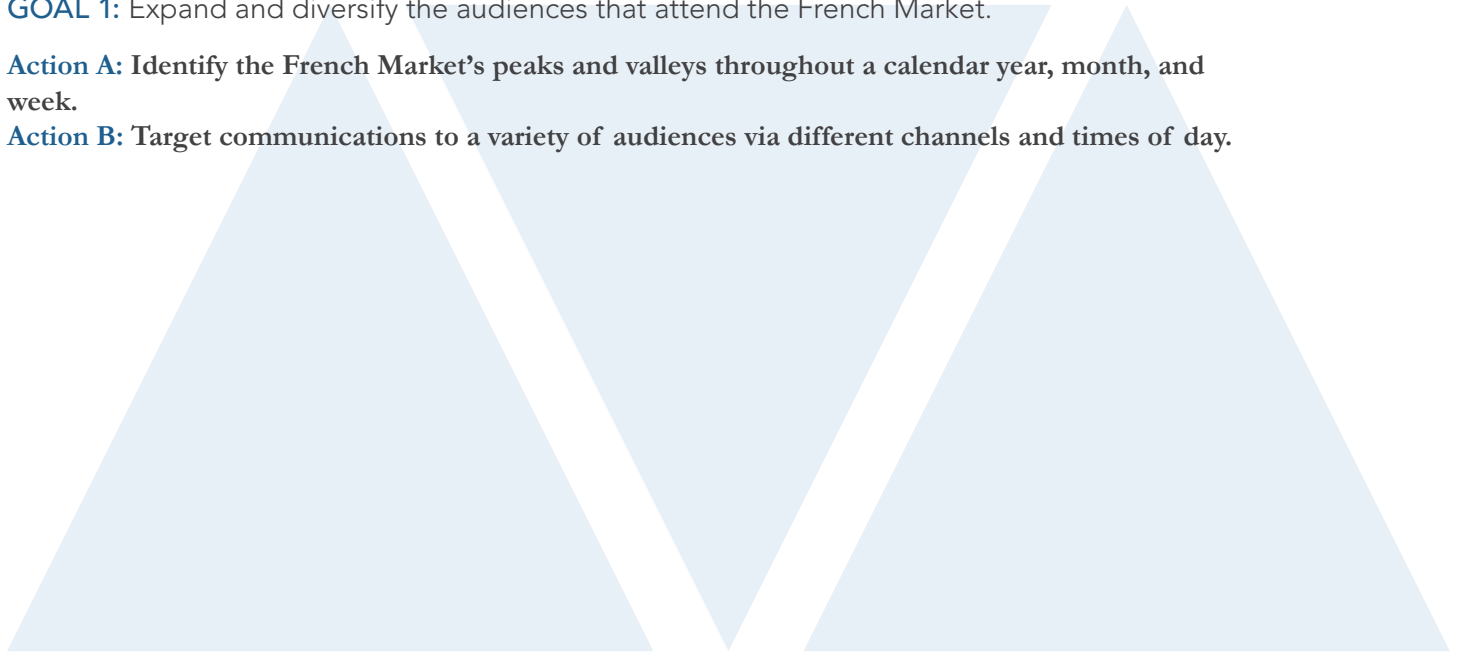
**Action D:** Partner with local organizations for food box delivery.

## Year, Month, & Day at a Glance

**GOAL 1:** Expand and diversify the audiences that attend the French Market.

**Action A:** Identify the French Market's peaks and valleys throughout a calendar year, month, and week.

**Action B:** Target communications to a variety of audiences via different channels and times of day.





# Program Recommendations



While the FMC improves operations beneath the Sheds with the existing community of (flea and food) vendors, we recommend (re)building trust with targeted communities, strategic partners, and culture bearers out in the open-air space with programming that field-tests new ideas and concepts that make the market relevant to locals.

More than one-off events, these recurring pop-ups should be designed to:

- Champion the theory of change;
- Empower new staff to curate the market during off-peak hours with pop-ups that utilize the triplicity of sit/learn/sell;
- Help locals reclaim the public market as theirs.

If the FMC provides space for local communities-of-interest to exhibit, instruct and sell services, products and culture, then these disparate groups become future loyalists, vendors, and partners.

This approach to programming differs from festivals. Whereas festivals offer a [suspension from reality](#), pop-ups provide a [glimpse into a community's reality](#). Important from an operational standpoint, wherever possible, they are staged during off-peak hours so that they do not compete with crowded market days. Instead, they provide locals with a chance to [experience the market as their own](#).





Public Market Triplicity: In order to improve the visitors' experience, the French Market must improve its placemaking. In the 1990 French Market study, authors recognize how “there are very few internal landmarks to orient shoppers.” Stakeholders in the 2021 engagement process also echo this point. Upon arriving at the Flea and Food Sheds, it is difficult to gauge what awaits you. You see a long corridor, but little to slow you down between the beginning and the end. At Barracks Street, the market just ends.

If you are a food stallholder, how do you describe the location of your business? There is very little to work with: By the restrooms? In the first Shed, not the second? If launched with a degree of discipline, the following plan to activate the open space (adjacent to the Sheds) will begin to improve the shopper experience, and brand places within the market as identifiable landmarks.



**Sit/Learn/Sell:** Walt Disney recognized decades ago that visitors congregate in locations if reinforcing activities are also grouped together. In theme parks, this may look like seating for grandparents, rides for kids, and gift shops that turn profits. In a public market, this looks like the launch of time-delimited pop-up events in which participants:

- **sit** to fulfill what many stakeholders describe as “sit to soak up the atmosphere”;
- **learn** by attending an educational presentation or cooking demonstration;
- **sell** by guest vendors and permanent stallholders whose offerings reinforce the thematic activities on offer.

This triplicity of activities should become akin to a paint swatch for organizers to hold up to analyze whether programming offers these activities within close proximity. If not, they have difficulty feeding off one another.

**Brand these events:** Consider these activities as a new programmatic function of the French Market to communicate to strategic subsets of locals. As such, this pop-up posture provides the FMC the room to experiment, attracting different groups to sit and learn (attend the pop-ups as shoppers to experience the market) and to sell (market goods and services on a trial one-off basis). If the format and general timing of pop-up programming is consistent, then locals will learn to expect these activities and look forward to the next event. FMC can capture names and contact details from event attendees to stay in touch and build a loyal base.

**Brand the location:** It is critical that pop-ups be staged in the same location each time in order to orient shoppers. They will begin to look for it in the place where pop-ups take place. Architect Allen Eskew recognized in 2004 how the uncovered space along, French Market Place near Barracks Street, is shaped like an Italian piazza. Should it be named the Piazza? Or, does the FMC honor past leaders within the market – naming it after the “king of the hippies,” Mike Stark Park? Applying the triplicity of activities has the potential to improve all areas of the FMC. Sitting, learning and selling are not sequential activities; rather, they work best when they coexist in close proximity to one another.



## Existing Successful Programs



While the new theory of change, use of pop-ups, and physical improvements may lean upon theories of placemaking (as expressed through the sit/learn/sell format), it is important to remember that these new practices are not intended to operate in isolation. Rather, they will be successful if **executed with adaptive leadership** and if the lessons learned are **incorporated into the wider culture of the FMC**. In other words, if sit/learn/sell works for pop-ups, then it can also be integrated into the FMC's existing programs and public-facing infrastructure.

The FMC's popular festivals represent high points on the Market calendar; however, they come at a remarkable cost and are due for reevaluation. Some festivals could potentially be scaled back to reallocate resources for curating smaller pop-ups. While festivals deliver large crowds, the number may overwhelm the infrastructure of the Market itself and drown out commerce for vendors. Since they serve a different audience than that of pop-ups, the commitment to festivals must be calibrated within the scale of priorities: to balance regional tourists with locals. Both pop-ups and festivals will be expected to operate with measurable objectives. Festivals may increase visibility, signal a shift in seasons, highlight culture bearers, and share the FMC's new future, but these benefits must be factored into their financial and branding costs.

**GOAL 1:** Confirm that all existing festivals are valuable moving forward.

**Action A:** Evaluate the efficacy of staging festivals in/adjacent to the two Sheds within the framework of the theory of change.

The current roster includes:

- January: The Joan of Arc Parade
- June: Creole Tomato Festival
- October: Boo Carré
- December: St. Nick

**Action B:** Define the objectives, budgets, and the weight that the FMC will put into each.

In the past, these have represented the FMC's primary means to actively communicate to the world that it exists. With the advent of pop-ups (directed to smaller, local communities of loyalists), the FMC may choose to redirect some of the resources from festivals to pop-ups. Past pressures to make big things happen in the festivals may no longer be as relevant to the FMC planning.







**GOAL 2:** Evaluate how these potentially lucrative events serve culture bearers.

**Action A:** Hire culture bearers as talent.

Approach each special event as an opportunity to showcase cultural authenticity. For these, enact a policy that places a preferential option for culture bearers to be hired as talent to perform and/or guest vendors to sell products.

**Action B:** Enlist culture bearers as experts to shape the programming.

Just as we recommend enlisting culture bearers to help steer this new work as members of working groups, the new work of the cultural liaison must also entail enlisting culture bearers to help design pop-ups and the scope and tone of festivals.

**Action C:** Distribute customer service surveys afterwards to partners, contractors, talent.

Utilizing the theory of change as a mode of operating, approach each and every special event as an opportunity to test the theory, and engage the public with rapid surveys (dot surveys off line, hashtags online), and to measure the efficacy of serving internal customers to evaluate their experience.

Ideally, the festivals should add financial and marketing value to audiences who are unaware of all that FMC offers. If they meet these goals and attract desirable numbers of visitors, then they should continue. However, the goal should not be to stage more and more festivals. They are disruptive to the human-scaled commerce associated with a market that serves locals' daily needs.



# Pop-ups & Seasonal Specials



While festivals may remind the broader community to visit the French Market, pop-ups and seasonal specials communicate to the local community that the historic market is moving forward into the future. Seasonal specials remain active for weeks to give the FMC a stable marketing message, while pop-ups are more fleeting. Limiting the number of pop-ups hosted and sharing them on social media creates a buzz. For those who miss them, they will want to attend the next one. Timed to occur during off-peak hours, pop-ups take advantage of easier parking, thinner crowds, and opportunities to enjoy what many articulated during the stakeholder engagement process: a chance to “sit, watch, and take it all in.”

**GOAL 1:** Provide the FMC with signature products to lure locals for an extended period of time.

**Action A:** Devote available space for extended stays to temporary vendors who help to brand a market’s season.

Over the decades, with the loss of agricultural vendors, this messaging has been made far more difficult. Some seasonal vendors may already attend: pumpkins in October, Christmas trees in December.

**Action B:** Establish unique partnerships for extended stays with key vendors and partners.

Just as there may be a season for pumpkins at the market, there may also be a season for school groups to conduct architectural scavenger hunts with partner organizations, like PlayBuild. School groups will not remain in the market for weeks on end. Each tour will last a morning, but the season for students may last for weeks. Regardless, it is important to remember that these vendors may serve a role as loss-leaders to attract locals. If you know that beginning in November, you can expect to find a selection of Christmas trees, then you are more likely to visit the Market with family, to enjoy a meal, hot beverages, etc. If, on the other hand, you are not certain that there will be trees, then you are more hesitant to take the risk.

**GOAL 2:** Reinforce seasonal specials with curated pop-up events.

**Action A:** Curate and stage pop-up events during off-peak hours.

These become the incubators to experiment with new partnerships, potential vendors, new products, relationships with culture-bearers. Free to the public, locals are invited to sit/learn/purchase products. These may also benefit from ticketed evening events to cultivate greater intimacy in experiences. While it is important that these events generate revenue, this may take more than one season to achieve this goal.



Shoppers find particular joy in the **surprises** that await them at public markets. Of course, in reality, organizers work strategically to deliver these surprises deliberately. For instance, talent is contracted weeks in advance. During the stakeholder engagement process, culture bearers voiced their desire to play meaningful roles in the French Market.

Whereas the FMC's signature festivals may attempt to attract as broad of an audience as possible, pop-ups intentionally attract niche audiences who are supportive of the subject matter, interested to occupy the market space during off-peak hours, and wishing to develop a different relationship with the FMC.

**GOAL 3:** Compensate artists, musicians, and culture bearers fairly for their talents; provide them public recognition, and forge an ongoing relationship with the FMC (to continue to perform for the FMC's banner festivals).

**Action A:** Curate pop-up programming through an equity lens.



"Vietnamese Farmers Market, New Orleans East". Source: <https://thelocalpalate.com/articles/shopping-vietnamese-farmers-market-in-new-orleans/>

The new staff, together with a working group of existing vendors and tenants, representatives from the communities of shoppers, partner organizations, and culture bearers can curate this list. Utilizing the public market triplicity, these events should have clear beginnings and endings. The potential for these pop-ups is as endless as the city and region's diversity:

- Black masking at St. Joseph's Day;
- Sicilian altars at St. Joseph's Day;
- Vietnamese night market to commemorate Wandering Souls Day;
- Crawfish and rice to recognize the coexistence of two crops/one farm;
- Central American pumpkins near Halloween;
- T-shirts and cotton to correspond with the harvest and holiday shopping;
- International pop-up to recognize the market's multilingual heritage;
- Spoken word pop-up in collaboration with literary/youth organizations;
- World's largest barbershop, to showcase local hair/nails/skin talent;
- Joan of Arc feast in the lead up to the parade;
- Juneteenth feast and BBQ summit.





## Pop-up Example

### *Embracing Change*

Consider t-shirts — the scourge of the French Quarter. Civic leaders have campaigned and legislated against them. And while these products may degrade the integrity of the French Quarter (and the French Market experience), in many shops along Magazine Street and in popular local markets around town, the t-shirt is a popular and authentic expression of place. Without increasing the number of t-shirt vendors in the French Market, how can pop-ups revitalize the selection on offer? This example may help to sketch out how popups deliver change to the French Market, engage local talent, and rebrand the space as relevant during off-peak hours, thus allowing locals to see the Market through fresh eyes.



To limit undesirable products, like souvenir t-shirts, Flea Market rules preclude the entry of new products in saturated product categories. to dilute their impact upon the shopper experience. Unfortunately, this has resulted in tying the hands of market staff. They defend existing, and in some cases undesirable and unimaginative products that are at saturation level, and turn away new vendors that offer innovative products. As a result, shoppers are left with a selection that has grown tired and has far too little competition. What if pop-ups introduce new dynamics? A t-shirt pop-up acknowledges the shirts as valid vessels to express local culture; to address historical and agricultural threads related to cotton; and to field-test within the safety of a pop-up the city's best new t-shirts for a day. Imagine an event that incorporates:

- A city-wide call-out to the most imaginative t-shirt designers to vend in the Market for a day;
- At the conclusion of the day, a jury awards prizes for best designs;
- Families are invited to paint their own t-shirt design and hang it up in the market (on clothes-lines – as is done in Japan's Beach Museum event) – also to be juried;
- Installations educate the community about the role of cotton in the region's economy, history, and ecology - it is important to share its brutal history in addition to the crop's beauty;
- Day vendors can include cotton candy, cut flowers (cotton), in addition to the t-shirt sellers;
- The evening concludes with a cotton fashion show to show-case reuse, natural dyes, and the return of comfort to fashion.

In addition to bringing a sense of purpose to a singular event, the t-shirt pop-up brings competition within feet of the FMC's existing t-shirt vendors. Will this spur innovation? Will the FMC select one or two of the pop-up vendors to join the roster of permanent stall-holders? Or will this event be repeated, in order to rebrand the FMC as a platform to showcase innovation? Regardless of the outcomes, it is important to weave these goals into the intended purpose of the event (just as it is important to integrate seating, learning, and selling into the DNA of how the event is managed):

12:00 – 4:00pm: T-shirt sales, interactive activities

4:00 – 5:00pm: T-shirt awards

6:00 – 7:00pm: Fashion show

7:00 – 9:00pm: DJ

# Focus on Food



Food is intrinsically linked to the French Market's brand. As one of the oldest public markets in North America, it once served as a wholesale and retail hub for commerce and distribution. Past reports, such as the 1990 and 2004 studies, devote considerable attention to preserving the once active wholesale operations and the community of regional farmers who used to set up as day-traders at the market. Feedback from local consumers reinforces the perception that food is important. However, stakeholder engagement with potential partners reveals skepticism that fresh and local food can easily return to the market.

The "build it and they will come" model: Partnerships in recent years, to stage farmers markets adjacent to the Food Shed, have been met with mixed results. This strategy asks for an intermediary to organize a roster of farming vendors to set up shop weekly to serve a community of consumers that this intermediary must attract to keep the farmers earning enough profit to justify their presence. The most recent partnership with Market Umbrella to deliver a weekly Crescent City Farmers Market ultimately only found success when the market relocated to Crescent Park. A Farmers Market may be possible again in the future. However, this model is high-risk. If you build it, they will not necessarily come. An occasional farmer who sets up at the market for a day will likely get lost in the shuffle and a larger undertaking of farmer vendors involves more risk. In order to mitigate these risks, we recommend the following actions that utilize currently dead spaces and times within the Market Sheds that offer locals with the opportunity to showcase their talents and culture, thus enabling the FMC to better reflect the full cultural experience of New Orleans.

## GOAL 1: Relaunch the weekly farmers market in Crescent Park.

**Action A: Re-engage Market Umbrella to explore the viability of restarting the weekday Crescent City Farmers Market at Crescent Park, next to the Rusty Rainbow bridge.**

Evaluate the past success of this weekday market, goals, and budget to explore the viability of a new relationship and new timeframe for reopening. Determine how the visiting market can purposefully support the FMC's theory of change.

**Action B: Establish a multi-year partnership with Market Umbrella to fulfill mutually beneficial goals.**

In the past, this relationship has placed considerable pressure on both partners to leverage one another for favorable outcomes. Market Umbrella struggles to launch a weekly market in challenging settings and encounters staff who either do not understand or value the partnership. Meanwhile, the FMC devotes resources to outsource one of its core components (as a food market) to a guest operator. This relationship should be transformative for both. Unfortunately, it has been more transactional in the past. Map out how the return of a weekly market will support the new strategic direction for the FMC's and Market Umbrella's priorities.

After years of various attempts to pilot the CSA / food box delivery model for local food products, a few social enterprises are beginning to succeed. Moreover, the



**Action B: Establish a multi-year partnership with Market Umbrella to fulfill mutually beneficial goals. (con't)**



pandemic has made this model more attractive and viable for both consumer and produce. A notable example is the Crescent City Farmers Market collaboration with Top Box. If this model persists as viable for local food distribution, there are opportunities for the French Market to revisit its role as a point of distribution. The French Market can serve as a distribution hub by providing refrigeration, promotion, and logistical support for food delivery partners. While the viability of farmers markets at the FMC remains uncertain, serving as a hub for food distribution rebrands the Food Shed as relevant to fresh food in the public mind. These types of activities may attract interest from other culturally relevant food vendors, who participate in pop-ups or whose food products are aggregated in food boxes, to explore the FMC as day-traders. In these instances, the FMC would likely need to reconsider altering its position on the Louisiana's cottage industry standards, which allow for some home-preparation of food. At present, the FMC rules and regulations do not accommodate such vendors. Pop-ups will help the FMC experiment, with these alternative models for food offerings, in a low-risk setting.

While wholesale distribution is not likely to return to the FMC; the development of pop-up initiated food box distribution, a shipping depot, and an inflow of new vendors keen to join local outreach; may enable the FMC to incorporate permanent infrastructural support to support food sales and distribution into its future facilities improvements. Infrastructural support can be provided and tested via impromptu means through portable refrigeration units. If successful, these infrastructural improvements can be baked into the FMC's long-term vision.





## **GOAL 2:** Explore new food distribution models for the French Market.

**Action A:** Meet with key food box distribution partners to determine if FMC can add value to existing efforts.

The FMC can add value by incorporating food box subscriptions into new pop-ups, provide space and infrastructural support (through refrigeration, storage, etc.) for downtown bicycle delivery, and forge partnerships with downtown employers to offer discounted boxes to restaurant and hotel workers as an employment benefit.

**Action B:** Develop a working group to explore the funding and business viability of partnerships.

In the past, potential farmers, fishers, and informal food vendors attempt to gain access to the Farmers Shed but fail to enter. The FMC is not equipped to handle vendors with insufficient food handling credentials or stand-alone farmers and fishers. Potential vendor expectations are consequently dashed quickly. Representatives from partner organizations and public servants at Land and Sea Grant (an LSU extension), may help to prepare and/or redirect these requests to FMC.

## **GOAL 3:** Make food a priority when staging pop-ups with partners to promote seasonal and cultural foods.

**Action A:** Develop a calendar of seasonal foods that can be offered by existing food stallholders or new pop-up vendors.

In order to bypass past challenges experienced by local farmers, to be publicly visible amidst a busy market of street food, flea, and craft products, use pop-ups to frame the cultural relevance of fresh local goods. Products like sugarcane, rice, satsumas, and tomatoes have seasons and cultures associated with them. Our recommendation is to incorporate the sale of foods into the critical mass of pop-ups at the French Market.



**Action B: Accompany food pop-ups with ticketed experiences that include pre-ordered boxes.**

Every event needs a hook to help elevate and promote it. For instance, if the pop-up is centered around the Croatian culture and its role in oyster farming, consider ticketed events in the evening whereby attendees experience something special: a tour of oysters from different parishes and locations paired with sparkling wine from a local liquor partner. These sorts of VIP experiences may not be appropriate for every pop-up; however, they may provide an opportunity to cultivate support from strategic partners. Moreover, as illustrated in the policy chapter, food is central to the French Market's historic purpose and brand. Ticketed events could be aggregated with food box partners to cultivate loyal support and experiment with alternative distribution models.

**Action C: Incorporate existing food stallholders into the planning process.**

Give existing food stallholders opportunities to shape the calendar of events, plan their business around FMC's priorities, and design pop-ups so that they may also benefit from these activities directly and indirectly. Whether existing stallholders decide to participate directly or not, they benefit indirectly from the additional, local foot traffic attracted to the market to experience and observe the market in a different way.

**Action D: Partner with local organizations for food box delivery.**

Potential partnerships that already have a working relationship with FMC include:

- Anna Marie Shrimp
- Broad Community Magic Cooperative
- Indian Springs Farmers' Association
- Market Umbrella
- SproutNOLA
- Top Box
- What's Good
- VEGGI Farmers Cooperative
- Covey Rise

# Year, Month, & Day at a Glance



Few markets sustain peak crowds at every hour in every day of operation. Rather, markets have rhythms. They experience peaks and valleys. Most vendors can tell you when they are because they see it in their revenue. Peak tourism is during the weekends. During the calendar year, there are seasonal peaks and valleys. Most restaurateurs can jot down their best and worst weeks of business in a given year. The French Market is no different.

Cultural tourists seek out what locals are doing. Pop-ups that attract locals have the potential to raise the French Market's visibility as a site of authentic gatherings that appeal to cultural tourists.

## GOAL 1: Expand and diversify the audiences that attend the French Market.

**Action A: Identify the French Market's peaks and valleys throughout a calendar year, month, and week.**

Reinforce the peaks that work for the market and its vendors (with the festivals that serve as beacons to the wider world). Then turn attention to generate new supporters, new shoppers, and ultimately new loyalists by activating the Sheds during off-peak hours, days, and weeks.

**Action B: Target communications to a variety of audiences via different channels and times of day.**

FMC should begin to manage a complex set of communications to different audiences: Festivals for regional tourism, seasonal specials for locals in search for signature products of a season (pumpkins, crawfish, etc.), and then pop-ups for communities who seek the platform of the public market to be seen and heard. While these various activations may work in concert, they also speak to different audiences.





## Potential Calendar Examples

Year, Month, & Day

### Year at a Glance

<b>JAN</b> ★  JOAN-OF-ARC FEAST	<b>FEB</b>  WEEKDAY STUDENT HISTORY SCAVENGER HUNTS	<b>MAR</b>  LENT: CRAWFISH VENDOR  ST. JOSEPH'S DAY ALTAR/ FEAST	<b>APR</b>  CRAWFISH & RICE	<b>MAY</b>  WEEKDAY STUDENT ARCHITECTURE DESIGN SCAVENGER HUNTS	<b>JUN</b> ★  JUNETEENTH
<b>JUL</b>  LEARNING WATERPARK  SPOKEN WORD	<b>AUG</b>  YOUTH MARKET	<b>SEP</b>  WANDERING SOULS DAY & NIGHT MARKET  INT'L POP-UP TO REFLECT WORLD OF VENDORS	<b>OCT</b> ★  HALLOWEEN PUMPKIN PATCH  CENTRAL AMERICAN PUMPKIN POP- UP	<b>NOV</b>  CHRISTMAS TREE SALES  COTTON HARVEST & T-SHIRT POP-UP	<b>DEC</b> ★

 : POP-UPS

 : SEASONAL SPECIALS

★ : EXISTING FMC FESTIVALS

Jan: Joan of Arc Parade, Jun: Creole Tomato Festival,  
Oct: Boo Carré, Dec: St. Nick

The annual calendar should be publicized widely to both internal staff and external customers. Management is responsible for sharing upcoming plans with vendors so they may participate in and support these new efforts. Vendors can get involved with pop-up programming by setting up during events and taking advantage of discounted rental rates and the opportunity to have a voice in shaping future programming.





## Potential Calendar Examples

Year, Month, & Day

### Month at a Glance

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
CHRISTMAS TREE SALES						
		Gumbo Pop-up				
CHRISTMAS TREE SALES						
	Gift Wrapping Pop-up		International Holiday Celebrations Pop-up			

: POP-UPS
  : SEASONAL SPECIALS
  : PEAK MARKET DAYS

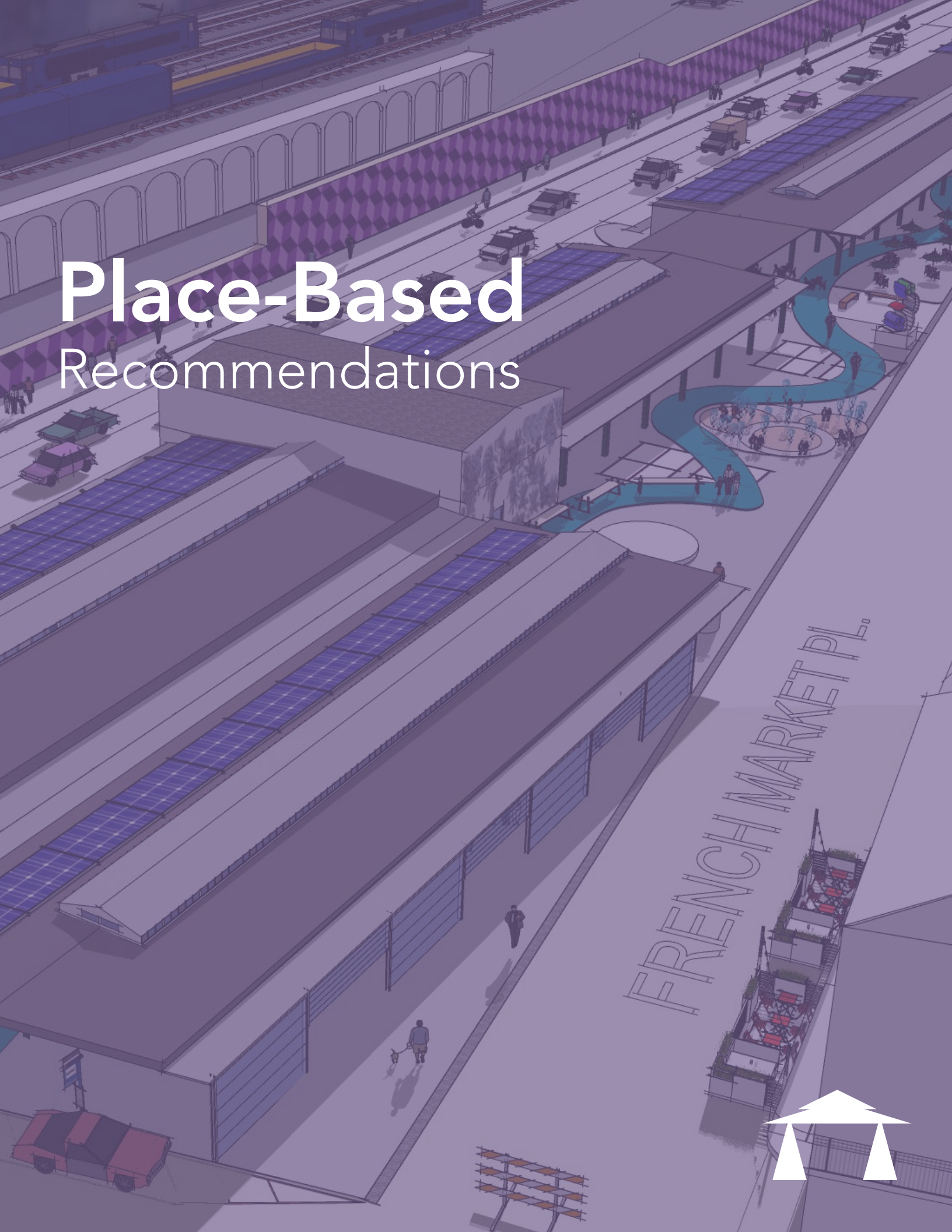
Each month should have a rhythm understood by many. There are peak days, just as there are slow days. Activate the Market with outreach events during slower days and weeks. This gives vendors opportunities to plan for pop-ups. Vendors may not immediately experience major increases in revenue, surprises can sour relations. While vendor buy-in may take some time, transparency and a clear actionable plan, will elevate both long-term vendors and new pop-ups' experiences. This also provides the FMC with opportunities to explore how pop-ups and seasonal specials can complement existing food and flea tenants' product offerings.

### Day at a Glance

7 am		7 pm	
8 am	STUDENTS	8 pm	LOCALS
9 am		9 pm	
10 am		10 pm	
11 am		11 pm	
12 pm	TOURISTS	12 am	
1 pm		1 am	
2 pm		2 am	
3 pm		3 am	
4 pm		4 am	
5 pm		5 am	
6 pm		6 am	

A regular rhythm of activities and events should start to emerge throughout the week. School groups may wander in during a weekday morning for an organized architectural scavenger hunt. By mid-day, visitors may begin to line up for lunch in the Food Shed; and by the late afternoon, a pop-up may begin to attract a throng of locals passionate about the topic of the evening. This is the rhythm of "ships passing in the night." Meanwhile, on weekends, there will be few pop-ups. There is no reason to compete with the pulse of big crowds who will drown out community outreach activities.



An architectural rendering of a city street scene, likely French Market Pl. The scene features a wide street with a pedestrian walkway on the left, a multi-lane road with cars and trucks, and a large building with a flat roof. The building's roof is covered with rows of solar panels. A winding, light blue path runs along the right side of the building, with people walking on it. In the background, there are more buildings, including one with a series of arches, and a bridge. The text "Place-Based Recommendations" is overlaid in the upper left. The street name "FRENCH MARKET PL." is written in large, stylized letters on the right side of the image. A small white icon of a house with two triangles is in the bottom right corner.

# Place-Based Recommendations

FRENCH MARKET PL.





# Place-Based Recommendations Summary

## Short-term Vision

**GOAL 1:** Improve the French Market's facilities in the short-term.

**Action A:** Add public art.

**Action B:** Expand and improve existing bathroom facilities.

**Action C:** Dedicate the adjacent plaza as a flexible space to support pop-ups, festivals, and seasonal activities.

**Action D:** Develop a transit hub on the Barracks Street side of the French Market by adding bike parking and a rideshare station.

**Action E:** Add information kiosks.

**Action F:** Add parklets and flexible seating.

**Action G:** Address parking and loading.

## Medium-term Vision

**GOAL 1:** Improve the French Market's facilities in the medium-term.

**Action A:** Build a multi-purpose platform with built-in electricity and sound infrastructure.

**Action B:** Add green infrastructure.

**Action C:** Upgrade existing fabric rain screens.

## Long-term Vision

**GOAL 1:** Improve the French Market's facilities in the long-term.

**Action A:** Build out a third shed over the pop-up plaza.

**Action B:** Build interactive play areas, like a splash pad.

**Action C:** Permanently close off one block of French Market Place, between Decatur Street and Governor Nicholls Place, to vehicular traffic in the future by installing bollards along Governor Nicholls and Decatur Street.

**Action D:** Address long-term loading needs.

# Place-Based Recommendations



Place-based recommendations include [physical improvements](#) at the Market Sheds and adjacent plaza that support the proposed policies and programs at French Market. The following concept sketches illustrate how some of these ideas might be implemented in the short, medium, and long term. Actions and concepts are elaborated on the following pages. Click on the image to jump to that vision's plan.

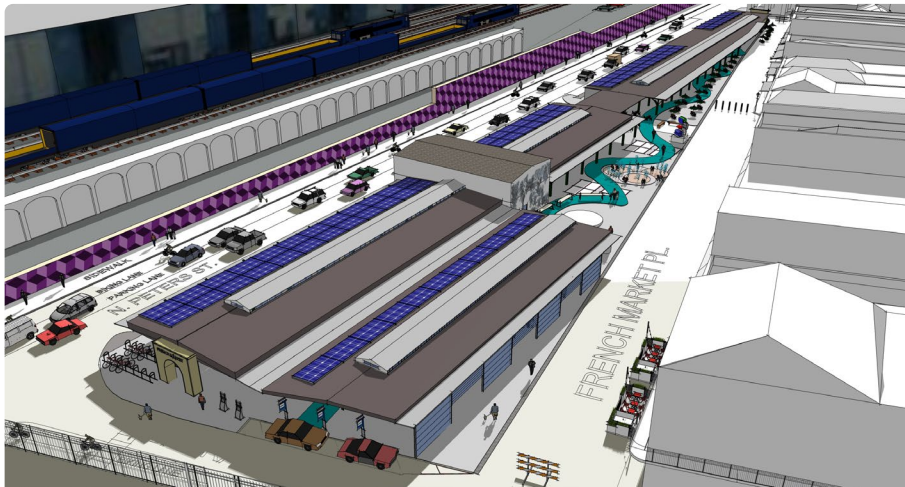
## Short-term Vision



## Medium-term Vision



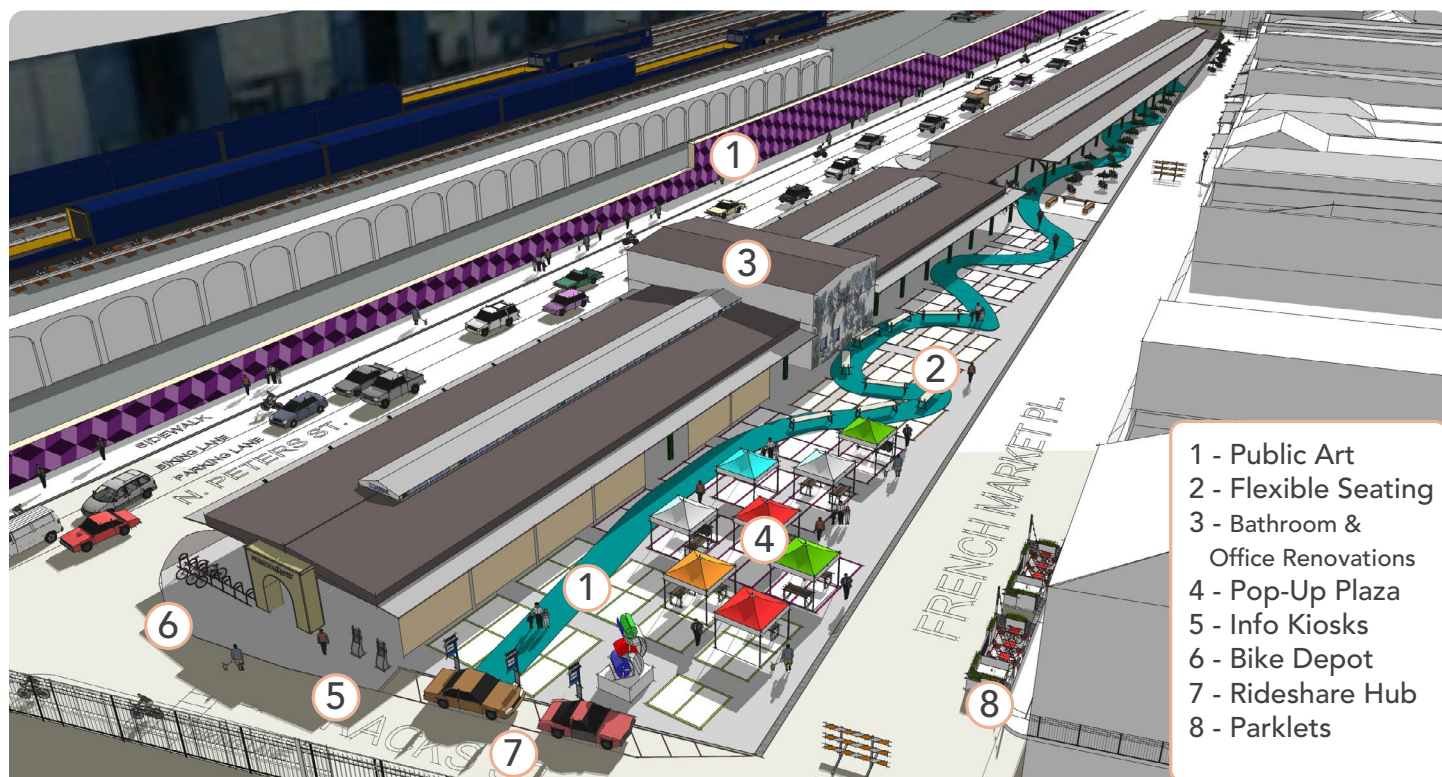
## Long-term Vision



## Short-term Vision



Proposed short-term investments include actionable opportunities that can be accomplished within the first year of implementation. FMC has a capital program that includes various funding sources with a portion of the funds already secured for implementation of some of these ideas. FMC is also actively working with the Mayor's Office to secure additional funding for other projects.



**GOAL 1:** Improve the French Market's facilities in the short-term.

### Action A: Add public art.

Incorporation of more public art to make the French Market more colorful and inviting is a top priority expressed by many stakeholders. This short-term concept plan shows murals at the flood wall to activate the North Peters side of the Market Sheds and murals on the ground that thread through the whole market. The mural threading through the market resembles the Mississippi River and can serve as a wayfinding and geographic storytelling device.

Artists already selling at the French Market could be hired to design the murals as an opportunity to promote their work and build ownership over the space.





**Action B: Expand and improve existing bathroom facilities.**

Many stakeholders expressed that improving and expanding the existing bathrooms should be a priority. Building out a mezzanine office above the existing offices and bathrooms would allow more space to be allocated at the ground floor to expand the bathrooms and repurpose the ground floor office to be a visitor's center and shipping kiosk.

Public restroom renovations might include public showers for vendors and the unsheltered. Management and maintenance issues related to public showers should be considered. See the [appendix](#) with additional research into successful models.

**Action C: Dedicate the adjacent plaza as a flexible space to support pop-ups, festivals, and seasonal activities.**

This might include farmers markets, food box pick-up days, or a testing ground for new product-mix ideas.

**Action D: Develop a transit hub on the Barracks Street side of the French Market by adding bike parking and a rideshare station.**

The Barracks Street side of the French Market offers an opportunity to include a transit hub that welcomes pedestrians, bikers, and rideshare vehicles. Installing a bike depot at the corner of Barracks and North Peters Street, further supports the progressive new bike path infrastructure that has been recently built around the market. Signage can be installed along an existing fire lane that bookends the plaza along Barracks Street to designate a rideshare station where pedicabs and rideshare cars can drop-off/pick-up visitors. Treating the Barracks Street side as a transport hub makes this side feel more like a second entrance to the French Market rather than a back-alley.

**Action E: Add information kiosks.**

Information kiosks can include wayfinding maps, menus for products that can be found at the market on a particular day, and programming schedules. These might be in the form of a physical sign or tied to a digital platform or app.



### **Action F: Add parklets and flexible seating.**

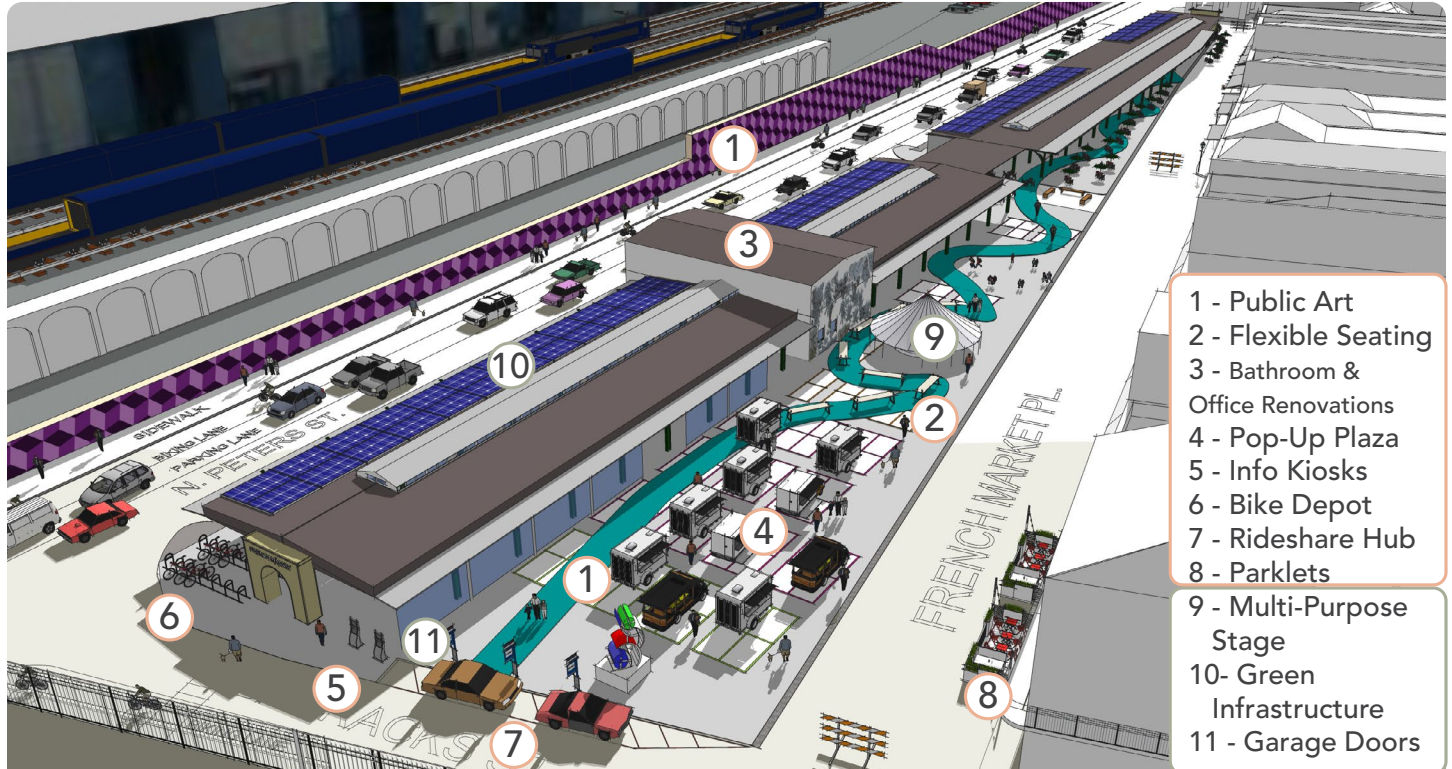
These can be arranged in a variety of ways to support diverse programming.

### **Action G: Address parking and loading through wayfinding signage.**

The FMC has large parking lots that can be accessed at the Moon Walk and at Elysian Fields. Both lots are within walking distance but lack direct sight lines between the Sheds and the parking lots. Consequently, there is a perception that there is nowhere to park. This can be resolved by installing clear wayfinding signs and graphics that direct people to the French Market's parking lots. Loading routes for vendors can also be delineated through wayfinding signage and graphics. Graphics painted on the ground can be used to demarcate dedicated loading routes and individual loading spaces. Signage with information on loading hours can be installed on site so that loading areas are kept clear during those hours.

## Medium-term Vision

Medium-Term place-based recommendations include physical improvements that may happen within 1-3 years.



**GOAL 1:** Improve the French Market's facilities in the medium-term.

**Action A:** Build a multi-purpose platform with built-in electricity and sound infrastructure.

This can be used as a stage for performances during festivals, a storytelling corner for educational programming, and a place to sit and plug-in electronics during off-hours.

**Action B:** Add green infrastructure.

Many stakeholders expressed a desire to see more green infrastructure at the French Market. Solar panels installed south-facing roofs of the existing Sheds and grey-water systems are examples of green infrastructure that can showcase the French Market's eye towards sustainability and progress.

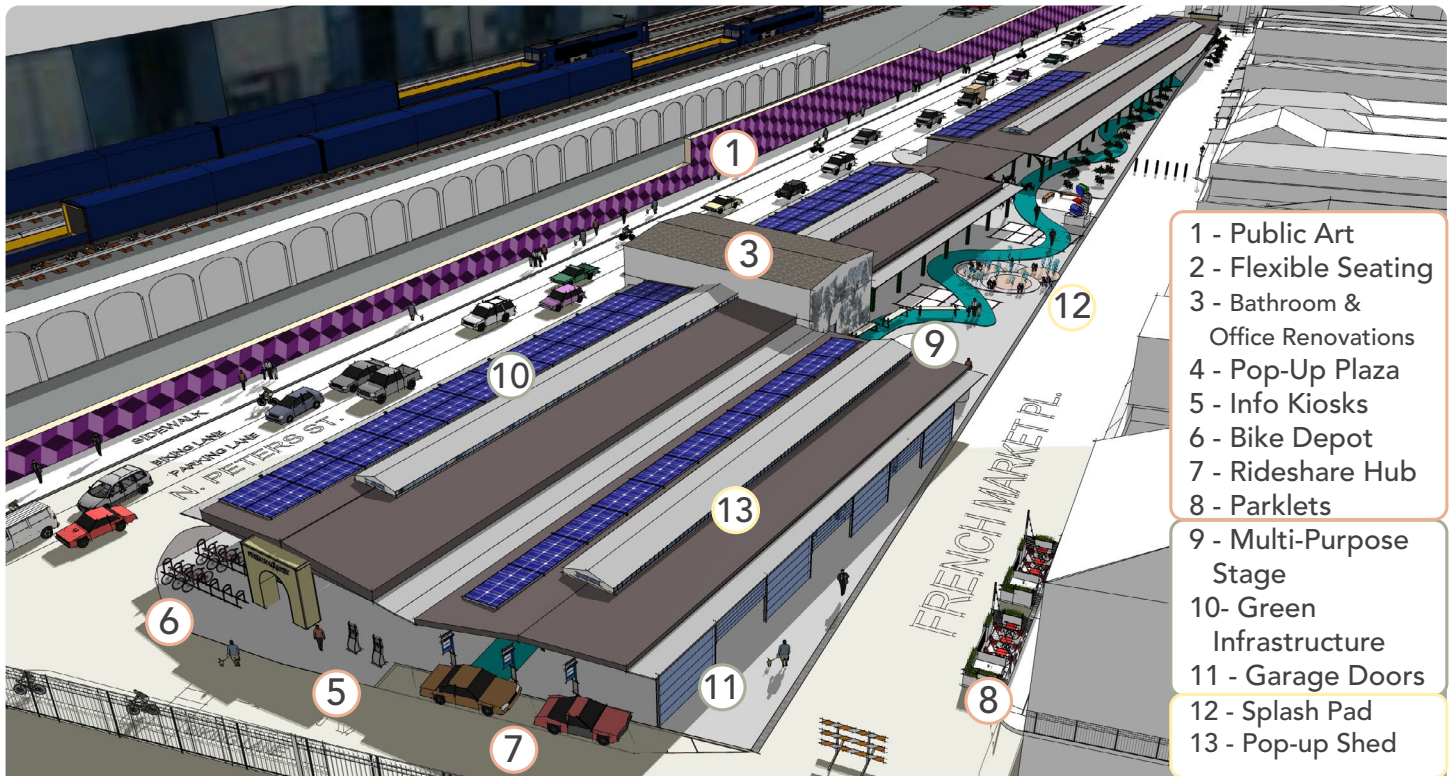
**Action C:** Upgrade existing fabric rain screens.

Upgrading existing fabric rain screens along the perimeter of the market Sheds to be more rigid, glass garage doors would better protect vendors and customers from wind-driven rain and weather disturbances.



## Long-term Vision

Long-term capital improvements are aspirational and will require more substantial planning, funding, and resources to implement successfully.



**GOAL 1:** Improve the French Market's facilities in the long-term.

**Action A:** Build out a third shed over the pop-up plaza.

In the long term, building out a third shed over the pop-up plaza would create additional weather-protected space that can be programmed year-round.

**Action B:** Build interactive play areas, like a splash pad.

Building out interactive play elements such as a splash-pad or water-feature in the open plaza area would draw more families to the market, especially during hot summer months.

**Action C:** Permanently close off one block of French Market Place, between Decatur Street and Governor Nicholls Place, to vehicular traffic in the future by installing bollards along Governor Nicholls and Decatur Street.

This temporary action has proven to be very successful and popular among locals and tourists. This would still maintain vehicular access at the second block of French Market Place, between Governor Nicholls and Barracks Street, for service and loading traffic.



### Action D: Address long-term loading needs.



Work with New Orleans DPW to demarcate and designate loading areas and times along French Market Place and N. Peters Streets in the long term. Provide signage that clearly describes designated loading hours along both streets so that loading aisles are kept clear during those hours and vendors with loading tags are not ticketed.

Vehicular paths and pop-up locations should also be demarcated underneath the new covered shed for pop-up trailers.

Loading areas and paths should be further defined through design and further vendor engagement during the implementation phase.



# Ending with People

## Conclusions & Next Steps





# Conclusions & Next Steps

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***“Plan the work and work the plan.***

***Are we ready now to do the work?”***

**-Carol BeBelle, New Orleans Cultural Thought Leader**

The recommendations outlined in this document are intended to lay the groundwork for the French Market’s next stage of implementing a refreshed vision for the future. Collaboration between French Market leadership, the City of New Orleans, partners, and stakeholders should continue; to review, refine, and implement these recommendations successfully. The team invites the public to stay engaged with this evolving work by doing the following:

- Check the French Market Corporation’s website for updates.
- Email FMC staff and use FMC’s virtual comment box to share additional questions and feedback.
- Tell your friends and neighbors about this ongoing work.
- Tag the French Market with photos of your vision!

Just as this work started with people, it also ends with people at the center. This document is a culmination of many voices coming together to envision the future of the French Market. It will take many hands to ensure that this work is done right, so that the French Market can achieve its mission to serve the public good.



# Appendix

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The full appendix document can be found on the [French Market website. \(frenchmarket.org\)](https://frenchmarket.org)

Engagement Summaries

[Round 1 Stakeholder Engagement Summary](#)

[Round 2 Stakeholder Engagement Summary](#)

[Round 3 Stakeholder Engagement Summary](#)

[Public Bathing Research Document](#)