

City of Albany  
Request for Qualifications (RFQ)  
Development and Implementation of a  
Community Farmers Market



Prepared by Ecology Center  
July 9, 2010



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Nicole Almaguer  
Environmental Specialist  
City of Albany  
1000 San Pablo Avenue  
Albany, CA 94706

Dear Nicole,

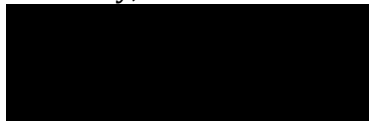
It is with great pleasure that I present to you the Ecology Center response to the City of Albany Request for Qualifications (RFQ), Development and Implementation of a Community Farmers Market. The Ecology Center has a long history of operating markets of quality and providing a host of additional environmental services.

The Ecology Center brings to the table skills, experience and resources that cannot be matched. Selecting the Ecology Center as the most qualified organization to operate the Albany Farmers' Market would ensure that the market is strong and secure for years to come.

As a resident of Albany, let me say that regardless of the outcome of the process I would like to commend you for initiating an open and inclusive process. I believe that it truly serves the interest of the community of Albany. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this process.

I eagerly await the outcome of the review panel's work. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have additional questions, concerns, or if you would like to schedule a tour of our markets.

Sincerely,



Ben Feldman  
Farmers' Market Program Manager  
Ecology Center

## I. General Information

### 1. Overview of the Ecology Center

The Ecology Center is a community-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit with 50 employees and an annual operating budget of over four million dollars. The mission of the Ecology Center is to promote environmentally and socially responsible practices through programs that educate, demonstrate, and provide direct services. The organization was founded in the lead-up to the first Earth Day in 1970 as part of the emerging environmental movement.

As summarized in Michael Pollan’s October 9, 2008 article in the NY Times Magazine, “After cars, the food system uses more fossil fuel than any other sector of the economy.” To address issues of health, nutrition, and climate change, the Ecology Center is working with our community to change the way we think about and consume food.

The Ecology Center’s Farmers’ Markets are one arm of our comprehensive Nutrition Food & Farming Policy programs (NFFP). The other NFFP programs are Farm Fresh Choice, the Berkeley Food Policy Council, and the EBT Program. As a whole, each year the Ecology Center’s NFFP programs help to: stabilize 100 independent, sustainable farmers and food vendors; serve over 400,000 general community members; reach an additional 10,000 low-income African American, Latino, Asian, and Multi-Ethnic residents; and employ and train over 30 low-income youth of color. These programs work directly with constituents, partners, and lawmakers to create an integrated food system that is healthy, equitable, and sustainable from seed to table.

In addition to the Farmers’ Markets, the Ecology Center’s programs include:



- **Berkeley’s curbside recycling program** that serves 36,000 households each week, was the first in the country, and operates under contract with the City of Berkeley. Our

expertise in curbside recycling has allowed us to develop strong recycling and composting programs at our farmers’ markets. By 2009 these programs had grown so strong that the Ecology Center was able to offer the first fully “Zero Waste” markets in the State. All of our markets are now

Zero Waste Zones where no garbage cans are needed -- only compost and recycling!

- **Farm Fresh Choice**, serving over 6,000 low-income youth and families in South and West Berkeley with nutrition education, produce sold at discounted rates, culturally specific cooking classes, youth employment, mentoring, and the creation of a cadre of youth advocates. Farm Fresh Choice purchases produce directly from farmers at the Ecology Center farmers' markets.



- The **Berkeley Food Policy Council**, a city-wide coalition of nonprofits, health service providers, schools, government agencies, and residents, connecting local agriculture with the community through replicable food policies and programs.
- The **EBT Program**, which trains Farmers' Markets across the state in the steps needed to accept Electronic Benefits Transfer cards (which replaced paper food stamps in 2003), and aggressively markets to benefits eligible populations with nutrition education and information on the Farmers' Markets where benefits are accepted. This program helps ensure that community members who make use of supplemental nutrition assistance are able to buy food at our farmers' markets and at farmers' markets around the state.



- **EcoHouse**, an environmental demonstration home, classroom, and garden.
- The **Climate Change Action Program**, directly educating residents on reducing their carbon footprint;
- **Information Services**, providing classes, events, hotline support, and the EcoDirectory searchable database of resources and business.
- Our **Retail Store**, which sells environmentally friendly clothes, toys, books, organic, gardening supplies, and non-toxic household products that

are hard to find elsewhere. A selection of these products is made available for sale at the farmers' markets.

- The **Environmental Resource Center** is open to the public with numerous resources including fact sheets, a hotline operator to answer questions on any environmental topic and refer residents to relevant programs, businesses, and agencies; a library of relevant reference publications. Fact sheets are brought from the Ecology Center to each market and made available at no charge to market goers and questions that the market staff cannot answer can be referred to the resource center.



- The **Fiscal Sponsorship Program** supporting and governing emerging organizations in alignment with the EC's mission.

As most of our programs are focused on the East Bay, we seek to tool our programs towards the culturally and economically diverse community in which we operate. We are committed to ensuring that all Ecology Center programs are able to engage a wide range of people and make special efforts to reach lower income community members and people of color. This manifests in making all of our classes low cost or free, creating special recycling campaigns for apartment buildings, making sure our information and programs are appropriate for renters as well as home owners, developing organizational cultural competencies to be able to serve a wide range of clients, and creating specific programs and outreach efforts to reach more deeply into low-income communities of color. Of paramount importance in our community outreach efforts is our dedication to recruiting staff members that possess the highest degree of commitment, integrity, and experience, and both culturally and linguistically represent those they serve.

## 2. Experience developing and implementing local farmers markets

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### 2.1 The Markets

The Ecology Center has operated farmers' market in Berkeley, California since 1987 and currently operates farmers' markets three days per week, year round, rain or shine. We operate markets one hundred and fifty times during the course of the year. Nearly one hundred different vendors participate in these markets. Most (83%) of these vendors come from within 100 miles. Combined, the farmers cultivate over 3,100 acres, with farms ranging in size from one third of an acre to 400 acres. At their peak, our markets attract over 10,000 customers in a week and during the course of the year, total customer attendance is approximately 400,000.

Each of the three markets that the Ecology Center operates has its own distinct character and flavor, reflecting the neighborhood that the market is located in as well as the community of shoppers and vendors that have evolved over the years:

#### South Berkeley (Tuesdays)



Before the Ecology Center became involved, a couple of different locations had been tried for a farmers' market. None of them had succeeded. When a loose collection of volunteers brought the idea to the Ecology Center in 1987, the City of Berkeley offered a lightly trafficked stretch of Derby Street between Martin Luther King Jr. Way and Milvia Street. The market started with just a handful of vendors selling produce out of the back of their trucks on a street that had been

closed to traffic. Over the years, the market has grown into a year-round market that covers all of the available length of Derby Street, with forty different vendors and 2,500 customers a day during the peak of the season. While the Tuesday market isn't the largest or most visited market, it certainly has the most dedicated customer base. One yelp reviewer listed on the site as Twilight G, had this to say: "The Tuesday market has a great feel to it. It's intimate and not at all touristy. On top of the satisfaction I get from buying directly from the farmers, there's something great about being at an FM after work, as a way to wind down and take in the outside (non-office) world."

The easy parking and position early in the week makes the South Berkeley market a favorite with restaurants. Food justice programs such as Spiral Gardens, Farm Fresh Choice, and a student-run produce stand called The Local, all purchase at the Tuesday market. As this market is located in a neighborhood where 40%-49% of the population is within 185% of the Federal Poverty Level, this is the market with the highest percentage of customers utilizing EBT, WIC and other nutrition assistance programs available to low income families.

### **Downtown Berkeley (Saturdays)**

Just three years after the Ecology Center started the market on Derby street, there was enough interest to justify opening a second market. In part due to the success of the Tuesday market, identifying a location for a second market was far more challenging. Negotiations with various stakeholders eventually led to the identification of a site located on Center Street, coincidentally located between Martin Luther King Jr. Way and Milvia Street, just as with the market on Derby Street. The location met the needs of many of the stakeholders and important criteria for a successful market. The market is highly visible from traffic on Martin Luther King Jr. Way while having minimal impact on actual traffic flow. It's



presence in the downtown helps support downtown businesses, but it's specific location does not block customer or delivery access to those businesses. The location is well served by public transportation with multiple bus lines in the area and the Downtown Berkeley BART station just one block away. While the site is also only one block long, it is a long block at approximately 400 feet. In the twenty years since the market opened, it has grown into the largest of our three markets, attracting 65 vendors and 5,000 customers weekly at the peak of the season. The Downtown Berkeley market is a destination market, attracting



visitors from all over the bay area and attention from national media. In 2000, Sunset Magazine listed the Downtown Berkeley Market as one of the best in the country. In 2008, the New York Times recognized the market in its *36 Hour* travel segment, saying “It’s tough choosing from the many farmers’ markets in the Bay Area, but for the real deal, head to the Saturday Berkeley Farmers’ Market.”

### **North Shattuck Market (Thursdays)**



The North Shattuck market opened in 2004 as a seasonal market offering all organic produce in the parking lot of what was then Elephant Pharmacy. The efforts of the North Shattuck Association were pivotal in identifying a site and getting the market started. In August of 2005, the market moved

from the Elephant Pharmacy parking lot to its current location of Shattuck Avenue at Rose Street and extended through the winter.

Once again, the north Shattuck Association played a vital role in identifying a site and working with local businesses to get the market established in its current home. The newest of our markets, the North Shattuck Market is still maturing, although vendors tell us that for a new market, sales are very strong. While the market has maxed out its available physical space with 25 vendors at the peak of the season, the number of customers continues to grow rapidly. At peak season the market attracts approximately 2,700 people each week.

A large grassy median in the middle of the market and the proximity of the very popular Cheeseboard pizza makes the market popular with families that come to shop, play, and eat. The community atmosphere of the market is strong. As a yelp reviewer Eric V. says. “This is my tribe, this is where we go as a family to buy our veggies for the weekend (Thursday is a very useful day for a farmers market). This is where we see our friends and build community and this is what I believe in. Plus its nestled between the drug store, the supermarket, the cheeseboard and the wine store, so you can really get everything you need walking.”

## 2.2 Unique Aspects of Ecology Center Farmers’ Markets

### Integrity

All vendors at the Ecology Center Farmers’ Markets produce the product that they are selling at the market. We feel strongly that farmers’ markets are a place for artisans rather than resellers. In the case of farmers, they must grow all of the produce that they sell. Non-agricultural vendors need to make the item that they are selling. For farmers, there is a system established at the state level that helps assure that produce sold at the market is grown by the farm in question, but ultimately, market management is key to ensuring that this is the case. For both farmers and non-agricultural vendors, we make annual inspections of farms and businesses to ensure that our expectations are being met.

### Vendor Mix

In order to succeed, a farmers’ market needs lots of things, but none is more important than the vendors that make up the market. At our markets we strive to balance choice with diversity. Over the years, we have learned that when customers can reliably find a wide variety of products, the market becomes part of people’s regular shopping patterns. As a result we pay particular attention to the vendor mix at our markets to make sure that items are represented in the right balance. We also have policies in place that help ensure regular attendance by farmers. Customers want to know that the item they saw one week will be there the following week. A strong, diverse farmers’ market builds a consistent customer base.

### Farmer Focus

At the Ecology Center our markets have two primary goals: to support farmers and to make seasonal, local, organic produce available to city dwellers. We take these commitments very seriously. We have a Farmer Committee and farmers and vendors on our Community Advisory Committee. Both of these committees help us make decisions about our policies and actions. Before we put



any new policy or program in place, we consider the impact it will have on our farmers. We even do little things, like sending our staff around to work the

stands for farmers who are working the market alone so they have the chance to take a break and use the restroom or get a bite to eat.

Many farmers markets have become a place for predominantly pre-prepared food purveyors and craft vendors with no assurances of who is making the product or where it is from, but not our markets. Our focus on farmers and the integrity of our markets gives us real credibility with our farmers and customers, and allows us to recruit the best growers who share our commitment to excellence.

### **Community and City Partnerships**

The Ecology Center is the regional hub organization for issues relating to the environment. We maintain close and collaborative relationships with similar organizations and recruit advisors from other organizations onto the Advisory Councils for our programs. Our Eco Directory is a publicly searchable database of over 3,500 individuals, organizations, agencies, and businesses with whom we partner. We have existing relationships with many health related organizations and are the organization of record for the relationship between food, farming, health, and nutrition for the Network for a Healthy California. We work closely with a number of different departments within the City of Berkeley on a regular basis, and our partnership with the City of Berkeley has been a mutually beneficial one. State Senator Loni Hancock and Assemblywoman Nancy Skinner are longtime supporters of the Ecology Center and have called upon us to offer them policy directions to improve the food, farming, health and nutrition landscape. A list of our community partners is included in the addendum.

### **Food Programs**

The markets that the Ecology Center operates serve as a hub for food access and food assistance programs. The Ecology Center's Farm Fresh Choice program maintains consistent, weekly produce stands at three West Berkeley facilities that offer subsidized after-school childcare and youth programs (Francis Albrier Recreation Center at San Pablo Park, Bay Area Hispano Institute for Advancement, and Berkeley Youth Alternatives.) In this way, parents can shop for fresh, organic food at a Farm Fresh Choice stand as they pick up their children. The FFC stands are run by culturally representative and bi-lingual adults and youth interns, and feature organic food grown by regional farmers of color. Thanks to the Ecology Center's Berkeley Farmers' Markets, relationships exist with each farm, so produce can be purchased at the Tuesday Markets at wholesale prices and then sold by Farm Fresh Choice at cost to increase affordability for low-income shoppers. Shoppers can also purchase FFC produce using their EBT cards. Unsold produce is donated to the partner sites for snacks and free lunches.

In addition to Farm Fresh Choice, other food access programs, such as Spiral Gardens, purchase produce from farmers at Ecology Center markets and then

sell the produce at reduced prices at community produce stands in neighborhoods where there is limited access to fresh fruits and vegetables. These food access programs are vital to addressing diet related diseases in our community. At the end of each market, a collection of volunteers from Food not Bombs comes through the market to collect leftover produce from farmers. They use that produce to make meals for people in need.

### **Zero Waste**

In March of 2009, the Ecology Center’s Berkeley Farmers’ Markets launched the Zero Waste Program. From the outset the intention of the program was to reduce overall waste generated at market with a particular focus on reducing the number of single-use plastic bags taken from market. With the help of a grant from the Alameda County Waste Management Authority, this program eliminated the distribution of plastic bags and packaging from all three farmers’ markets that the Ecology Center runs. Virtually all waste generated by the markets today is recyclable or biodegradable—nearly nothing from the markets enters the landfill. The program requires that instead of handing out free plastic bags, as had been customary, vendors now distribute paper bags or compostable “biobags” for a 25-cent fee. For customer purchases of more than ten dollars, vendors are given the option of waiving the 25-cent fee. Additionally, products previously sold in plastic packaging—ranging from blueberries in clamshell plastics to quark in plastic tubs—are now sold in non-plastic packaging that is compostable or recyclable. Drastically reducing the amount of plastic generated by the farmers’ markets ultimately decreases the amount of waste we pass on to our local landfills. Overall, the combination of education, packaging changes, and the bag fee succeeded in reducing the number of single-use bags generated by over 80% across all three markets. Instead, market customers have become accustomed to bringing their own reused or reusable bags to transport their produce home.

### **GMO/Methyl Bromide Bans**

As a multi-issue environmental organization with a customer base that is greatly concerned about human health and that of the natural world, the Ecology Center has taken strong stances on farming technologies that pose a threat to humans and the environment. To that end, genetically modified organisms, and produce grown in fields sprayed with the soil fumigant methyl bromide, cannot be sold in our markets. We have policies in place that make this clear with our vendors.

### **Advisory Bodies**

In addition to the Board of Directors of the Ecology Center, we have two advisory committees that help us make decisions regarding our markets. The Farmer Committee is made up of all of the farmers that participate in our markets and primarily provides feedback regarding issues related to farming and product mix within the market. This committee meets quarterly and is also consulted via email on an as needed basis. The Community Advisory Committee is made up

of farmers, vendors, and customers. The Community Advisory Committee provides feedback on non-agricultural vendors at the market, makes recommendations on policies, penalties, marketing, and a host of other issues. These two committees help ensure that the Ecology Center maintains vibrant markets that consistently meet the needs of the many stakeholders we serve.

### Supplemental Nutrition



When the switch was made from paper food stamps to an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) system, there were no provisions for the use of their EBT cards at farmers' markets. It was only through the work of the Ecology Center -- lobbying elected officials, designing and piloting a system -- that a system was developed. The Ecology Center pioneered the

system that was adopted statewide and then nationwide. Individuals with EBT cards can now use a wireless terminal that we have at our booth to turn their benefits into scrip, in the form of wooden tokens, that are redeemable with farmers at the market. This program, the WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, and the Senior Nutrition Program are vital to ensuring that economically disadvantaged members of our community are able shop at the farmers' markets that we operate.

### Credit Card Terminal

Based on the model of the EBT cards, we have developed a system by which customers can use a credit or debit card in order to purchase farmers' market dollars in the form of wooden tokens. The tokens are valid with all of the vendors and help when customers run out of cash or find that they arrived at market without any. This one small service has been of tremendous benefit to both the farmers and the shoppers, and unlike stopping at an "out of network" ATM, neither the Ecology Center or the bank charges customers for this service as it shows up as a purchase.

## 2.3 Policy Involvement

The Ecology Center has a long history of operationally focused programs; programs where we get our hands dirty--sometimes quite literally. We also have experience in the policy arena. Our hands-on experience lends a depth to our voice when we speak up on issues of policy. Recently we have been outspoken

on the topic of Methyl Iodide, a highly toxic substance that the California Department of Pesticide regulation is considering for approval in agriculture. We are also working with a coalition headed by the Agriculture & Land-Based Training Association towards the passage of a bill that would make EBT more accessible at farmers' market in the state. As we have in the past, the Ecology Center will be active on issues related to the next farm bill and we are gearing up for the 2012, campaign.

At the local level, the Ecology Center was actively involved in the writing the food and agriculture chapter of the Berkeley Climate Action Plan and our recommendations were used verbatim. This Plan is one of the most ambitious in the country and has already been replicated by cities around the world. The Ecology Center was also a key member of the Berkeley Food Policy Council (BFPC) in its original incarnation. As part of the BFPC, we played a pivotal role in developing the Nutrition Policies of the City of Berkeley and the Berkeley Unified School District. Now, with the help of a grant from the California Department of Food and Agriculture, the Ecology Center is in the process of re-forming the Council.

### **3. Site Assessment and Feasibility Skills for Developing a Market**

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#### **3.1 Staff Experience**

Here at the Ecology Center, we employ professional market managers with many years of experience. All of our core staff came to the Ecology Center with experience organizing and managing farmers' markets and additional personal experience as farmers' markets vendors. Our staff members have worked at dozens of markets around the bay area, giving us a tremendous insight into how different markets work to meet the needs of their communities. With six regular market staff and additional volunteers we have the resources and capacity to identify a site and assess it's feasibility.

#### **3.2 Criteria for a Successful Market**

In the past, we have been successful in identifying sites, with three flourishing markets to show for our efforts. Equally importantly, the Ecology Center has turned down many sites that have been brought to us in the hopes that we would start a market there. We know what makes for thriving market, and we do not enter into new market development lightly. Over the years we have developed some criteria that we use in evaluating sites for their feasibility. These criteria, which will be discussed more in the site selection process portion of this report, are: size, visibility, accessibility (parking, walking, public transportation, ADA, emergency vehicles), central location, bathrooms/water, local business integration, costs.

In addition we tap into years of relationships and other resources at the UC Small Farm Center, UC Sustainable Agriculture Resource and Education Program (UCSAREP), UC Extension, and numerous state and national networks related to food and farming issues. We are active participants at the Small Farm Conference, keeping up to speed on current developments in the farmers market sector, and serve on the board of the California Federation of Certified Farmers Markets.

## 4. Experience coordinating with local community organizations and merchant groups

Connections with community organizations serve to strengthen our markets, build the capacity of our organization, add value, and allow us to provide our services to people who might not otherwise be reached. For these reasons we take every opportunity to work with other community organizations. A full list of community partners is included in the addendum, but some of these partnerships deserve additional mention.



### **North Shattuck Association**

The North Shattuck Association played a vital role in the development of the North Shattuck Farmers' Market and five years later the Ecology Center still enjoys a very close relationship with the Association. Over the years, the North Shattuck

Association has provided logistical, marketing, and financial support to the farmers' market. The Ecology Center has jointly promoted events with the North Shattuck Association, such as the Spice of Life festival. Currently, we are working together to expand that market and install bollards to improve customer safety during market hours.

### **Downtown Berkeley Association**



The Ecology Center has a strong working relationship with the Downtown Berkeley Association. With a market located in the downtown, we have worked with the Association on a number of different issues including the Buy Local Berkeley Campaign, and the Berkeley Host Ambassadors.

### **Restaurants**

Ecology Center markets are frequented by many of the region's hottest restaurants, and we consider these restaurants partners in the work that we do. Farm-to-fork restaurants feature the farmers that raised the food being served in the restaurant, and in doing so, raise the profile of farming and help promote local, sustainable agriculture. Given the high-quality of the vendors at our markets alone, one would expect a strong restaurant connection, but we have



gone farther, reaching out to restaurants to develop cross promotion strategies. In 2007, as part of our farmers’ market 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, we brought a number of chefs out to market to make food for our customers and promote their businesses at the same time. A list of restaurants that regularly shop at Ecology Center markets is included in the addendum.

## 5. Community Building and Promotional Skills

Farmers’ markets are more than just a place to buy fruits and vegetables. Farmers’ markets build community and help connect people to the food that they eat. Here at the Ecology Center, we go to great lengths to help facilitate this process. Our community building efforts are closely tied to our promotional efforts. As such, we go beyond our print advertising by incorporating the multiple creative strategies that are detailed below. It is worth noting that we produce most of our advertising and promotional materials in house, saving us money and allowing us to adjust quickly to changing needs.




### Special Events

Special events are one of the main strategies that we use, both to build community and to promote the markets. Each year we have over twenty-five events at market. These include cooking classes and demonstrations, produce tastings, music events, family events, poetry festivals, and compost giveaways. Our Special Events Coordinator produces these events in house, often with community organizations as partners.

### Farm Fact Sheets

In an effort to help educate our customers about the farmers’ that participate in our markets, we have developed Farm Fact Sheets that give details about growing practices, distance, acreage, labor, and season, among other things. These sheets are popular with both our farmers’ and our customers. An example of a farm fact sheet is included in the addendum.

**ECOLOGY CENTER'S  
BERKELEY  
FARMERS' MARKETS**



**LUCERO ORGANIC FARMS**

ABOUT: Ben Lucero describes farming as a constant learning process. He has been learning how to farm throughout his entire life. Raised in a farm worker family of Native American and Spanish descent, one of his earliest farming experiences was picking cotton along side his parents when he was five years old. He has always farmed with an ecological mindset. He started his first organic farm in the 1990s and has been selling at farmers' markets since the movement took off in the 1980s. In 2006, Ben's son Curtis returned to the farm, along with his wife Priscilla. Ben says that having their extra help over the past 5 years has been great! In 2007 the Lucero's launched a CSA program as an additional outlet to farmers' markets. The CSA has grown each year, and they look forward to expanding in the future.


MARKET DAYS: Tues, Thurs & Saturdays  
SELLING SEASON: April - December  
(2008) 324-4138  
lucerofarm@yahoo.com  
cuceroec@yaho.com

**FARM FACTS**

LOCATION: Look, San Joaquin County, CA  
DISTANCE FROM BERKELEY: 90 miles  
ACREAGE IN PRODUCTION: 23 acres  
SOIL TYPE: Sandy loam, loam  
WATER SOURCE: Well

PEOPLE: Ben & Karen Lucero, along with their son Curtis and his wife, Priscilla, work full-time on the farm. They have 5-6 employees during peak season, and four children and grandchildren who help out during summer vacation.

PRODUCTS: Strawberries, raspberries, heirloom tomatoes, tomatoes, okra, cucumbers, peppers, eggplant, beans and summer and winter squash.



**GROWING PRACTICES**

ORGANIC CERTIFICATION: Certified Organic by CCOF since 2002.  
FERTILIZER: Organic compost, cover crops, organic fish emulsion fertilizer.  
WEED CONTROL: Mechanical and hand cultivation, mulch, and use of drip irrigation.  
PEST MANAGEMENT: Beneficial insects, owl boxes, OMRI-approved insecticides when needed.

Berkeley Farmers' Markets 510-548-3333 bfm@ecologycenter.org www.ecologycenter.org/bfm

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### **Frequent Shopper Program**

For our Tuesday and Thursday markets we offer a frequent shopper card to our customers. When customers come to the Ecology Center booth at market, we stamp or sign their card. Once the card is filled out, customers receive a pint glass with our logo on it and are entered into a drawing to win a bag of produce. Customers can also save up cards in order to receive other farmers' market merchandise.

### **Question of the Month**

Each month we create a trivia question on topics related to food and agriculture that our customers have the chance to answer. At the end of the month, a winner is drawn from all of the correct submissions.

### **Print Advertising**

Each year we place dozens of ads in the East Bay Express, Monthly, and Edible East Bay. During our busier season we have ads in nearly every edition of each of the publications.

### **Newsletter**

On a quarterly basis, we publish a newsletter to inform our customers about interesting things that are happening at the market, educate customers about different vendors, and provide seasonally appropriate recipes.

### **Twitter**

We have also begun using twitter as a way of live-updating our followers about what's happening at the markets, as it is going on. We focus our tweets on what is new and seasonal at the markets and special events and promotions.

## **6. Ongoing Success of the Markets**

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All three Ecology Center markets are highly successful on a number of different levels. Our markets are all well attended by shoppers and farmers, have loyal attendance and strong community support, are profitable for the Ecology Center and the farmers, and have an excellent year-round variety.

### **Awards**

Ecology Center markets have consistently been recognized as special markets. Over the years our markets have been the recipients of numerous awards. An extended run of wins led the East Bay Express to retire its farmers' market category. Most recently, the Ecology Center markets finished first out of twenty-eight farmers' markets from all over the bay area in the SFGate Baylist Best contest.

### Vendor Interest and Retention

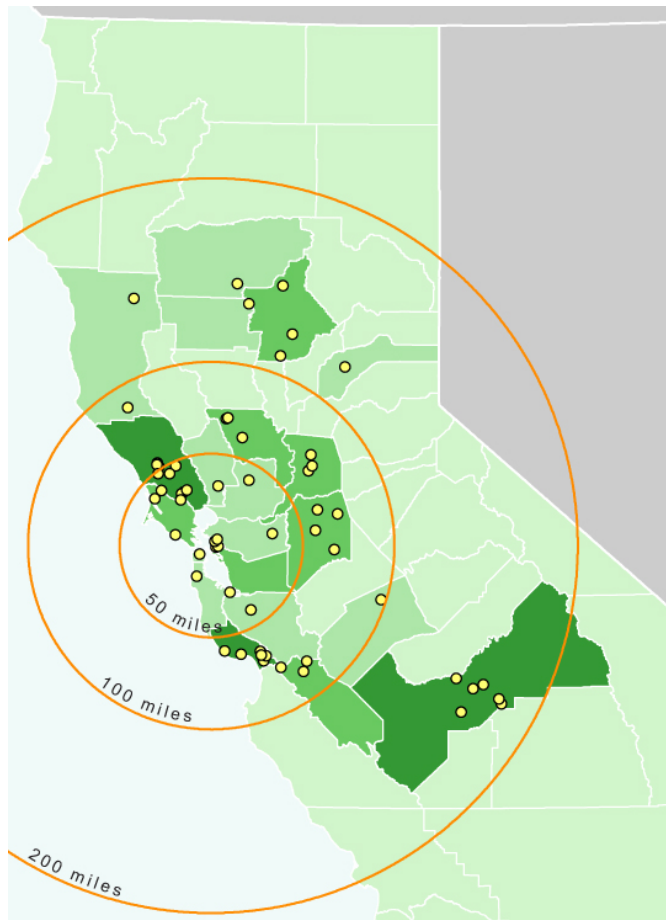
It is clear based on how popular our markets are with vendors that they are profitable and successful markets. Each year we receive hundreds of applications from vendors that would like to participate in our markets. Likewise, retention of vendors that already participate in our markets is very high. From one year to the next we typically retain 95% or more of our vendors.

### Customer Support

Each year our markets attract more customers. This is particularly significant as two of our three markets are long standing, mature markets. This indicates that we are continuing to improve and change our markets to meet the needs of additional customers. Customer feedback from websites such as Local Harvest, Yelp, and Chow indicates both in ratings and comments that our markets are very highly rated and well loved.

## 7. Ability to Provide Local, Organic Produce and Goods

The Ecology Center has a strong track record of providing local, organic, produce and goods. Seventy five percent of the farmers that participate in our markets



are certified organic, and even more grow their crops in accordance with organic principles but have chosen not to become certified. All of the produce vendors at the North Shattuck Farmers’ market are certified organic. Processed food vendors are required to use at least 80% organic ingredients, or ingredients purchased at the market. As a result, we can knowingly say that more than 80% of all of the food sold at Ecology Center markets is organic. To further incentivize organic production, we offer organic growers discounts on their stall fees.

Alameda County is not a strongly agricultural county, however, we are within a short drive from some of the most

productive farmland in the country. Eighty three percent of our vendors come from within 100 miles of the Ecology Center, and all but one of our vendors is within 200 miles. The lone exception to the 200-mile limit is a date farmer from Thermal, California. Dates, a popular item at farmers’ markets, are only grown in the deserts in the southern portion of the state. In addition to the strong slate of vendors that we already have participating in our market, we have an extensive waiting list to draw upon that would help us meet the needs of the Albany community, if we are selected to do so.

## II. Market Concept

The Ecology Center has a vision for the Albany Farmers’ Market as a vibrant community market that connects exceptional growers of local, organic produce with Albany residents who are seeking that produce. The farmers’ market would integrate with existing projects and efforts in Albany, such as the climate action plan, the sustainability committee, produce swap, and urban and backyard gardening.

### 1. Site Selection Process

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#### 1.1 Criteria For Evaluation

As discussed above, a number of different criteria go into developing a successful market. In our evaluation of different locations to determine their fitness as a market location we will use the following criteria:

##### **Size**

The physical space available for the market plays a major role in the success of a market. The location needs to be large enough to accommodate enough vendors for the market to have both a “critical mass” and a wide diversity of products. Generally, this means that there needs to be space for 40 stall spaces (each ten feet by ten feet). Ideally, the location can be arranged such that there are two rows of vendors opposite one another with a customer walkway of 10-15 feet.

##### **Visibility**

Advertisements, signs, posters, and banners are all effective tools to promote farmers’ markets, and we use all of them, but the market can be an advertisement for itself. When placed in a location that receives heavy foot traffic or passing vehicles the market can receive thousands of impressions during the duration of the market. For example, traffic studies have shown that during the peak commute hours of 4pm-6pm approximately 4,000 vehicles pass by the

location of the South Berkeley Farmers' Market. Unlike other forms of advertising, people viewing the actual market can stop then and there to shop. They do not have to remember the date and time and wait until the next market.

### **Accessibility**

Accessibility is key. As would be expected, if customers have a difficult time reaching the market, they are less likely to attend. Most farmers' market customers arrive by car, and as a result, adequate parking is a must. In addition to car parking, bicycle parking, easy access on foot, and proximity to public transportation are all key elements in choosing a location. Furthermore, locations need to meet appropriate ADA accessibility guidelines and be accessible to emergency vehicles.

### **Local Business Integration**

Farmers' markets have consistently been shown to support businesses in the neighborhood surrounding the market. A 2002 study by the Project for Public Spaces showed that 60% of market shoppers visited other, local business and of those, six in ten said that they shopped at those businesses only on market days. A similar assessment of the Manhattan Beach Farmers' Market in 2009 indicated that the market's 2,780 customers brought an estimated \$26,300 to neighborhood businesses. Choosing a site that has opportunities to work with local businesses rather than impede them can be beneficial to both the market and the businesses.

### **Effects on Neighbors**

Like its effect on businesses, a farmers' market should be an amenity for neighbors of the market. A market location should not unduly impact residents. Residential streets where a market would block access to residential driveways would not be appropriate. Effects of parking, trash, noise, and vendor vehicles will be considered.

### **Restrooms and Water Availability**

In accordance with the California Retail Food Code, restrooms must be available within 200 feet of the farmers' market. At Ecology Center markets, we have used city and school restrooms, restrooms operated by local businesses, and as a last resort, a portable toilet. Having clean, potable water available for vendors is also important.

### **Costs**

Any costs, such as rent, permit fees, janitorial fees, or taxes associated with the site would also play a role in the site assessment.

### **Safety and Security**

Any site chosen must meet a minimum level of safety for all participants. Major safety or security concerns that cannot be mitigated will lead a site to be eliminated from consideration.

### **Other Amenities**

Some sites may have additional amenities that are not necessary for the operation of the market, but improve its viability or enjoyability. One example would be a market that takes place in a park with a playground. While the playground is not a vital requirement, children can play while their parents shop, adding to the overall enjoyment of the market experience.

### **1.2 Possible Sites**

The Ecology Center has identified a number of sites as possible locations for the Albany farmers' market. Some sites have already been eliminated based on conversations with business owners, residents, or city staff. Other locations may be identified and considered during the process. At this time the locations that we believe to be worth further consideration are listed below with a preliminary assessments:

## Solano Avenue between San Pablo Avenue and Adams



As the major business artery in Albany, Solano Ave is a logical choice as a location for the market. While it's small size would limit the number of vendors, the market would be highly visible to traffic coming down Solano towards the market, and to drivers passing by on San Pablo. The proximity to traffic on these streets does present a safety consideration.

**Size:** 200 feet by 50 feet (narrowing to 40 ft at Adams). Space for approximately 40 stalls

**Visibility:** Excellent

**Accessibility:** Good

**Opportunities for Local Business Integration:** Excellent

**Effects on Neighbors:** Likely minimal, parking impacts unknown

**Restrooms and Water Availability:** Unknown, but promising based on number of local restaurants.

**Costs:** Unknown

**Safety and Security:** Fair

**Other Amenities:** Unknown

## Cornell School



Cornell School is the largest of the possible sites that we have identified, giving ample room for vendors. The site is fenced on all sides with access through 2-3 gates. It's contained nature and location away from busy streets makes the location very safe and secure, but limits visibility. With narrow residential streets on either side, considerations for parking and large vehicles would need to be made.

**Size:** Two connected areas, one approximately 150 foot by 80 feet and the other approximately 150 feet by 150 feet. Room for 120 stalls.

**Visibility:** Poor

**Accessibility:** Fair

**Opportunities for Local Business Integration:** Good

**Effects on Neighbors:** Potentially significant

**Restrooms and Water Availability:** Yes

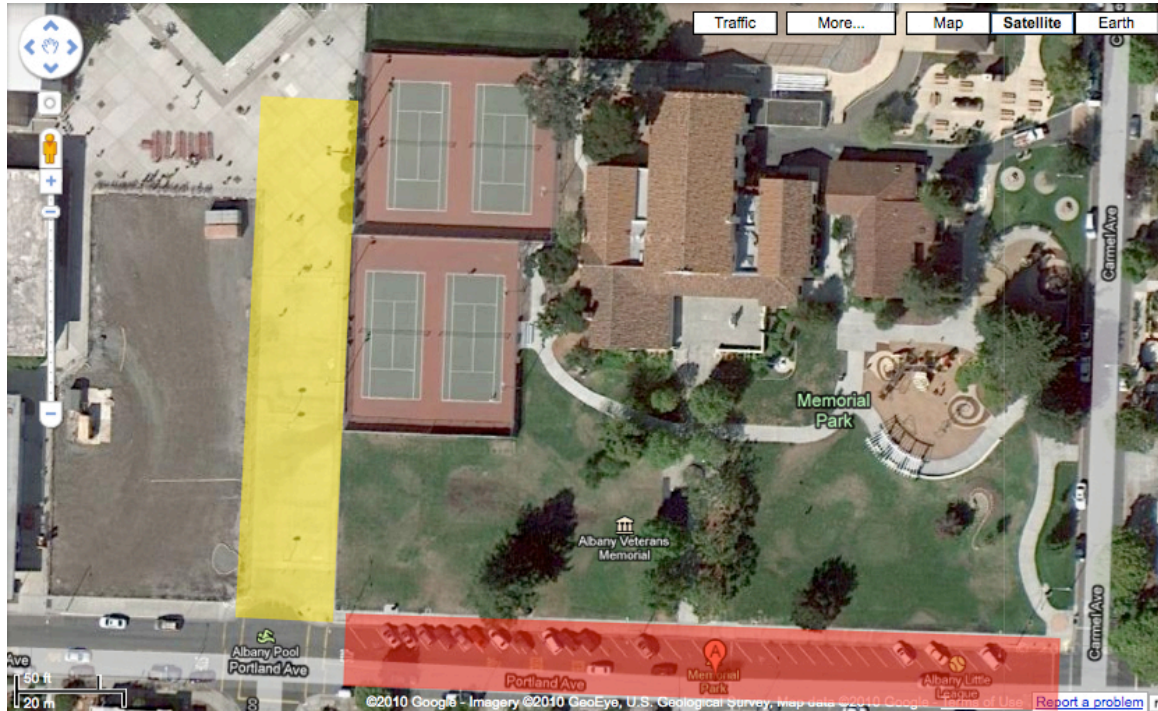
**Costs:** Janitorial fees, amount Unknown

**Safety and Security:** Excellent

**Other Amenities:** Playground, School Garden



## Memorial Park/Albany High School



This site offers excellent opportunities to tie into existing community activities such as after school childcare, baseball games, the September Music in the Park series, and general park use. The location provides enough space for a moderately sized market.

**Size:** Dependant on layout. Approximately 300 feet by 50 feet (space for 60 stalls) in the basketball courts next to the park (in yellow). Space for an additional 20 stalls could be created by closing the westbound lane of Portland Ave (red).

**Visibility:** Good

**Accessibility:** Fair

**Opportunities for Local Business Integration:** Fair

**Effects on Neighbors:** Dependant on layout

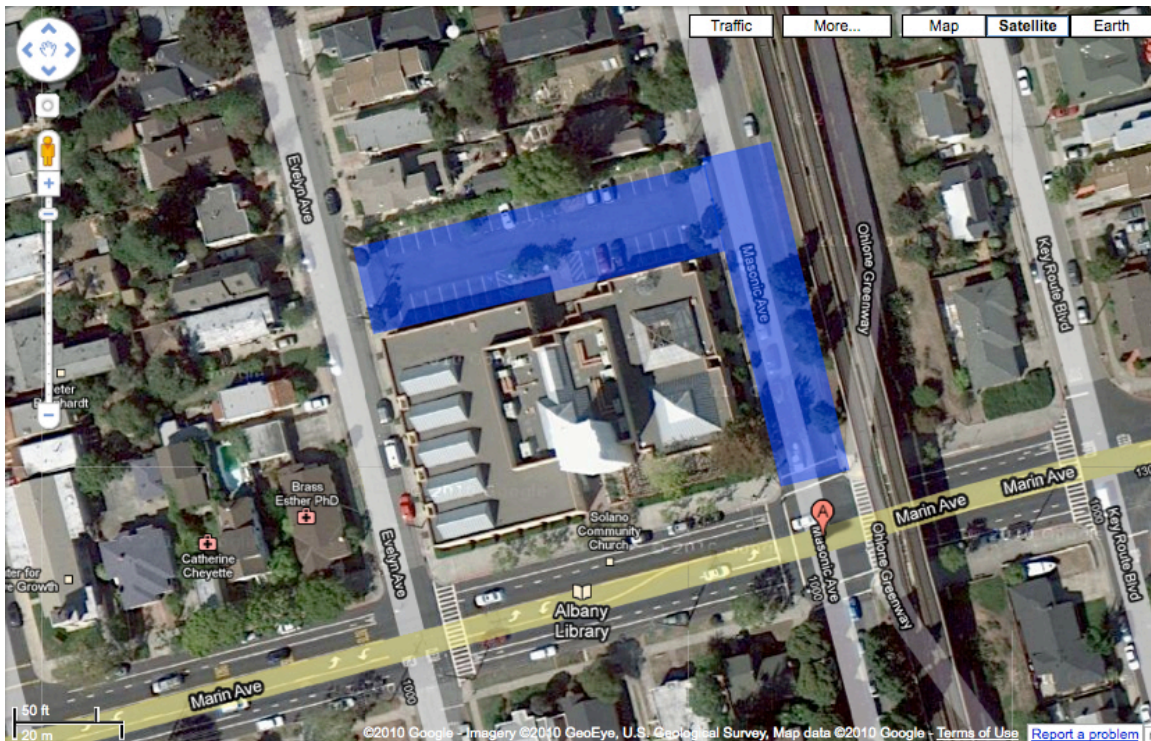
**Restrooms and Water Availability:** Yes

**Costs:** Unknown

**Safety and Security:** Good

**Other Amenities:** Playground, Stage, Music in the Park concert series

## Albany Library and Masonic Ave



A viable market at this location would require the use of both the library parking lot and the portion of Masonic between the lot and Marin Avenue. The market would be highly visible from Marin Ave and could make use of space next to the Ohlone Greenway for special events. Closure of the street between the lot and Marin would require residents on Masonic to find alternate routes to their house.

**Size:** Lot is approximately 200 feet by 60 feet wide although not all is usable space. Street is 150 feet by 45 feet. All together, enough room for 55 stalls.

**Visibility:** Excellent

**Accessibility:** Good

**Opportunities for Local Business Integration:** Fair

**Effects on Neighbors:** Potentially Significant.

**Restrooms and Water Availability:** Restrooms in Library, Water unknown

**Costs:** Unknown

**Safety and Security:** Fair

**Other Amenities:** Library, Ohlone Greenway

### 1.3 Process and Stakeholder Involvement

Our process for identifying a site would be an open process, involving our staff, board, advisory bodies, stakeholders and the public and would include the following steps:

- 1.) Review existing sites and scout additional ones
- 2.) Contact property owners to assess availability
- 3.) Narrow sites based on relevant criteria
- 4.) Meetings with stakeholders to gather input and address concerns
- 5.) Submittal of Permit Application

## 2. Market Schedule

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### Day And Time

With many well-established markets, the East Bay is a challenging place to be operating farmers’ markets. In the immediate vicinity of Albany there are farmers’ markets almost every day of the week. Weekends tend to be more popular days for markets as many people are off work, and many businesses are closed. Mondays are not typically farmers’ market days, as vendors are recovering from weekend markets and preparing for the upcoming week.

Day	Market	Distance from Albany
Tuesday	South Berkeley El Cerrito Plaza	2 miles > 1 mile
Wednesday	None within 5 miles	
Thursday	North Shattuck	1.5 miles
Friday	Oakland Kaiser	4.5 miles
Saturday	Downtown Berkeley El Cerrito Plaza Beehive Market	1.75 miles > 1 mile 1.5 Miles
Sunday	Kensington Temescal	1 mile 4 miles

While no decisions have been made, the above table shows Wednesday to be the day that would reduce overlap with other farmers' markets in the area. In order to reach the working population, weekday markets typically operate in the evenings. Alternately, if a weekend date proves preferable or necessary, Sunday would likely be a better day based on number, size and proximity of other markets. The final decision on day and time would likely be influenced by constraints of the site.

### **Season**

Initially we anticipate the market would operate seasonally starting in April or May and continuing until October. Once the market is established, it could go to a year-round market. This is what we have done in the past with our markets and is standard practice for new farmers' markets. The length of time that the market would operate as a seasonal market would depend on how successful it is at drawing customers and supporting vendors.

## **3. Market Composition**

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As discussed previously, the vendor mix at a market greatly influences its success. Over the years we have developed a model for the percentage of various categories of vendors that has a history of success.

### **3.1 Vendor Type and Percentage**

#### **Farmers**

Unsurprisingly, farmers are the backbone of a farmers' market. Typically 55-65% of the market is farmers based on number of vendors, and 65-75% based on number of stalls. This is because many farmers use more than one stall space, but other vendors are limited to one 10 by 10 space. Farmers include those that grow or produce fruits, vegetables, grains, beans, honey, eggs, meat, chicken, wine, cheese, yogurt, herbs, and aquaculture.

### **Pre-Prepared and Packaged Food**

Artisan food purveyors that make and sell products such as bread, pasta, pastries, ice cream, vinegar, tortillas, tamales, pickles, sauerkraut, tofu, coffee, chocolate and other foods make up 30-40% of our markets.

### **Hot Food Prepared on Site**

Vendors that make and serve (usually hot) food on-site make up 5-10% of our market vendors. Having these vendors provides additional diversity, promotes the community aspect of the market, and ensures that customers and vendors don't go hungry.

### **Other Services**

Additional services such as knife sharpening and massage are offered at some of our markets, are limited to one or two spaces at market.

## **3.2 Vendor Selection Process**

First priority for spaces will go to existing vendors at Ecology Center markets and businesses based in Albany. The steps in the process will include:

- 1.) Alerting Ecology Center vendors and Albany Businesses
- 2.) Receiving applications from interested vendors
- 3.) Assessing available vendors
- 4.) Reviewing additional needs
- 5.) Recruiting additional vendors as needed

## **4. Ongoing Management and Self-Sufficiency**

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The Albany Farmers' Market would be operated by the Ecology Center with the same commitment that we operate our other farmers' markets. Staffing would likely include one market manager, one assistant manager and one or more volunteers. Additional resources such as fact sheets, merchandise, compost and recycling bins, would be provided through the existing framework and infrastructure of the Ecology Center. The market would be entirely self-sufficient, supporting itself through the collection of stall fees from vendors.

## **5. Opportunities for Community involvement/Special Programs**

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There are opportunities for the community of Albany to become engaged and actively participate in the market. Ultimately, community members will dictate the level and type of involvement, but we have discussed the following ideas:

### **Tie-ins with Existing Community Events**

This could include the Solano Stroll, Music in the Park concert series, 4<sup>th</sup> of July festivities, community produce swap, Dinner with Albany, National Night Out, or other events.

### **Community Produce Sale**

Building upon the existing community produce swap, some community members have expressed interest in setting up a booth where residents could sell produce grown in their gardens. While this idea would present some challenges based on existing direct marketing regulations, we love the idea and would be willing to work with residents and the County of Alameda department of Agriculture to see if we can come to a resolution.

### **High School Internship**

This is another idea proposed by a community member. High School Students would work at the farmers' market and receive high school credit as well as job training.

### **Restaurant and Institutional Involvement**

We would welcome restaurants and other institutions in Albany that serve food to purchase from the market and we will do everything we can to support such efforts. This is an excellent opportunity for cross promotion.

### **Durable Dish**

Pushing the envelope of Zero Waste, vendors providing food for consumption on site could offer durable plates and utensils with a deposit. Vendors would then take the dishes back to their facilities to be washed and sanitized.

## **III. Conclusion**

The Ecology Center is deeply grateful for this opportunity to present the City of Albany with our qualifications and request the opportunity to serve the residents of Albany with a self-sustaining, high-quality, environmentally sustainable Farmers' Market. It would be our profound pleasure to work with your residents and business owners to find the ideal location and to bring our 23 years of expertise and partnerships to making Albany's Market a thriving hub for community, food, and low-carbon living.

## Key Staff, Bios, and Organizational Structure Ecology Center

### Biographies

**Martin Bourque** has been EC's **Executive Director** for seven years. He comes from a food and farming background with a Masters degree from the University of California at Berkeley. He has a strong background in local food systems and urban farming from both policy and production perspectives. He has worked on California's food system from the pesticide perspective through his four years at the Institute for Food and Development Policy (Food First) and Californians for Pesticide Reform where he helped develop the first statewide mapping system of California's pesticide applications for public use. Mr. Bourque was also the national director of training for ALTERTEC, Guatemala's leading organic farming organization.

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**Penny Leff, EBT Program Manager**, has worked with the Ecology Center since 1996 and has provided technical assistance to farmers' market managers throughout California resulting in implement and promotion of food stamp EBT access at more than 60 farmers markets. Ms. Leff has over 20 years experience developing and managing programs, projects and small businesses, including her work as the Regional Manager for the California Growers' Collaborative, and as the Agritourism Coordinator for the UC Small Farm Program. Ms. Leff received her B.S. in Managerial Economics (Agricultural Economics emphasis) from University of California, Davis in 2007.

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Raquel Pinderhughes-President  
Pam Webster-Vice President  
Becca Prager-Secretary  
Chuck Teller-Treasurer  
Mark Gorrell  
John Yuasa

### **II. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – Reports to the Board**

Martin Bourque

### **III. DIRECTORS – Report to the Executive Director**

Deputy Director, Debbie Beyea  
Recycling Director, Daniel Maher  
Program Director, Amy Kiser  
Development Director, Gwen Loeb

### **IV. MANAGERS AND THEIR STAFF**

- a. Financial Manager, Susan Miller--Reports to Deputy Director
  - i. Financial Assistant, Jackie Yep
- b. Information Services Manager, Beck Cowles -- Reports to Program Director
  - i. Info Program Coordinator, Carrie Bennett
  - ii. Climate Action Coordinator, Debra Berliner
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