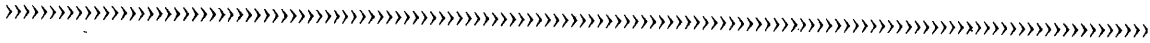


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Food might be the seed for new city

Farmers market could spur the dream of Sandy Springs downtown.

By April Hunt
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The first thing to grow in a dreamed downtown for Sandy Springs could be tomatoes, lettuce and other produce.

Two businessmen are gearing up to create the city's first farmers market in a parking lot at Sandy Springs Circle and Johnson Ferry Road.

If all goes as planned, the stalls of vegetables, fruit and crafts would open Saturday mornings starting in March or April, in front of the former

Target store where the city hopes to eventually build a City Hall.

"It's really about two things: food, knowing what you eat, and community, and knowing your neighbors," said Andy Bauman, one of the organizers. "Connecting like that, it sounds hokey, but it's fun."

It could also be the start of creating a downtown for the 4-year-old city.

Mayor Eva Galambos ran for re-election last year in part on a platform of working with private business to reinvigorate the Sandy Springs Circle

area.

In addition to the city-owned former Target, the area north of I-285 and west of Roswell Road is home to the 4-acre Heritage Green and a streetscape beautification project that includes new sidewalks.

It is the closest thing the city of nearly 100,000 people has to a center.

"I think we all have a vision of a downtown that serves the needs of the community as a gathering place, and this can happen in a matter of months," said Councilman Chip Collins, who was among several council members to signal support for the market.

Nothing is set in stone yet, though. Bauman and his partner, Jeffrey Langfelder, are still working with city staff to get special-events permits for the market to happen.

They also must convince farmers to set up in Sandy Springs over more established outdoor markets in Marietta, Dunwoody and Buckhead.

The pair also must tackle how to address concerns of some council members, about whether they should pay rent for using the city-owned lot, and keep costs down enough to at least break even in the venture.

Langfelder said he and his partner, both involved in real estate ventures that have slowed because of the economy, do not expect to make a profit.

Initial plans call for charging vendors just \$20 or \$25 for stalls, far below the going rate, to bring in produce, flowers and other items.

Nonprofits, such as those wanting to provide free health screenings or promote community events, wouldn't pay at all.

"It's basically become a labor of love," Langfelder said. "We really believe come Saturday mornings this spring, we're going to see neighbors come out with their families and their dogs and meet at the market."