

## Palafox Market Opens This Month

Saturdays in downtown Pensacola will not be the same starting June 7<sup>th</sup>. On that date, the Palafox Market will begin its inaugural season surrounding the Martin Luther King Memorial on N. Palafox Street between Chase and Gregory Streets. From 8:00 a.m. to at least 1:00 p.m. each Saturday, several dozen vendors selling fresh produce, flowers, live plants, art, baked goods, natural products, and herbs will be set-up in the median of this block. Vendors from all over Escambia, Santa Rosa, and Baldwin Counties will be there selling items that they grew, made, or created themselves. No buying and reselling will be allowed at this market. Everything has to be fresh from the field or kitchen or created by the hands of the artisan selling it.

For the 2008 season, an abbreviated schedule will be followed as the CRA and DIB (the sponsors of the new open-air market) fine tune the operation and presentation of this new economic development tool. Since this activity was proposed as a key component of the Downtown Retail Strategy back in December, the City, CRA, and DIB have been planning and working to make this much needed offering in the center city a reality. The Palafox Market will be open every Saturday in June, July, August, and September for this year. Starting in 2009, it is anticipated that the market will expand its schedule by about three more months and take on a somewhat more permanent presence with special offerings several weekends each month.

For a public market, like the Palafox Market, to succeed it must be positioned within very close proximity to a sizable residential population, be easily accessible by foot, automobile, and public transit, have ample nearby public parking, offer a variety of high quality and interesting items, have a notable agricultural focus, be colorful and visually inviting, and be accessible to tourists and non-resident visitors. We believe that the new Palafox Market has all of these attributes working for it.

While the Palafox Market, in and of itself, will be a huge additional attraction and offering for downtown, its presence will also offer greater animation to the downtown on the weekends, create additional development and redevelopment opportunities surrounding the market, draw additional shoppers from across the region to the downtown, create a community resource that will be welcoming to all types of people from across the region, and provide more unique high quality shopping options, provide colorful entertainment, and help sustain the local farmers, growers, artisans, and bakers that make our regions so special. It is in many ways a retail incubator for quality small entrepreneurs (farmers, artisans, and bakers) to sell at retail instead of wholesale and thereby improve their cash flow. It protects the local family farms by keeping them profitable, and encourages the individual artists to think about a storefront

gallery as their visibility and profitability grows. And it creates hundreds of additional customers for existing downtown businesses on Saturdays.

While weather will no doubt have some effect on the variety and number of offerings on some Saturdays, I have no doubt that the Palafox Market during the next few months will make great headway towards the anticipated outcomes. As it matures and grows with each passing week and month, more of the wonderful benefits that the Downtown Retail Strategy envisioned for this part of our downtown will become reality. I hope you will join me and hundreds of others every Saturday this month at the Palafox Market. I look forward to seeing you there.

For more information about the Palafox Market or how to become a vendor on the market, please contact the DIB at 434-5371 or the CRA at 435-1695.

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