

Saturday market back in City Square

By ANDREA RONDEAU
CITIZEN STAFF

The City of Duncan announced Tuesday it has reached a tentative deal with a group of area farmers to run a market in City Square every Saturday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The weekend gathering of vendors is an important, longtime staple enjoyed by tourists and locals alike, Mayor Phil Kent said Monday. "We're very supportive of a market in the downtown core and we've reserved the area of the City Square for that to take place."

The Downtown Business Improvement Area Society will no longer be managing the market, Kent said, but the same group of vendors who set up last year, along with a number of new ones, are interested in using the space.

The Duncan Farmers' Market used to blend with the City Square market when it had its home at the Duncan train station. It moved to the Mound on Government Street last year after the City said it needs the land.

This year they're moving to Sun Valley Mall, just south of Duncan, because Cowichan Tribes needs the Mound property for an assisted living complex.

The Farmers' Market had tried to reach a deal with the City to integrate the two markets but failed.

Kent said the City can't agree to the Farmers' Market's proposal to return to the train station, through Lois Lane, and into City Square for a number of reasons.

The City is looking at traffic changes that include the train station parking lot and can't commit to allowing a group to hold a weekly event there, he said.

Further, having the market spill from the train station across Canada Avenue creates safety concerns, he said. "It's a very busy thoroughfare."

The original intent of the City in allowing the Farmers' Market to locate at the train station, he pointed out, was that it would move into City Square when the Square was finished.

While that never happened, having a market in the Square remains important to the City, Kent said.

For more than 100 years Duncan has had a market in town, he said, emphasizing that the washrooms and other infrastructure at the Mound site were built there by the City to serve market vendors.

A market provides an important service to the community, giving residents and tourists alike access to locally grown goods and locally made crafts, Kent said. "The more activities there are for people to do who are visiting or coming into town, or just for local people to be able to walk into town to get basic food goods, is just really positive."