

# The Inter-Mountain

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## Food market in Elkins eyed

ELKINS — A recent Elkins Main Street study concludes that Elkins residents want a local food market.

Downstream Strategies conducted a survey among Elkins consumers finding there is a large amount of desire and support for a food market in downtown Elkins. Such a food market would specialize in selling locally grown and made products.

There was also a survey conducted to measure local producer's interest in the market, and results found that producers would be very inclined to participate in the business.

The project began as a result of Elkins Main Street seeking to continue downtown growth and development. Executive Director Karen Carper said.

*“Our purpose was to fill vacant store-fronts downtown, so this is one of the ideas that came up as a possibility,”* she said.

Survey results concluded that consumers not only want the market, but they hope business hours will extend past other downtown hours. Many residents are apparently unable to visit the downtown attractions because store hours clash with their work schedule.

Carper hopes that extending hours of the possible food market will encourage other downtown businesses to extend business hours, resulting in even more downtown development.

Main Street will fully support and advise the stakeholder of the business

while they develop ideas and plans for a future downtown market, Carper said.

*“A lot of things are going to be the choice of the stakeholder, but we will advise and support them to make this business into what the consumers desire,”* she said.

Elkins has stores that sell local products but nothing like this idea, Carper said.

*“Ideally, this location would not only sell produce, but be a gathering place for the community. There could be many possibilities for what the market does,”* Carper added *“There could be an open sitting area, events or entertainment, and some citizens even responded with interest in holding cooking classes to prepare the fresh food sold.”*

Carper believes that the market would have a big impact on the tourism in Elkins, which is good for growth. In addition to the other attractions Elkins already offers, the market could be used to encourage visitors to embrace our heritage in a unique, intimate way.

*“A goal would be met if the tourists could come here and feel like they are really experiencing our town for what it really is,”* Carper said. *“When I am a tourist, I like to really get to know the place I’m visiting.”*

A food market in Elkins would benefit not only producers, consumers and tourists, but there is also an idea that local restaurants would benefit from buying locally grown products, Carper said. People could easier support and trust in their restaurant choices knowing that most of the food was locally produced.

The survey conclusions identified the concern of having the food market during off-seasons, but ideas and plans are in place so that the market can still operate during these seasons.

*“There’s the idea of holding cooking classes in the market during the seasons where selling produce is not possible,”* Carper said *“Customers would still be encouraged to visit to possibly have a drink or buy*

*homemade items. There was also interest expressed in having food prepared in the market that consumers can purchase as carry out to know that the food they're giving their family is healthy.”*

Future plans for an Elkins food market are currently in discussion. There are interested stakeholders evaluating the idea and plans, Carper said. For a more detailed report, visit [downtownelkins.com/main-street-news](http://downtownelkins.com/main-street-news).