



RAINIER BEACH FARM STAND
START FRESH

2018 - 2020

RAINIER BEACH FARM STAND REPORT





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I. Background on Farm Stand

For many years, Rainier Beach aspired to a neighborhood farm stand. The pilot project that resulted is a collaboration between Ethiopian Community in Seattle (ECS), Rainier Beach Action Coalition and ROAR (Roots of All Roads), who provided valuable technical assistance to the fledgling project. The project evolved after many conversations among the organizations serving communities of color. They were looking for a way to address south end health disparities, growing interest in alternative diets, local gardening projects and the community's passion for supporting local businesses owned by people of color.

In February 2018 RBAC partnered with ECS to hire a farm stand manager who would both coordinate the launch of the farm stand and manage the 5 youths engaged in the program, referred to as Farm Stand Fellows. The farm stand manager came on board and began attending trainings to learn how farmer markets work. She partnered with Roots of All Roads (ROAR) to attend the Washington Farmers Market Association trainings and to understand how small farm stands differ from a more traditional, large farmer market. Working together with ECS as the venue, they began meeting with Fresh Bucks program staff, Seattle-King County Public Health, the Seattle Fire Department and others to ensure that all permits were in place and that the farm stand would be able to accept food assistance benefits from the surrounding low-income community.

Farmers of Color

In March 2018, the farm stand manager began outreach to area farmers, including neighborhood gardeners at a nearby market garden. The program focus is on centering farmers of color. We established communication with over 10 POC farms, including Kamayan Farm, Nurturing Roots, Clean Greens, TukMuk Farm, Faithbeyond Farm, Alvarez Organics, Namaste Garden and the market gardeners from New Holly to purchase food from them throughout the farm season and sell it at our stand.

Farm Stand Logistics

We also started planning for the marketing and production of the farm stand events. We developed a logo, designed and ordered t-shirts, pop-up tents, and purchased the inventory supplies needed for food handling, cash and credit card handling. We coordinated with the Senior Meal program at ECS to use part of their cold storage to keep fresh produce.

The Rainier Valley Food Bank proved an invaluable partner by purchasing any leftover produce at the end of the market day. We then donated the surplus to ECS seniors and to the farm stand fellows who needed supplemental food for their families.

Farm Stand Fellows

The farm stand manager also began organizing the Farm Stand Fellow program. She created posters and did outreach to community organizations that work with youth in order to recruit and hire five Fellows. She conducted interviews and hired the Fellows to participate in the inaugural program. The fellows all had a commitment to food security - many sharing stories of their own experience with different food ways or food insecurity as part of their onboarding process.

She designed a training curriculum and recruited chefs, farmers and nutritionists. Fellows received training on all aspects of organizing and managing a farm stand.

Topics included farm stand orientation, market management, branding, event planning, nutrition, food-handling, farm stand data collection and evaluation, social media marketing, community outreach, Fresh Bucks and EBT handling, Square/transaction/money handling. Additionally, the fellows took three farm and market field trips, participated in two cooking classes, and received training in one nutrition class.



Figure 1 Fellows learn to prepare soil.



Figure 2 Fellows help prepare a meal

The farm stand team used several tools for marketing the project. All team members made weekly social media posts on Facebook, Instagram, and twitter. These were made to personal accounts and to the ECS and Rainier Beach Action Coalition accounts. RBAC’s weekly electronic newsletter also included information about the farm stand throughout the season. We distributed over 400 \$5 coupons

throughout the neighborhood, at the Rainier Beach Community Center, Atlantic St. Center, surrounding businesses, and via Tilth Good Food bags. Additionally, approximately 30 yard signs were posted around neighborhood.

We also hired seniors from the East African community to help staff the produce stand. They worked together every Saturday to set up the farm stand, display produce, handle the sales and interact with customers. Four of the fellows are themselves from immigrant communities, which means they weren't necessarily familiar with produce grown in the Puget Sound region. Nor were they familiar with handling change in American currency.

Market Impact

Our evaluation of the market was limited due to the lower turnout than was predicted. While the opening day saw roughly 65 community members, throughout the season attendance averaged 30 people per week in 2018. Over time we realized that many of the same people were coming to the farm stand, a sign that we would need to find more effective ways to market the farm stand in 2019. Nevertheless, we collected 35 customer satisfaction surveys to learn what guests thought of the pricing, variety of produce and location. Additionally, we conducted a dot survey on the last day of the season and had 27 responses.

We had hoped to survey the neighboring businesses about any change in economic activity for them, but it became clear that farm stand customers were not staying in the neighborhood to shop.

At the end of the 2018 season, the farm stand fellows reflected on their experience through short essays. Their ideas and suggestions are included in the discussion below. The operations of the farm stand are also discussed below, including information about the cost of operations and a review of the amount of produce purchased and sold throughout the 2018 season.

II. Results

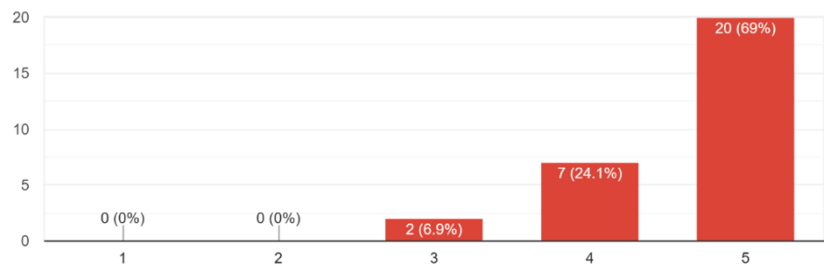
Customer satisfaction survey

Overall, customers seemed very pleased with the market. Most of those surveyed mentioned the friendly atmosphere, the sense of community, or the presence of fresh produce as the things they liked about the farm stand. When asked what they would like to see more of, customers responded with specific produce items or a desire for more fruit. One mentioned the need for parking and one the need for better signage. It should be noted that this response came from the first two weeks of the market. Subsequently, flag banners, colorful tents, and fence banners were used to market the farm stand every week.

The goal of this farm stand was to provide high quality, local produce at an affordable price while also ensuring that farmers were paid a fair price. Consequently, we did not mark up the prices for the produce. When asked how they would rate the cost of goods at the farm stand from 1 being "not good" to 5 being "great", 69% responded that the prices were great. Twenty-four percent rated the cost a 4 and 7% rated cost a 3.

How would you rate the cost of goods? (1= not good, 5= great)

29 responses

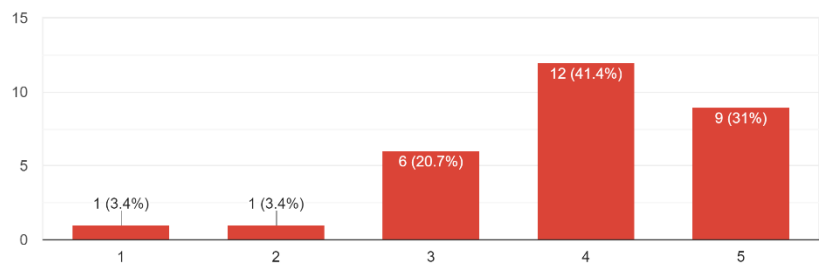


When asked how they would rate the quality of the produce, 21% rated the quality a 4 and 79% rated it a 5.

When asked how they would rate the variety of the produce, 41% rated the variety a 4. Thirty-one percent rated the variety a 5, while 21% rated it a 3.

How would you rate the variety of produce?

29 responses

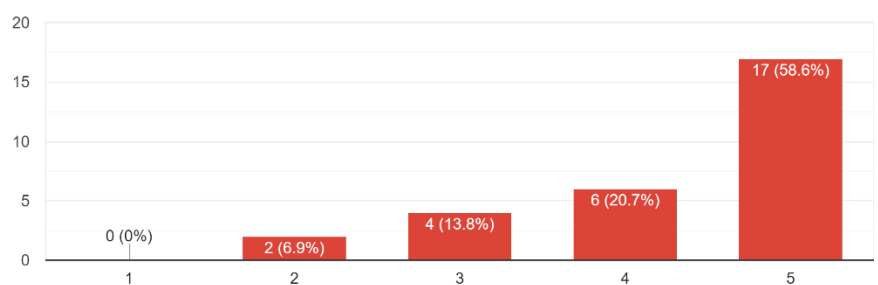


The farm stand was held in the parking lot at the Ethiopian Community in Seattle. The lot can accommodate 50 cars and is surrounded by an eight-foot tall metal fence. Due to the configuration of the parking lot, its proximity to a children's playground, and the fact that there is only one entrance/exit, the farm stand team decided not to allow parking in the lot during farm stand days in 2018.

Consequently, customers had to find parking on side streets and walk to the farm stand. Even so, 59% of customers rated the location a 5, although some comments did refer to the poor parking situation. Seven percent rated the location a 2, while 14% rated it a 3 and 21% rated the location a 4.

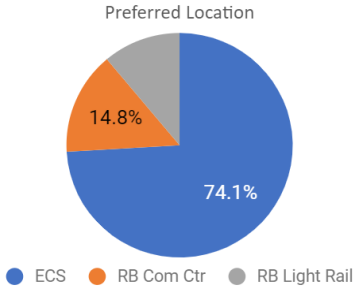
How would you rate the location?

29 responses

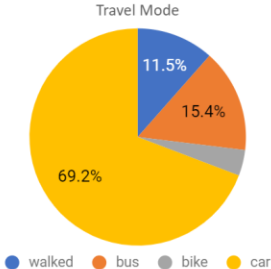


Dot survey

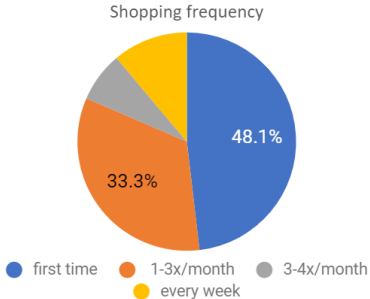
As discussed previously, during most of the season the farm stand averaged 18 customers per week. Consequently, on the last day of the farm stand we conducted a dot survey to assess whether a different location was preferred and to learn how people came to the farm stand.



We were surprised to learn that 74% of those surveyed preferred the farm stand stay at the Ethiopian Community center and that most of them (69%) drove. The Fellows explored several other sites, but determined that the farm stand should stay at ECS for the next season.



One third of respondents reported visiting the farm stand 1-2 times per month and a few visited weekly. Almost half of the respondents (48%) were visiting the farm stand for the first time. This was another indication that with more marketing and perhaps more programming, there is potential to increase the turnout substantially next season.



Operations/Market Performance

An important goal of this project was to increase access to fresh, high quality produce for low-income communities and communities of color in the neighborhood. To do this, we purchased produce from 13 vendors - all farmers of color - and sold the produce at cost. Consequently, we were able to pay the farmers their asking price without marking up the cost for our neighbors.

Impact of Farm Stand	
Value of Produce and Product Sold	\$ 6,405.12
Value of Produce and Product Purchased:	\$ 8,864.03
Value of RBAC Subsidy to Community*	\$ 2,458.91

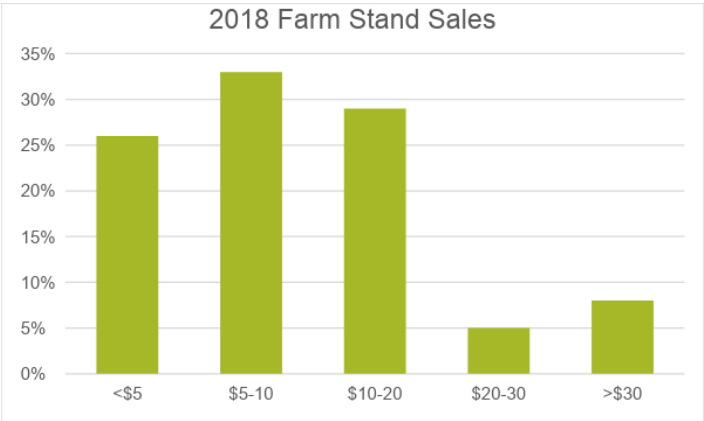
As the table for 2018 shows, RBAC provided about a 30% subsidy to the community, lowering the financial barrier to access fresh produce.

Redemption rates were low for those participating in food assistance programs. We were granted participation in the Fresh Bucks program later than expected and received authorization as a vendor for food stamps late.

Food Assistance	
Average Sales / Week (\$\$)	\$ 360.00
Average Coupons Subsidy / Week (\$\$)	\$ 12.00
Average FreshBucks Subsidy / Week (\$\$)	\$ 8.00
Total Value of Food Not Sold Donated*	\$ 1,305.00

Consequently, redemption rates were low in 2018; in 2019, we got these established earlier to be able to advertise their acceptance.

Based on the 519 transactions in Square, the transaction amounts ranged from under \$5 to over \$30. Roughly a third of transaction were between \$5 and \$10; another third between \$10 and \$20. Just under a third were under \$5, for an average of \$11/wk.



The program employed a farm stand manager to set up and run the program, as well as five young people to serve as Fellows for the season.

Average Cost of FS Labor*	\$ 3,349.29
Start-Up Costs**	\$ 3,525.17
Space Rent***	\$ 650.00
"Cost" of an Average Farmstand Saturday****	\$ 3,055.47

*Biweekly Pay to Six Staff

**Flyers, Tents, Posters, Licensing, etc.

***Biweekly Space rent to ECS, our community partner.

****Includes Labor, Start-up, Performers, Produce, and Rent

Recommendations and Lessons Learned

The Rainier Beach Farm Stand pilot successfully demonstrated the interest in better access to fresh, local produce in the neighborhood. Targeted outreach and adjustments in the physical layout of the farm stand helped increase the number of customers and allow for more foot traffic into the space.

Market Operations

Marketing of the farm stand targeted communities of color, young people, the various cultural centers and senior programs in the neighborhood. The Rainier Beach neighborhood has residents who speak 60 different languages. In order to serve these communities better, we still need to be more proactive about translating materials to spread the word and attending events and meetings where these communities gather to let them know about the farm stand.

The Fellows conducted a review of different locations in the neighborhood for possible consideration of changing locations in 2019. After considering the alternatives, the Fellows determined that with some changes, ECS would remain a good location for several reasons:

- cold storage is on-site
 - the large parking lot can accommodate customers who drive
 - shifting the entrance to a different gate allows for pedestrian traffic and opens up the parking
 - there were additional street improvements planned for the intersection that could help draw more customers into the farm stand
- Consequently, the 2019 Farm Stand remained at ECS.

Farm stand manager duties

The work of the farm stand manager involved managing the logistics and operations of the weekly farm stand. This included applying for a fire permit, verifying our space met public health requirements, developing systems for tracking produce and cash management systems. In addition, the manager developed a job description, interviewed and hired five Farm Stand Fellows. She created the training curriculum and recruited trainers, farmers, and nutritionists to provide the Fellows with a solid grounding in food production and sales. Throughout the season, the manager supervised the Fellows and worked with them to create the programming for the weekly events.

The manager position was a part-time position, budgeted for 20 hours a week, while the Fellows were budgeted for 8 hours per week. Saturdays were long days - typically 9 to 3 - which left little time for the Fellows to receive additional training and adapting to changes from week to week.

In 2019, the manager position was supported by a Food Justice Organizer focused on food justice on youth engagement while the manager could concentrate on farm stand operations.

Food security

Our aim with this project is to support low-income community members in getting better access to fresh food. Part of the strategy was to get certified to accept both EBT and Fresh Bucks. Getting certified to accept EBT and fresh bucks took longer than expected. Indeed, we weren't able to get approved for EBT until the end of the first summer, which meant we were unable to advertise it. We also had some issues with the equipment. Using the EBT wired machine required us to connect to the internet via an extension cord into the ECS building. This made processing transactions difficult than necessary.

We were also excited to participate in the City's Fresh Bucks program, which offers \$2 coupons for produce. We had some challenges because our pricing structure didn't match the program very well. We encouraged customers to get a little extra produce so the total would equal their coupons.

As a marketing tool we also created RBAC coupons to encourage neighbors to attend the farm stand. Originally, we distributed \$2 coupons, but didn't find that they increased attendance. We ultimately increased the coupons to \$5 and had some uptick in numbers. We used this opportunity to outreach with folks and connect with other business and nonprofits to advertise for us.

These programs and coupons all allowed us to serve low-income neighbors. However, we were able to overcome the challenges of the 2018 season with getting the programs up and running, when redemption rates were lower than anticipated, and get the EBT machines and Fresh Bucks issues resolved so that, with increased marketing, those programs run more effectively.

Farmers

Outreach to farmers began in February 2018. We began recruiting farmers of color throughout King County and sought to understand their products and their practices for delivery and invoicing. Most farmers were small-scale producers who had limited experience with sending out regular

fresh sheets. Consequently, the farm stand manager spent much of her time calling and emailing to order and prepare for that week's farm stand.

It was important to have a good tracking system for the inventory. It often happened that the produce that arrived was different from what was ordered – either in quantity or item – because of harvesting issues, yet the invoice forms sometimes still reflected the original order. This made reconciling invoices difficult. In 2019, changes in the system were put in place ensuring control of orders and that farmers were paid appropriately, but obtaining and filing receipts remained difficult.

Fellows

The Farm Stand Fellows who participated in the program ranged in age from late teens to early 20s. Throughout the season they participated in extensive training, exploration, and collaboration with one another. For all of them, this was their first job, so in addition to learning about the work of managing a farm stand, they were also learning basic professional skills like showing up for work on time, how to be accountable to the team, how to communicate with a supervisor. Having a farm stand manager who was experienced in youth mentoring was a critical part of the success the Fellowship program.



Figure 3 Fellows Reflections Word Cloud

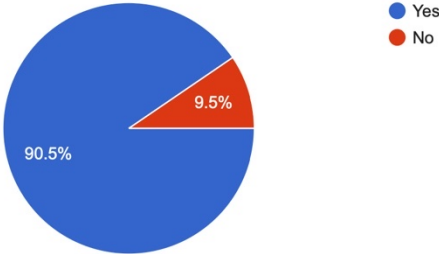
The Fellows made suggestions about the kinds of training and support they needed for the next season. They expressed interest in having closer relationships with the other RBAC programs, especially the Corner Greeters, so that they feel more connected to RBAC’s work and other young people. They also became proficient at cash handling and transaction processing.

At the end of the season, the Fellows reflected on their experience. They all expressed gratitude for what they learned about food security, the importance of healthy eating, and the role of community in supporting a more vibrant food system.

Findings and outcomes

In closing, we cannot underrate and understate the value of access to fresh produce. People in our communities suffer from underlying health conditions and other dietary restrictions, that make fresh produce an essential element of their well-being. 90% of our respondents stated purchasing fresh produce for health reasons.

Do you purchase fresh produce for health reasons?
21 responses

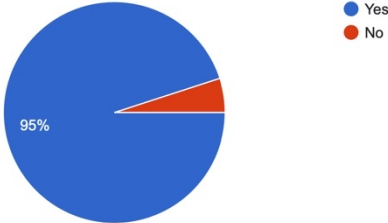


As much as EBT/SNAP and other subsidies provide critical options to keep produce affordable, as shown by the numbers below, RBAC’s own vouchers almost matched institutional incentives (41% of total incentives), and outweighed it in number of customers (102 to 83). 95% suggested that they would still shop at the Farm Stand without EBT or FreshBucks.

Number of incentive shoppers:

- FBx: 24 (\$250 total spending)
- SNAP: 44 (\$284.34 total spending)
- Farm Bucks: 15 (\$162 total spending)
- RBAC: 102 (\$492 total spending)
- Total incentive purchases: 185
- Total Incentive Spending: \$1,188 (14.5% of \$8185 total season sales)

Would you still shop at the farm stand without affordability options like coupons, EBT/SNAP, and Fresh Bucks?
20 responses



In 2019, 3,594Lbs of produce was sourced and 2,837Lbs (79%) were sold to residents, an increase of 15% from 2018. The rest was split between ECS Senior meals and RBAC’s dinner program.

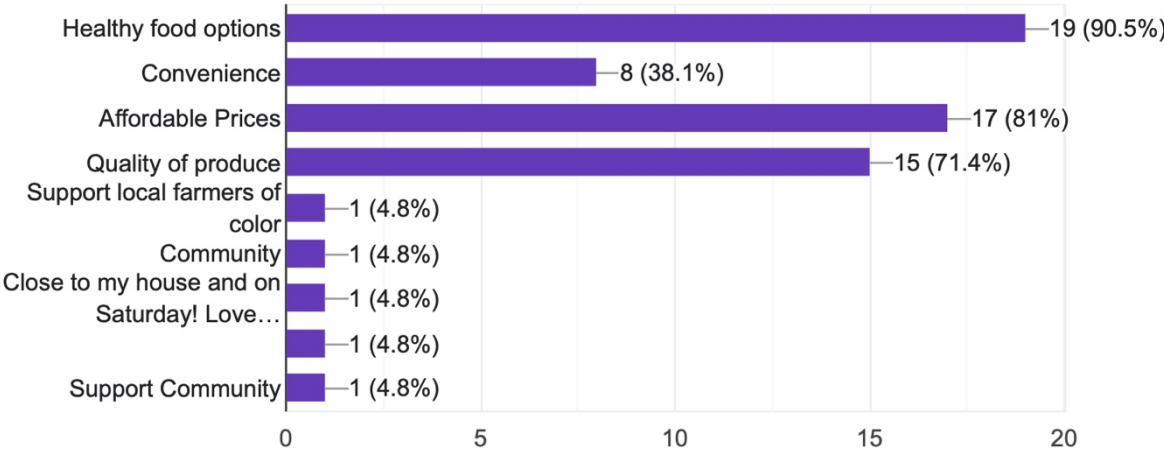
The number of shoppers also grew from 2018 by 35%, with a weekly average going from 31 customers in 2018 to 42 in 2019. Additionally, not only did the number of transactions increase by 20% (668 versus 556), but the amount spent per transaction was 10% higher. This was particularly noticeable in the last weeks of the 2019 season when the number of transactions was consistently above 50, with a peak at 65, and the total daily sales reached highs close to \$800 compared to half that earlier in July.

The Farm Stand accomplished just what it set out to do. It made the fresh, healthy, and culturally-relevant produce available and affordable to the residents of Rainier Beach. There is still room for improvement and opportunities to grow, support farms in other ways, serve more residents, reach out to local businesses.

But the Farm Stand, as a pilot, has delivered on some many levels, as a diverse cross-generational space, a vehicle of economic development for young people, and not so young, a platform for chefs and caterers' cooking demo, for local and cultural artists, dancers, musicians, a place to meet neighbors, discover new produce and share recipes, as well as a source of for Senior meals and food bank.

Why do you shop at the Rainier Beach Farm Stand?

21 responses



Customers were very clear when asked why they shop at the Farm Stand. The primary reasons are: healthy food, affordable prices, quality of produce and convenience. People aged between 16 and 65 came through the Farm Stand. We saw young athletes stop by on their way to practice for a healthy snack. People from all cultures and walks-of life, either came on purpose or stumble across the Farm Stand. East African seniors came to visit our elder helpers. Mixed-race families came for classes at ECS and stopped by one their way out. Residents in nearby housing crossed the street to see what this was about, or because the word had spread from their neighbors. Local stores shared our coupons, others found us on Social Media, and ultimately, the Farm Stand came to be. The pilot established its footprint as a staple of the neighborhood and last we heard as we packed for the last time of the season, is that customers will miss it and looked forward to next year!

Appendices

2018 outcomes



Healthy, Fresh,
Affordable Fruits
& Vegetables

sourced locally
from POC Farmers

KEY

- Alvarez Organics - Mabton, WA
Organic, locally operated
Beans, spices, vegetables
- City Fruit - Seattle, WA
Non-profit urban orchard gleaming
- Clean Greens - Duvall, WA
Black-owned & operated, seasonal vegetables
- Faithbeyond Farm - Enumclaw, WA
Kenyan farmers at shared soil
Cherry, tomatoes, greens
- Kamayay Farm - Carnation/Duvall, WA
Filipino-owned & operated, seasonal vegetables
Honey, medicinal herbs, inclusions,
value-added products, collective
- Nurturing Roots - Seattle, WA
Black-led urban farming in BEacon hill
Vegetable, eggs, value-added products
- P-Patch New Holly Market Garden
SHADON elders farming partnership
Greens, vegetables, flower bouquets
- Regeneration Farms - Woodinville, WA
Organic orchards supplying top-quality cherries,
stone fruit, apple & pears
- Sariwa farm - Woodinville, WA
Filipino-owned & operated
Traditional Asian Pacific Islander vegetables
- Sidhu Farm - Puyallup, WA
Sikh family of berry producers in Pierce County
- Sweet Hollow Farm - Woodinville, WA
OTPOC Farmer cooperative, seasonal vegetables,
specialty crops
- Tuk Muk Farm - Woodinville, WA
Traditional Japanese and difficult to find Asian
greens & roots
- Viva Farms - Skagit & King County
Aggregated wholesale platform for beginning and
incubator farmers



TO SNOHOMISH & SKAGIT COUNTY



KING COUNTY

RAINIER BEACH FARM STAND
START FRESH

TO PIERCE COUNTY
TO YAKIMA COUNTY

MABTON
Alvarez Organics

OUR FARM PARTNERS



2019 Farm Stand Customer Feedback

Short paper survey available at every Saturday market.

What did you like about today?

Your answer

What would you change/would you like more of?

Your answer

How would you rate the following? Check one (1= Not so good; 5= Great)

	1	2	3	4	5
Cost	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Choice/variety	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information about produce	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Location	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



2019 Rainier Beach Farm Stand Survey

Dot survey questions

* Required



What neighborhood do you live in? *

- Rainier Beach
- Skyway
- Othello
- Beacon Hill
- Other:



How did you learn about the Rainier Beach Farm Stand? *

- Yard Signs
- Flyers
- Facebook
- Coupons
- Word of mouth
- Other:

How important is it to you that our farm stand accepts Fresh Bucks - the healthy food program that helps residents afford fruits and vegetables? (On a scale of 1-5) *

- | | | | | | | |
|---------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Not important | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Very Important |

Would you still shop at the Rainier Beach Farm Stand if we didn't accept Fresh Bucks? *

- Yes
- No
- Maybe



What is your primary reason for coming to the Rainier Beach Farm Stand?

- Affordable fruits and vegetables
- Convenience
- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Visiting with neighbors
- Other:

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Thank you!





Rainier Beach Action Coalition

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