

Market Cities

An initiative of



In partnership with



The Market Cities Initiative has been established to advance a new vision for public markets systems at the scale of cities, regions, and beyond.

The Need and Opportunity

Despite the value that public markets bring to people, cities, and their economies, they are endangered by a combination of many forces. These constant and immediate threats include increasing urban development and value of real estate; the modernization and centralization of food systems; economic development practices that neglect women, minority populations, and other small entrepreneurs; and the lack of management capacity of the markets themselves. Both the Global North and the Global South face these external and internal threats, but they play out differently in each global region.

What is a Market City?

A Market City strategy helps address these challenges by creating new infrastructure, policies and investments in public market systems at the citywide, regional, or national level. A key goal of this Market Cities Initiative is to identify the best practices that define existing successful Market City strategies. Municipalities like London, UK, and Barcelona, Spain, demonstrate some of the potential elements of a Market City strategy, which include:

1. Performing holistic assessments of a markets system's strengths and weaknesses;
2. Nurturing markets as active public spaces through placemaking;
3. Creating strong local and regional distribution networks of healthy, affordable fresh food and other products;
4. Supporting upward mobility for disadvantaged populations;
5. Building partnerships, collaboration, and collective action, especially with public health agencies and advocates;
6. Supporting a wide variety of market types; and
7. Investing in building the capacity and physical infrastructure of markets and market networks.

We see the Market City model being applied to cities, states and provinces, and even at the national level—in other words, the model is not one-size-fits-all. In all these contexts, however, a Market City strategy focuses on how a collection of public markets functions as a system. These systems are not static; successful markets are always evolving, as are local economies and food systems.

Our Strategies

In the first stage of this initiative, we are exploring issues related to the successful implementation of Market Cities policies, and refining its understanding of the program's potential impacts. This exploration will be carried out through research, model projects, policy development, and partnership building.

Get Involved!

Complete our [Market Cities survey](#) and join the Project for Public Spaces Public Markets [mailing list](#) to stay updated about future opportunities. For more information related to the Market Cities Initiative, contact Kelly Verel at kverel@pps.org. We look forward to working with you!

Indicators of Success

A Market City recognizes the unique benefits of markets as public spaces and develops supportive policies that enhance their financial health and leverage their value to people, place and the economy. By investing in a Market Cities strategy, we believe that public market systems can help to:

- Tackle economic, social, gender, and racial inequality;
- Create safe and engaging environments where diverse people interact;
- Spur regional economic development and urban-rural linkages;
- Create job and business opportunities for all, but especially for women, low-income, and minority populations;
- Establish critical social and economic infrastructure for communities facing climate-related risks; and
- Promote community health.

About the Partners

Project for Public Spaces

Founded in 1975, Project for Public Spaces has brought some of the most successful public places in the world to life. We put community participation at the center of everything we do. Our interdisciplinary team has helped over 3,500 communities in 52 countries create inclusive places that change our society for the better. Since 1987, PPS has hosted ten international public markets conferences and conducted hundreds of training programs, in addition to providing assistance to market sponsors, managers and community development officials in 200 cities and towns around the world.

HealthBridge Foundation of Canada

HealthBridge is an international, non-profit, non-governmental organization that has been working since 1982 in Asia, Africa and the Americas. We aim to improve the health of vulnerable populations, including those at risk of malnutrition, infectious disease and emerging epidemics, such as obesity and non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Through our Livable Cities program we work with local groups in low and middle-income countries to improve the livability of cities by ensuring access for the most vulnerable to healthy transportation, healthy foods, parks and public spaces.

Slow Food International

Slow Food is a global grassroots organizations, founded in 1989 in Italy to prevent the disappearance of local food cultures and traditions, counteract the rise of fast life and combat people's dwindling interest in the food they eat: where it comes from and how our food choices affect the world around us. Since its beginnings, Slow Food has grown into a global movement involving millions of people in over 160 countries, working to ensure that everyone has access to good, clean and fair food.