

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 13, 2019

## Mayor John Hamilton Announces Plan to Reopen Community Farmers' Market

Bloomington, Ind. – Bloomington Mayor John Hamilton announces the City's plan to reopen Bloomington Community Farmers' Market this Saturday, August 17 from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Showers Common. The mayor's statement follows; his briefer, recorded version may be viewed on the City's website and social media.

\*\*\*

On July 29th we suspended the operations of the Bloomington Community Farmers' Market for two weeks due to concerns about public safety. As outlined in a public meeting on July 31st, this action was taken due to rising tension at the market and information identifying risks of specific individuals with connections to past white nationalist violence. I noted the difficulty presented by the prevalence of firearms and the strictures of state laws that hamstringing us from taking common sense actions. And I noted the toxic national atmosphere that emboldens white supremacy and bigotry.

In light of our local situation and the terrible national daily death toll of firearms, including recent horrific mass shootings in El Paso and Dayton, I am arranging personal meetings with our federal representatives, both senators and our congressman, to urge their support for practical, effective responses to gun violence. And I have been in communication with the Governor's Office and the Attorney General's office about the same issue, and about state law that eliminates our local authority.

Besides desperately needing common sense gun reforms, we also need to stand together against the attacks on America from homegrown white nationalist terrorism. These attacks are sometimes violent. More often they insidiously seek to nurture bigotry and racism, resentment and division. As a community and as a country, we must be vigilant against all attempts to instill or arouse fear and prejudice. We must protect our civic spaces and our civic culture of inclusion and justice. We must not let hateful ideologies erode our trust and care for each other. Bloomington must be better than that and stronger than that.

Ideologies of white supremacy and segregation have long scarred our country and community. They have damaged and still damage our entire society, but people of color and other targeted minorities bore and bear the vast weight of the damage. The ongoing struggle to eliminate the ugly bigotry and hate that

persist demands energy and determination. And a recognition that the fears and difficulty of that struggle can still weigh very differently on different individuals. It is critical that mutual support and caring thrive in our community. We've all seen communities come together after dreadful tragedies. We need to do so before one arrives, by embracing the trust and care we so need of each other.

Our community market faces a community challenge that must be met with a community response. And Bloomington has been coming together over the past two weeks. Thanks to public support and tireless efforts of the Local Growers Guild, pop-up markets the past two Saturdays have offered key alternatives for farmers and customers both. Other groups like United Way and Downtown Bloomington Inc have stepped up to help carry the baton. And as they have over decades, groups like Bloomington United, the NAACP, many faith-based groups, PRIDE, Black Lives Matter, Bloomington Refugee Network, the Bloomington Human Rights Commission and many others continue to champion human dignity and combat prejudice and hatred. Of particular note are the focused efforts from advocates and volunteers, organized as "No Space for Hate," directly to address issues at the Farmers' Market.

During the two-week pause we continued to collaborate with many local leaders, including vendors, advocates, and patrons, to hear their concerns and ideas. We listened to and reviewed hundreds of comments and suggestions. We engaged with numerous national experts with experience responding to hate groups and bigotry, including mayors, police chiefs, former federal officials, the FBI, and nonprofits focused on helping communities navigate complex situations like our own. We have studied how to respect the fundamental rights protected by our Constitution. We have held seven public sessions in the last eight weeks, with more to come. I'd like to thank the hundreds of people who provided thoughtful important advice on how best to proceed in keeping our community safe and living out our values.

Comments, suggestions and ideas we heard reflected widely ranging views about possible paths forward for the market and our community. Some urged immediate changes in the market, including closing the market for the season, or removing or relocating a vendor or vendors, or changing the rules governing advocacy and protest, or privatizing the entire market. Some urged less focus directly on the market, and more on the deeper challenges of racism, bigotry, and inequality in our community.

Today, after reviewing the comments and weighing the advice received, we are announcing planned next steps, dealing with the market and beyond, for this week and beyond.

As of today, we plan to reopen the market this Saturday, August 17, at its usual place and time. We proceed with this plan with confidence in our collective ability to protect public safety, and with a commitment to follow the Constitution, preserve our cherished public spaces, and embody our community values. The reopened market will include some new aspects:

Cameras to monitor the site will enhance safety.

Two public streets will be closed to traffic during market hours to create a larger comfort zone for the market crowd (Morton Street from 7th to just south of the Smallwood garage entrance, and 7th Street between Morton and the B-Line Trail; 8th Street will be closed west of the market to the entrance of the Cook Medical Center).

The presence of police and other professional public safety officers will be increased.

New “market ambassadors,” volunteers with experience and commitment to the market, will welcome folks back and be visible embodiments of the inclusive spirit (If you’d like to join these market boosters, please let us know).

New signage will clearly indicate areas designated for flyering and expression, and publicize market rules.

The Market on Saturday will be activated with special music, programming, resources and amenities in full Bloomington spirit, to welcome attendance from families and all ages. Morton Street garage will be available free of charge during the Market, and additional free parking will be available in Showers Red Permit spaces north of City Hall, the IU EM-S parking lot on the east side of Morton Street, and just north of the Market in the field at the Trades District, south of 11th Street and east of Rogers. Accessible parking will be located along Morton Street north of the road closure and on the west side of the Showers Building, with access from 10th Street.

A successful reopening depends on everyone who’s involved in the market, so we will continue to reach out directly to vendors, advocates, activists, and patrons over the next four days, to talk about how we can work together to meet collective and individual needs in this community space as we embrace our public spaces and protect our civic culture.

No doubt, there will be disagreements about how we should proceed. Beyond the reopening this Saturday, we still have a lot of work to do together. Longer term efforts to address underlying issues and explore how best to proceed as a community will include:

Evaluate market options for next year -- Our Parks Department, working in tandem with our Parks Board and Market Advisory Council, with regular opportunity for public comment, will review vendor contracts, the vendor manual, and other guidelines from top to bottom, to consider improvements that can build on our 45-year market history and ensure our market is as welcoming and inclusive as possible.

Support community-led convenings to explore underlying issues, including

Faith-based gathering on Tuesday, August 20

Bloomington United Community Gathering of Solidarity on Tuesday, August 27

Engage national experts to facilitate structured engagement to move our community toward more justice and inclusion, including:

Not in Our Town, a national program that provides tools to help build safe, inclusive communities and promote engagement

The Divided Community Project's Bridge Initiative, based at The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law, a team of mediators with experience developing processes to keep protests safe while seeking to engage the entire community in systemic change

Support ongoing local efforts including:

Community Justice and Mediation Center's (CJAM) efforts to mediate conversation with interested parties

Ongoing resources and programming offered through the City's Building Bridges program: <https://bloomington.in.gov/building-bridges>

Ongoing reporting and responding to hate incidents and crimes, by the Bloomington Police Department and the Human Rights Commission. Reports are archived back to 2011 at <https://bloomington.in.gov/boards/human-rights>. You can report an incident directly by using this link.

With the market reopening on Saturday, our community is reclaiming our public space and, I urge, coming together to live out our community values of inclusion and caring. Challenges in our community will continue. We know that a safe, civil, and just community does not mean a tranquil one. Disagreements, differences, even conflict may arise. That can be disturbing, upsetting, and scary. But our mutual caring and respect in Bloomington, our commitment to justice and inclusion, can and must carry the day. It is essential. Bloomington has this.

We want our community again to enjoy a Farmers' Market with a vibrant marketplace of fresh, local food and, yes, ideas. We also want our community, together, to confront the remaining challenges of racism and bigotry around and among us. That means sitting down together, candidly and openly, to talk about where we need to go. That is not a simple, short or easy journey. But it can and should be a fruitful and valuable one. It is a necessary one.

I'll conclude by thanking the many, many employees of city government, the hundreds of volunteers and advocates with so many organizations, and thousands of residents and visitors of our community, for your caring for each other and for embodying values that reflect our best selves. This community has traveled far together, and we have farther to go, always toward a more just and vibrant future. Thank you all. And I hope to see you on Saturday