8/4

Farmers markets getting thumbs up

BY JESSICA SIBLEY
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CLEMSON — The mere mention of a farmers market will send Clemson resident Molly Jackson into an excited tailspin.

Jackson, like many other residents, said she loves the idea of a local farmers market because the produce is fresh from the garden and the prices are right.

"For example, I can go to a farmers market and get some of the biggest, brightest and most flavorful colored peppers for far less than I can at any grocery store," Jackson said. "I'll pay $4 for three small ones at the grocery store. Just yesterday, I was in Aiken and got five huge peppers for $2. Not to mention, you know where your produce is coming from. That's a great feeling all around."

West Union is on the list of local municipalities that either have or are working to implement a farmers market and Mayor Linda Oliver is thrilled at the idea.

"This idea was pitched to us by resident Josh Stephens. He has been the backbone of getting this together. In his research he felt that along Highway 11 would be a perfect place to have the farmers show their produce," she said. "We meet again on Wednesday to put all the ideas together to present to the council on August 14."



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Visitors to Clemson's farmers market look over some fresh greens. The popularity of farmers markets are growing fast around Pickens and Oconee counties.

Oliver added that the town hopes to open a market by May 2013.

"The benefits to any town would be the inflow of traffic and the hopes that the visitors would take the time to visit the other local businesses," she added. "It's going to be a great thing."

Seneca holds its farmers market at Norton-Thompson Park on Tuesdays and Thursdays until lunchtime and Westminster has its market on Monday and Friday mornings on Main Street. Clemson has a market Friday evenings at Patrick Square.

Walhalla is working on changing the location and operation of its market, according to councilman Tjay Bagwell.

"Josh Holliday has plans in progress to have it moved and improved and will present something during our next council meeting, so it seems like it's moving along very fast."

As far as the overall benefits of a farmers market, Jackson said it's pretty priceless.

"It really speaks volumes about how high the produce is marked in the stores," Jackson said. "If markets can charge so little and still pay their workers to pick the fields, it should help put that in perspective. Plus, it helps our local farmers out so much. I think every town should have one and if they don't, they should work feverishly to get one."

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