

## **Our Neighbors: Survey seeks input for possible El Sobrante farmers market**

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Martha Booz would like to see a regular farmers market in El Sobrante, and she is trying to find out how her neighbors feel about the idea. The El Sobrante Municipal Advisory Committee and El Sobrante Chamber of Commerce would like to know as well.

That's why they are promoting an online survey (<http://bit.ly/ROw5A>) to find out what folks in the area think of the idea.

There are still logistics to starting a market, including startup costs and finding a location, but enough positive response could set things in motion to bring the valley a weekly market offering farm fresh produce. Better yet, in Booz's opinion, would be a market offering organic fruits and vegetables actually grown in Contra Costa County.

"Local — that's the issue right now," said Booz, who has researched the idea, talked to farmers in Brentwood and is covering the cost of the survey to see if others share her desire for a market.

Several farmers markets already operate in West County, but none are really convenient to El Sobrante.

"That was the main issue for me," said Booz, a retired project manager for Bio-Rad in Hercules. "I looked around and saw they had one in Pinole, Richmond, Point Richmond," none of them practical for a bike ride from El Sobrante.

She took her idea to Barbara Pendergrass of the El Sobrante Municipal Advisory Committee, then made a presentation to the rest of the community. The Chamber of Commerce indicated its interest, as did the Boys & Girls Club of El Sobrante and a representative of Supervisor John Gioia's office.

The Boys & Girls Club is one possible location for a market, but that has yet to be decided. Also awaiting resolution is covering the costs of liability insurance, a business license and health department inspection. Application and stall fees could make up most or all of those costs, Booz thinks.

However, those issues are premature until it is certain there is enough interest. Hence the survey, which will be open to responses through Nov. 30. Responses can be mailed in as well. Simply write how often you buy fresh fruit, vegetables, bread and eggs (at least every week, sometimes or never); whether you would shop at a farmers market in El Sobrante or what would be needed to persuade you to; how important is the price of goods; how important it is that produce be certified organic; whether you would be willing to pay 5 percent to 10 percent more for organic produce; and what day and hours for a market would work best for you.

**Responses should be turned in or mailed to the El Sobrante Chamber of Commerce, 3769 B San Pablo Dam Road, El Sobrante, CA 94803, by Nov. 30.**