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Roy Robinson

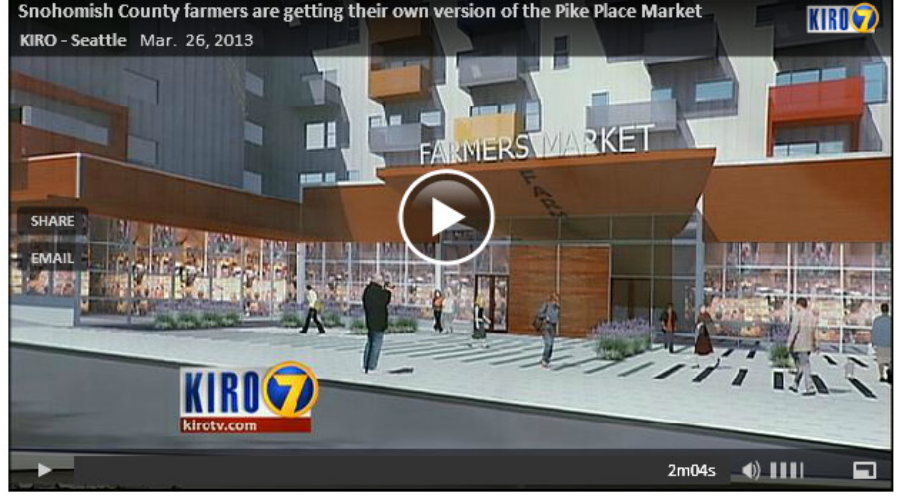
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Posted: 4:01 p.m. Tuesday, March 26, 2013

High hopes for new year-round Everett Farmers Market

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EVERETT, Wash. — Mark Craven grows pumpkins, squash and sweet corn at a Snohomish farm. But he'll be the first to admit his business has limitations. A retail shop on his place is open less than two months out of the year and can be hard to find.

"We're kind of tucked in the middle of nowhere," Craven told KIRO 7 Eyewitness News reporter Chris Legeros.

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That could change. Ground broke in Everett on Tuesday for a new public farmers market. The market will be 60,000 square feet and would operate indoors year-round. It will be part of a project that includes hotel and luxury apartments.

The market will be similar to the Pike Place Market in Seattle. Shoppers will be able to buy produce, flowers, meat and dairy products.

Unlike the Pike Place Market, however, the Everett Farmers Market will include a commercial kitchen and food distribution center. Local products, such as carrots, will be sliced and packaged on site -- they could even be cooked into a chicken pot pie and sold to restaurants and schools.

The advantage is that Snohomish County farmers won't have to truck their products all the way to Seattle to sell. They also won't have to rely as much on smaller community markets farther away, with very limited hours.

"They can now stay right here in Snohomish County and sell their product to their neighbors," said Linda Neunzig, county agriculture coordinator.

Craven is now considering expanding his operation. He said he could sell pumpkin butter and jams or vegetables year-round in Everett, with access to many more customers.

The county is hoping to give agriculture a boost. They know that that a greater demand for local food will spur farmers to grow more and put more land into production that could otherwise be lost to development.

Most of the \$53 million that will be needed to build the Everett Farmers Market will come from Chinese investors. Under a U.S. government program to create jobs, the investors will get green cards and the opportunity to live in the United States.

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