

After a hard year of restrictions, Downtown Growers' Market is bouncing back

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The Downtown Growers' Market is in full swing again, right at the height of New Mexico's growing season.

"It's just been blossoming," said market manager Danielle Schlobohm, surveying the crowds that bustled between vendors on July 31.

After Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham lifted all public health restrictions on July 2, Robinson Park welcomed back the maximum 139 vendors, plus live music and yoga. On the cusp of [National Farmers Market Week](#) (August 1-7), the tables lining the park's sidewalks were weighed down with fresh produce of all kinds, from apricots to zucchini.

This comes after a tough year in which the park was cordoned off to limit capacity, forcing masked customers to line up at a single entrance. Schlobohm told DAN that the pandemic brought 2020 attendance down to about 1,300 visitors per week, compared with 2,000 to 3,500 in the Before Times.

"We're still not as full as we have been," Schlobohm said. "But now that the farming season is hitting its peak - basically July through September or October - we should have a lot of folks."

Here's a quick photo tour of the resurgent market:



2020's decreased attendance was a challenge for vendors like Carla Gallegos-Ortega, owner of New Mexico Sabor (above).

"We stuck it out," Gallegos-Ortega said. "Our sales weren't great, but at least we got sales."

Business took off in July 2021 when she was permitted to let customers try the salsa before buying it.

"People are sometimes hesitant to try new products if they haven't tasted it," she noted. "As soon as we started giving samples, our sales doubled."



Dennis Lucero, owner of Pecans de Lucero, harvests all his own pecans on a farm 15 miles north of Las Cruces, then trucks freshly shelled nuts up to Albuquerque to sell at the market. His sales have also increased with this summer's reopening: "This is my most productive year yet," he said. "I'm at a record high this month."



Living Roots Flower Farm is a family business run by mother-daughter pair Delaney and Anna Pearson, who grow some 40 different flower varieties on a one-acre urban farm in the South Valley. The two were so busy taking orders that they barely had a free moment to comment on how the market has rebounded this summer.

"It's definitely back," Anna said.

"We sell out," Delaney added as she gathered the next customer's bouquet.

– *By Karie Luidens*

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