

## Tucson Citizen

# Market envisioned at Congress, Avenida del Convento

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Published: 06.26.2006

Jerry Dixon wants to add a public market to his 105-home Mercado District of Menlo Park rammed-earth-and-adobe housing project.

First comment from the neighborhood: Make sure there's a Hispanic focus.

Dixon hopes to have a public/farmer's market up in six months at the corner of West Congress Street and Avenida del Convento, which is being built. He figures the \$250,000 market will have 48 vendors in an open-air shed.

Dixon is a partner at Rio Development Co.

"I have a huge investment," he said of the 105 homes and accompanying retail and condo Monier Brickyard Building, all neighboring the proposed Tucson Heritage Origins Park to the north. "I need to do something that improves the neighborhood immediately."

Dixon has brought in Project for Public Spaces, a New York nonprofit organization dedicated to creating and sustaining public spaces that build communities. PPS has consulted on more than 100 public/farmer's market

across the country.

"I went to seven markets they have done," Dixon said. "Each is unique. They are all indigenous."

That's the prime concern for Lillian Lopez-Grant, a Menlo Park resident and president of the Westside Coalition, which brings together five West Side neighborhood associations. She notes that 79 percent of the neighborhood is Hispanic.

"My first concern is for the neighborhood, that we become part of the game," Lopez-Grant said. "If we don't keep on top of these things, it will get way from us. I want to see a good ethnic mix."

She added that Menlo Park has been supportive of Dixon's Mercado District proposal. And Dixon stressed he will go to the neighborhood associations with his market idea.

Dixon is thinking of starting with Thursday night and all-day Saturday markets.

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