

## **DC's Eastern Market: How to Save an Endangered Treasure Executive Summary**

Aaron Zaretsky, a nationally-known consultant on public markets prepared this report, DC's Eastern Market: How to Save an Endangered Treasure. Currently executive director of Public Market Development, Inc., Zaretsky was previously the long-term (15-years) director of Seattle's highly successful Pike Place Public Market including during its \$65 million renewal. Over thirty-eight years, he has consulted on aspects of public market operations for over fifty public markets.

[Zaretsky's report](#) is based on extensive recent interviewing of market principals, his review of hundreds of pages of documents and his years-long experience with and observation of Eastern Market in particular and public markets in the US.

As summarized below, the report concludes that 145-year-old Eastern Market's current management and operational structure is jeopardizing the viability of a highly successful entity and provider of fresh food service to diverse DC communities.

The report identifies a range of major issues that "will", in Zaretsky's view, "inevitably lead to the demise of the Eastern Market" if not addressed. The issues may be broadly grouped as issues, first and foremost, of MARKET GOVERNANCE; of MARKET OPERATIONS, including marketing strategies and strategies to maintain competitiveness; and finally, of MARKET PLANT.

Key recommendations include:

-- establishing a non-profit entity to manage the market, replacing management-by-public-employee. Related recommendations address leasing, hiring practices, budget, and finance. It is urgent that, in the interim, technically qualified management be installed.

In the US, public markets' and cities' experience with properly designed non-profit management has been largely positive. Management-by-public-employee has not been a successful approach nationally and, in the case of Eastern Market, has been a source of fundamental problems that now threaten the viability of the market.

--establishing, or reestablishing, the historic mission and goals of the market as reflected in existing (but largely ignored) DC legislation. Related recommendations suggest strategies to improve merchants' ability to market, to compete with other markets, and to serve an economically diverse community.

Finally, and with regard to "next steps", the report recommends resources be allocated towards implementing the recommendations rather than, as proposed, on a "strategic plan" still on the drawing board.

Eastern Market Preservation and Development Corporation (informally Eastern Market Preservation) commissioned this report. This local community-based group's goal is to protect and foster the historic function and character of DC's Eastern Market. Visit [www.empreservation.org](http://www.empreservation.org).