



DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Planning Division

m e m o r a n d u m

TO: Laurel Lunt Prussing, Mayor

FROM: Elizabeth H. Tyler, FAICP, Community Development Director

DATE: August 18, 2011

SUBJECT: Urbana's Market at the Square Strategic Plan, Status Update for City Council

Introduction and Background

Urbana's Market at the Square has seen significant growth in recent years. In order to manage this growth and in response to the Urbana City Council's goal of incorporating the Market as part of the City's environmental sustainability goals, the Department of Community Development Services began a strategic planning process for the Market in 2010. This was also a response to growers' and other vendors' concerns about the direction of the market and the need for a formal voice in the decision making process.

This memorandum is intended to provide a status update on the Market strategic plan to Urbana Mayor and City Council.

The Market Strategic Plan

In February 2010, a Steering Committee of stakeholders was formed to help guide the planning process. Members included a City Council member and representatives of the following: produce, meat, dairy, and arts & craft vendors; community groups; several Urbana neighborhoods; experts in sustainable agriculture and local and organic foods; long-time patrons; and the downtown business community. The Steering Committee studied the history of the Market as well as recent trends and issues. As part of the data gathering stage, the City worked with the Steering Committee to conduct outreach including several public meetings and a survey. Using this information, a mission statement was developed:

Mission Statement

"Urbana's farmers market is a vibrant market that connects the community with local food growers and producers, strengthens our local food economy, provides access to local artisans, and serves as a community gathering place."

Goals

The next step in the process was to formulate a set of Goals and Implementation Strategies. These statements set the framework for how the plan will be achieved. They also reinforce the elements of the mission statement and will help guide City staff, the City Council, appointed Boards and Commissions, and the community in making important decisions related to the Market. The goals are as follows:

1. Preserve and enhance the character of the Market.
2. Ensure that the provision of a variety of fresh, healthy, local foods remains the cornerstone of the Market.
3. Encourage a dynamic, diverse, and quality Market.
4. Promote the inclusion of stakeholders in the decision making process for the Market.
5. Consider future growth of the Market that is consistent with its mission.
6. Enhance the quality of life in Urbana by providing community activities which foster social gathering and interaction.
7. Promote the Market as an educational forum for consumers to learn the uses and benefits of quality, locally grown or prepared foods.
8. Ensure that the Market continues to have a stable funding source to ensure its long-term continuity and fiscal health.
9. Strengthen the Market's role in the City's economic development efforts in the downtown and elsewhere.
10. Enhance the Market's role in the local food system.

Implementation Strategies

The Market Strategic Plan further identifies ways the goals will be implemented through an Implementation Program Matrix. The Steering Committee recognizes that farmers and food anchor Urbana's Market at the Square. Therefore, the most significant implementation strategy is to create an Advisory Board that reflects the importance of food in commerce at the Market. The Board would ideally include vendors, patrons, and Urbana business representatives to assist staff and advise the Mayor and City Council regarding policy decisions and issues that may confront the Market. Detailed recommendations for the functions and makeup of this board can be found in the draft plan on page 23.

Other important strategies include considering providing additional opportunities for the Market by lengthening the season, lengthening the hours, or adding an additional Market day of the week; studying the feasibility of a permanent structure to house the Market; promoting collaboration with downtown businesses; and considering rebranding the Market to reflect its core mission as a farmers' market and strengthen its role in the local food system.

The full Implementation Program Matrix identifies the responsible City agency, other responsible entities, the timing, and the type of strategy. The Implementation Program Matrix begins on page 25.

Public Comment on Draft Plan

City staff held an open house on the draft plan at the July 16, 2011 Market at the Square to present the key recommendations in the draft plan and take public comments. In addition to the open house, the draft plan is available on the City's website at <http://www.urbanaininois.us/market>.

Next Steps

The Market Steering Committee is meeting on September 20, 2011 for a final discussion on the draft plan. At this meeting, suggestions and comments from the public will be discussed and incorporated into the draft plan where appropriate. City staff will then ask the Plan Commission for comments on the draft plan and then present it to Urbana Mayor and City Council for adoption by resolution.

Staff welcomes your comments and/or feedback on the draft plan at the August 22, 2011 City Council Committee of the Whole meeting. If you would prefer to provide comments after the meeting, please contact Rebecca Bird at rbird@urbanaininois.us or (217) 384-2440 with your comments by September 9, 2011.

Prepared by:

Rebecca Bird, Planner I

Attachments: Draft Urbana's Market at the Square Strategic Plan*

* Please note that the attached plan does not include the appendices. The appendices can be found on line at <http://www.urbanaininois.us/market>. If you would prefer a paper copy, please contact Rebecca Bird at 384-2440.

cc: Market Steering Committee

Urbana's Market at the Square



Strategic Plan



City of Urbana, Illinois
Community Development Services

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Urbana’s Market at the Square



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Executive Summary

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A Steering Committee of stakeholders was recruited to help guide the planning process. As part of the data gathering stage, the City conducted outreach including several public meetings, a survey, and an open house. The Steering Committee studied the history of the Market as well as recent trends and issues. Using this information, a mission statement was developed:

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The next step in the process was to formulate a set of Goals and Implementation Strategies. These statements set the framework for how the plan will be achieved. They also reinforce the elements of the mission statement and will help guide City staff, the City Council, appointed Boards and Commissions, and the community in making important decisions related to the Market.

1. Preserve and enhance the **character** of Urbana's farmers market.
2. Ensure that the provision of a variety of **fresh, healthy, local foods** remains the cornerstone of the Market.
3. Encourage a **dynamic, diverse, and quality** Market.
4. Promote the inclusion of stakeholders in the **decision making** process for the Market.
5. Consider future **growth** of the Market that is consistent with its mission.
6. Enhance the quality of life in Urbana by providing **community activities** which foster social gathering and interaction.

7. Promote the Market as an **educational** forum for consumers to learn the uses and benefits of quality, locally grown or prepared foods.
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Implementation Strategies

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Other important strategies include considering providing additional opportunities for the Market by lengthening the season, lengthening the hours, or adding an additional Market day of the week; studying the feasibility of a permanent structure; promoting collaboration with downtown businesses; and considering rebranding the Market to reflect its core mission as a farmers' market and strengthen its role in the local food system.

The full Implementation Program Matrix identifies the responsible City agency, other responsible entities, the timing, and the type of strategy. The Implementation Program Matrix begins on page 25.

Introduction

Started in 1978 by a group of farmers, Urbana’s Market at the Square has become a major attraction in the community and is one of the largest and most diverse farmers’ markets in Illinois. The Market draws an average of nearly 7,000 people from Urbana-Champaign, the surrounding area, and further afield every Saturday morning from May to November. Through its location adjacent to Lincoln Square Village, the Market acts as a gateway to downtown. Not only does the Market contribute enormously to Urbana’s identity, vitality, and “sense of place,” but it is also an integral part of the local economy and a major component of being a viable sustainable community.

One of the seven goals adopted by the Urbana City Council and Mayor on February 1, 2010 is environmental sustainability. Strategy J under this goal discusses how the Market can help the City achieve this goal:

Strategy J: Promote production, accessibility and affordability of local farm and artisan products.

- ***Conduct a strategic planning process to explore the future vision, program goals and implementation steps for Market at the Square***
- *Consider creation of an advisory board for the Urbana Market composed of representatives from the City of Urbana, vendors, consumers, the Urbana Business Association and others as deemed appropriate.*
- *Implement use of Electronic Benefits Transfer cards at the Urbana Market.*
- *Encourage establishment of a “Friends of the Urbana Market” not-for-profit organization to provide fundraising for educational and artistic events, infrastructure and other needs.*
- *Grow the Urbana Market by establishing a year-round operation on a permanent location with commercial kitchen space that can be rented by vendors.*
- *Leverage the Urbana Market as an economic engine to drive development of a portion of downtown Urbana as a “food district.”*

In response to this goal and requests made by growers, the Department of Community Development Services began a strategic planning process for Urbana’s Market at the Square in February 2010. A Steering Committee of stakeholders was recruited to help guide the process. The Steering Committee is comprised of four Market vendors (two produce, one meat, and one arts and crafts), a representative of the Urbana Business Association, a Lincoln Square Village business owner, an Urbana City Councilmember, a representative of the local sustainable food movement, an expert in local sustainable agriculture from the University of Illinois, three members of the public representing differing community interests, and City staff.

Market History & Background

Market at the Square, established in 1978 by a group of farmers, is one of Urbana’s strongest attractions. It is a large and popular farmers market running every Saturday, starting the first weekend in May, for a total of 28 weeks. The Market draws customers from both Urbana-Champaign and the surrounding area, as well as out-of-town visitors. It serves as an incubator for local business activity and is home to nationally-recognized, award-winning food producers. The Market also acts as a magnet for downtown businesses, bringing thousands of people downtown every Saturday during the Market season. While its economic impact is difficult to quantify, it is undeniably significant. In short, the presence and visibility of Market at the Square contributes enormously to Urbana’s identity and economic vitality.



Farmers’ markets, such as Market at the Square, are an integral part of a viable, sustainable community and its local food system. Everyone must eat, and the existence of farmers’ markets encourages the purchase and consumption of healthy food that is grown locally and regionally. The definition of “local” for Urbana’s Market is anything grown or produced within the state.

While sourcing food locally lightens the carbon footprint of a community, such sourcing also promotes economic sustainability by providing jobs to residents, supporting local farmers and their enterprises, incubating new businesses, and keeping financial resources in the community.

Market at the Square has existed in or near its current location for over thirty years. During its initial years, it was managed by a variety of entities, including the founding vendors, Lincoln Square staff, and the Urbana Business Alliance (now the Urbana Business Association). Starting in the spring of 1997, the City of Urbana took over management of the Market. Since that time, Community Development Services staff have planned, promoted, and operated the Market under the direction of the Mayor and City Council.

The City currently employs an Economic Development Specialist who serves as Market Director. The City also employs a Market assistant who works on Market days and Friday afternoons, and a groundskeeper to handle setup and teardown on Market days. A volunteer coordinates the monthly “Sprouts at the Market” educational program. On-site management activities include supervising setup and teardown, overseeing vendor/community group/performer placement prior to the Market opening, maintaining the Market’s new credit/debit/Link card service, and selling Market merchandise to the public.

The Market is held in a City-owned parking lot at the northwest corner of Illinois and Vine Streets in downtown Urbana. There are 203 vendor spaces in five rows and 30 spaces for community groups (see map below). Each vendor space is 9.5 feet wide by 16 feet deep. The spaces for the community groups are 6 feet wide by 10 feet deep. Many vendors and community groups use more than one space.



Aerial of Market Area



Current Market Layout

Participants of Urbana’s Market at the Square include vendors, community groups, performers, and patrons. The vendors sell fresh fruits and vegetables, fresh flowers and plants, meat, dairy products, honey, baked goods, candy, prepared foods designed to be consumed both on- and off-site, and art and craft work such as photography, clothing, woodwork, pottery, furniture, soaps, and more. The community groups are local non-profit organizations looking to



connect with the Urbana-Champaign community. They include a wide range of organizations, such as political parties, animal rescue societies, a cooperative daycare, a countywide bicycle advocacy organization, and many more. The performers include acoustic folk, bluegrass, classical, and indie rock groups, as well as spoken word, balloon sculpture, and traditional busking performances.

The City has established Market rules and regulations for each of the participant groups. These include information about the following: dates and times of operation; booth location and rules; product regulations, such as a requirement that all products must be either grown or produced in Illinois; and Market policies on discrimination, disruptive behavior, sexual harassment, animals, and smoking. A copy of the current regulations can be found in Exhibit A.

An estimated 190,000 people visited the Market in 2010. Averaged across the season, the Market drew an estimated 6,955 visitors per week. Peak season, mid-June through the end of August, saw an estimated 9,000 to 10,000 visitors per day. A total of 162 vendors participated throughout the 2010 season, with weekly vendor attendance averaging 75 vendors. An average of 89% of vendor spaces were occupied per day, although peak season days were generally sold out and early and late season days generally had fewer vendors. There were a total of 92 Community Groups registered to participate in 2010, and 51 performers.



Urbana's Market at the Square uses both traditional and less-traditional marketing tools to attract and retain patrons. Traditional marketing tools include print and radio advertising, a page on the City website (www.urbanaininois.us/market), posters and handbills, banners, merchandise, and media coverage. Less-traditional marketing tools include internet-based social networking tools, such as Facebook, Twitter, a Market weblog, and Flickr (a photo hosting site). The Market also produces an annual report, which is presented to Urbana City Council in the off-season. Copies of the Market's annual reports can be found on the Market's page on the City website.

Economic Development Impact and Potential

Farmers markets have long been recognized as promoters of economic development. There are five ways Urbana's Market at the Square impacts and promotes local economic development:

- ***The Market helps promote and support local businesses.*** The Market brings large numbers of patrons to an already-concentrated business area every Saturday during the Market season, stimulating economic activity in the downtown area, in addition to the economic activity that takes place at the Market itself. Retailers adjacent to the Market site enjoy spikes in sales on Market days, and some have made adjustments to their businesses and/or business plans in order to accommodate this uptick in business, including conducting events of interest to Market patrons, adding staff on Market days, and considering renovation and expansion for their businesses. According to one downtown business owner, "the Market is what keeps us in Urbana." Sales at another double or triple on Market days, according to their general manager. Several businesses have also agreed to cooperative partnerships with the Market to promote Market events, such as Sprouts at the Market, thus attracting more market patrons to their businesses.
- ***The Market helps money stay in the community.*** The Market features local and regional businesses selling goods to local residents and Market visitors, many of whom will go on to spend more money in the immediate area. In addition, vendors re-circulate money in Urbana on Market days by purchasing food/meals, fuel, and other items.
- ***The Market facilitates business incubation and development.*** Several businesses getting their start at Market at the Square, such as A Toffee Tale, Prairie Fruits Farms, and Flatlander Chocolates, have become bona-fide brick and mortar businesses while also remaining loyal to the Market as a place to do business. Established brick and mortar businesses have been able to cultivate their clientele at the Market, drawing more people not just to their retail establishment, but also to the Market.
- ***The Market promotes job creation and supplements incomes.*** Several of the Markets larger vendors have employees or hire staff to work at the Market booth on Saturdays, including Blue Moon Farm, Prairie Fruits Farm, Pekara, and A Toffee Tale, among others. Also, Market businesses provide a source of part-time employment for some vendors.
- ***The Market provides a long-term, indirect economic impact by improving the quality of life for residents.*** The Market is a unique Urbana amenity that attracts people to the area to live and work. The Market has a positive impact on the quality of life of the community not just as a

source of fresh, healthy, local food, but also through the social experience it offers.

Further enhancement of the Market's economic development potential could include the creation of an advertising campaign by area businesses designed to capitalize on the Market's foot traffic, assisting vendors in their own marketing efforts in order to attract more business to their booth (and to the Market), and educating vendors considering opening a brick and mortar store about the City's business incentives.

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Trends & Issues

In recent years, the Market has grown significantly due to its popularity as a well-established local attraction and to an increased national interest in farmers' markets. According to the United States Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service figures for 2010, farmers' markets grew in number from 5,274 in 2009 to 6,132, an increase of 16%. Nearly 300 (5.69%) of those markets are located in Illinois.

As Market at the Square has grown in recent years, the needs of the Market have changed. Growth has brought along with it several major issues the Market faces as it plans its future. Among these issues are:

Governance

Currently, the Market has guidelines that assist in the day-to-day operation of the Market. Decisions on policy creation and enforcement, programming, and long-range planning are made by the Director in consultation with other City staff and with annual reports to City Council. As a result of Market growth in recent years, increasing interest in local food systems, the need for an avenue for stakeholder voices and a forum to handle concerns, and a number of policy-related concerns such as whether the Market should change its definition of "local", the question has arisen as to whether an advisory body would be useful in helping to provide guidance on the overall operations of the Market.

Possible Remedies

An advisory body could provide a chain of expertise that could assist with policy-creation in addition to serving as a formal method for stakeholders to participate in the decision-making process for the Market. As with all City Boards and Commissions, such a body would be appointed by the Mayor and City Council. Staff support to the advisory body would be provided by the Community Development Services Department with the assistance of other staff as appropriate.

A Market Advisory Board would ensure the application of the mission and goals outlined in the Strategic Plan, the long-term continuity of the Market, and a forum for all stakeholders to be given an appropriate opportunity to be heard. The creation of this Board, while included in the Implementation Program Matrix as fulfilling the fourth Goal of the plan, is fundamental enough to the remaining strategies to warrant a special description, which can be found on page 23.

Growth and Infrastructure

Responding to the Market's recent growth, as well as to the growing public interest in the role it plays in our local food system, requires a strategic approach.

Planning for the Market's continued growth and success and providing adequate infrastructure support are two steps vital to its future.

In recent years, the Market has grown in the number of customers attending each week as well as in the number of vendors, community groups, and performers applying for space and attending the Market. For the last two years, there has been a waiting list for both vendors and community groups for the peak-season Markets, generally mid-June through the end of August.

The Market has grown physically to accommodate this increasing participation, but is close to reaching its physical limits during peak season (see map on Page 9). This trend has highlighted the question as to whether there is an optimal size for the Market and how this should best be accommodated in the current physical location of the Market, or whether the possibility of a new location should be explored, as well as what infrastructure is needed to support it. While the growth of the Market is generally seen as positive by the community as a whole, some vendors have questioned whether the market can sustainably support more vendors. Additionally, there have been questions as to whether a different type of physical space or structure is needed, such as a dedicated space with permanent stalls, a structure that would provide shelter from the rain and sun, an indoor space that could extend the season further into the cold months, or a structure that could house a certified kitchen that vendors could use.

Aside from growth of physical space, growth can also mean an extension of hours of operation or length of season. Questions have been raised as to whether extended hours or season would be desirable from both the customer and vendor perspectives, and whether the Market's expansion can be supported from a fiscal and sales perspective.

Possible Remedies

Possible remedies for growth issues include optimizing the current site layout by considering traffic flow, congestion, and proximity to utilities, and creating subcommittees of the Farmers Market Advisory Board to study the desirability and feasibility of a permanent structure and location for the Market, the vendor selection process, and other subjects concerning the type and manner of the Market's growth.

Fiscal Concerns

The Market's budget is composed primarily of revenue from four sources: City redevelopment funds; vendor, farm inspection and community group fees; merchandise sales; and grant funds. The Market Director's salary is paid from Tax Increment Financing (TIF) redevelopment funds. Vendor fees are \$20 per week per stall. Farm inspections, performed for new growers, cost \$50. Community groups, whose spaces are smaller in size than vendor spaces, are \$7.50 per week. The Market's merchandising efforts, usually T-shirts and tote

bags, bring in a small amount of revenue compared with vendor and community group fees. The City has applied for and received grant funding for two marketing campaigns for the Market, one for general marketing and one to market a specific program.

The Market's expenditures include marketing/promotional expenses, supplies, insurance and Market day staffing costs. Additionally, the Market reimburses the City's General Fund a flat fee each year for City services rendered, such as use of vehicles and storage space, postal mailing costs, printing/copying costs, maintenance of Market site, and other expenses related to operating the Market. This fee, \$8,720 in 2010, is determined by the Comptroller and will be increased to \$17,960 in 2011 due to increased operating costs. Overall expenses were \$47,456 in 2010. The Market operates with a small surplus held for any unanticipated expenses. At this time, it is uncertain how any significant infrastructure projects, such as a move or building a new physical space or structure, would be funded.

Possible Remedies

Possible remedies for fiscal concerns include conducting a cost-benefit analysis for the Market, revisiting the Market's fee structure, establishing a non-profit organization to support the Market through volunteerism and fundraising efforts, applying for grant monies, and reducing costs.

Public Input

An important part of creating this strategic plan was to conduct extensive outreach to inform the planning process. The goal of gathering public input was to collect information from a broad and diverse range of stakeholders that represent the community at large and to give voice to those with a direct stake in the Market. The approach to this outreach included the following activities:

- The Steering Committee prepared a survey to be used at public input meetings and to be sent out to the public via various other means. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix B.
- City staff reached out to a number of key stakeholders, asking them about their relationship to the Market. This information was then used to create “stakeholder profiles” for display at the public input sessions to help inform the public about some of the issues facing the Market from the perspectives of the different stakeholders. A copy of the stakeholder profiles can be found in Appendix C.
- A public input session was held on February 23, 2010 and had 68 participants. The participants were divided into small groups and asked to discuss survey questions. The Steering Committee and City staff facilitated these discussions and took notes. Following the discussions, participants were given surveys to fill out. A copy of the surveys can be found in Appendix B and the notes in Appendix D.
- A second public input session attended by 31 participants was also held on February 23, 2010 at the City’s Developers’ Roundtable Luncheon, a forum that focuses on reaching the business community in Urbana. The format for this meeting followed the same public input session as that described above.
- A copy of the survey was posted on the Market at the Square’s webpage, Facebook page, and a link sent out via the Market’s Twitter page. People who were unable to attend either of the public input sessions were encouraged to mail, email, or fax a completed survey to the Department of Community Development Services. A total of 58 surveys were received.
- A stakeholder meeting was held on March 23, 2010 with 24 participants. Market vendors, musicians, and community groups were invited along with the downtown business community. The meeting began with a brainstorming session. Participants were then divided into small groups and asked to write a Market mission statement. Once each group had crafted a Mission statement, the participants came together into one group and reviewed the similarities and differences between each of the statements. The whole group then spent time brainstorming about the future of the Market.



Surveys

The survey asked respondents how often they attend the Market, about any barriers to attending, what they appreciate about the Market, what would make them come more often and what they would like to see changed at the Market. The survey questions were discussed in small groups at the Developers' Roundtable Luncheon (a quarterly luncheon hosted by the Community Development Services and Public Works Departments to discuss what is happening in the City with development professionals) and at the public input session on February 23, 2010. Steering Committee members and City of Urbana staff facilitated these small group discussions and recorded the groups' responses to the questions. At the close of both meetings, participants were asked to fill out an individual survey. The surveys were also gathered using the internet, mail, and fax.

A total of 58 surveys were received and the results are summarized below. This modest number of responses is by no means a comprehensive picture of all relevant opinions, but does provide a sample of the types stakeholder views about important issues concerning the Market. A complete list of responses to the survey questions can be found in Appendix B. Notes from the group discussions can be found in Appendix D.

Results Summary

Over half of the survey respondents were Urbana residents, Champaign residents being the next most common at almost 25 percent (Question 1). Most, over 60 percent, shopped at the Market every week (Question 2). Driving was the most common method of transportation by far, bicycling and walking splitting the remainder of responses (Question 3). No respondents took public transportation.

Weather was the most frequently cited reason for not shopping at the Market (Question 4). Having a place to rest and escape the sun and the rain was therefore unsurprisingly the most commonly desired change (Question 7). Time constraints, either conflicting plans or not being able to get to the Market at an early enough hour, was another significant obstacle for attendance (Question 4). Because of this, increasing the hours of the Market either by extending Market day, adding additional days, or lengthening the season was the most common change that would cause respondents to shop at the Market more often (Question 6). Other suggested changes included prohibiting dogs, increasing the amount and variety of available food, and solutions to reduce the congestion of patrons and parking.

The availability and variety of local produce as well as the social and community atmosphere were the most popular features of the Market (Question 5). A greater variety of produce was the most typical wish, and prepared and value-added foods were the most requested new item (Question 8). Visions for the Market in

five years revolved around existing strengths, primarily increasing the size and hours and improving the infrastructure (Question 9).

Stakeholder Meeting

On March 23, 2010, 24 key stakeholders attended a Market Mission & Vision meeting. The participants first held a group brainstorming exercise and then were divided into small interest groups to create mission statements. Finally, the participants regrouped to brainstorm on a vision or “preferred future” for the Market.

The group brainstorming was intended as a warm-up exercise to start participants thinking about a mission for the Market. The group was asked four questions and all responses were recorded. When the participants were divided into smaller groups, they were asked to keep the responses in mind while working on their mission statements.

Group Brainstorming Questions & Responses

Question 1. What does the Market do?

- A space for local food
- A community gathering place
- Community outreach
- Sales tax revenue
- Easy accessibility
- Creates lots of foot traffic
- Education
- Destination
- Free parking
- Central location
- Space for local crafts
- Small business venue
- Economic development
- Organic food

Question 2. Why does the Market exist?

- Because of growers and patrons
- Bring people downtown
- Venue for home bakers
- Because it’s wanted
- Tradition
- Freshness of produce
- Allow community groups to explain themselves
- Successful event – bring people to city’s core
- To sell local food, produce, crafts
- Community relations – get to know your neighbors
- Urbana supports environmentally friendly initiatives
- Multiple days ensures its success (every Saturday)

Question 3. For whom does the Market exist?

- Everyone
- Business owners
- Farmers
- Patrons
- Consumers

Question 4. Who does the Market serve?

- Urbana community
- Teenagers
- Patrons of fresh food
- Small businesses without shop
- Outlying communities
- Help local brick & mortar businesses

Question 5. What are the benefits of having the Market?

- Provides jobs
- Keeps revenue in the community
- Low-cost venue to sell
- Gets people outdoors
- Fresh flowers
- Market testing
- Exercise
- It's fun!
- A sense of community
- Allows growers/producers to sell directly to consumer
- Provides access to fresh wholesome delicious food
- Makes Urbana more attractive place to live
- Safe place for public to meet/socialize/be entertained
- Provide income for people between jobs
- Locally-grown food/products have health benefits
- Educate consumers about food systems
- Brings together diverse population
- Vendors have direct contact with customers

Mission Statements

The participants were then divided into small groups based on their relationship to the Market and asked to create a mission statement for the Market. Below are the mission statements created:

- *Vendors – Growers/Producers*
“The Urbana Farmers Market at the Square contributes to the success of local growers/producers by providing a sustainable venue in which the community/consumers have access to high-quality, healthy, local food.”
- *Vendors – Prepared Food*
“The Urbana Farmer’s Market is a dynamic exchange of Illinois goods, ideas and entertainment.”
- *Vendors – Arts & Crafts*
“Accessible venue to showcase, directly market, sell and purchase Illinois produce, food, plants, arts and crafts to the public and provide personal contact between producers and consumers.”
- *Community Groups/Musicians/Downtown Business Owners*
“Discover all the hidden gems in downtown Urbana. People getting in touch with people.”

Group Brainstorming on “Preferred Future” of the Market

Following the small group mission statement exercise, participants were brought together again to brainstorm on the “preferred future” of the Market. Below are the suggestions given for the future of the Market:

- Second day of week
- Permanent location in or near existing location
- No re-sale
- Home-grown in Illinois
- Handmade
- Board of Directors
- Do we want more food vendors?
- More food moving through the Market
- Identify way to improve parking
- Larger volume of produce
- Expand to downtown experience
- Board of directors
- Covered space?
- Market should be accessible (transport/income) to everyone
- One organization should run both markets – winter as well
- More education to community about importance of local food
- Need study on relationship between size of market and parking
- Permanent roof for consumer walkways
- Local growers (Illinois) – no resale; handmade or homegrown
- Market available to everyone who wants (transport, income)
- No fee increases
- Year round structure
- Improve parking and accessibility
- Permanent location
- Study trade-offs parking/vendor space

Market Mission

Following the public input and stakeholder meetings, the Steering Committee met to review the input gathered from the two meetings and to develop a common mission statement for the Market. The Steering Committee wanted the mission statement to be focused on the importance of local food, but also to recognize the community/social aspect of the Market as well as the arts & crafts vendors, musicians and community groups. The following is the mission statement the Steering Committee crafted for the Market:

Urbana's Market at the Square Mission Statement

“Urbana’s farmers market is a vibrant market that connects the community with local food growers and producers, strengthens our local food economy, provides access to local artisans, and serves as a community gathering place.”



Goals

One of the primary components of a strategic plan is the set of Goals and Implementation Strategies. These statements set the framework for how the vision of the plan will be achieved. They also reinforce the elements of the mission statement and will help guide City staff, the City Council, appointed Boards and Commissions, and the community in making important decisions related to the Market. The Market Strategic Plan further identifies ways the goals will be implemented through an Implementation Program Matrix.

Goals

1. Preserve and enhance the **character** of Urbana's farmers market.
2. Ensure that the provision of a variety of **fresh, healthy, local foods** remains the cornerstone of the Market.
3. Encourage a **dynamic, diverse, and quality** Market.
4. Promote the inclusion of stakeholders in the **decision making** process for the Market.
5. Consider future **growth** of the Market that is consistent with its mission.
6. Enhance the quality of life in Urbana by providing **community activities** which foster social gathering and interaction.
7. Promote the Market as an **educational** forum for consumers to learn the uses and benefits of quality, locally grown or prepared foods.
8. Ensure that the Market continues to have a stable **funding** source to ensure its long-term continuity and fiscal health.
9. Strengthen the Market's role in the City's **economic development** efforts in the downtown and elsewhere.
10. Enhance the Market's role in the **local food** system.

Advisory Board

The implementation strategy for the fourth Goal of the Market Strategic Plan is to create an Advisory Board that includes vendors, patrons, and Urbana business representatives to assist staff and advise the Mayor and City Council regarding policy decisions and issues that may affect the Market. Since this is the most important recommendation of the steering committee, the strategic plan includes a recommended provisional structure for the Board.

Powers and Responsibilities

The purpose of the Board is to advise the Mayor and City Council on significant issues regarding the Market, such as rule changes and budget reviews. Smaller policy issues, however, could be handled by the Market Director and the Board directly. These might include vendor selection guidelines and hearing of vendor grievances. Day-to-day operations would continue to be handled by the Market Director and staff.

Members

The participants at the Market vary widely, from vegetable growers to craftspeople to community groups. Because of the emphasis of the Market's mission, food related vendors should have a more prominent presence on the Advisory Board. The steering committee recommends a nine-member board comprised of:

- Four vendors of any of the following: fruit and vegetable growers, meat, dairy, and baked goods and other prepared foods;
- Two representatives of any of the following: craftspeople, artisans, community groups, and performers;
- One downtown business representative;
- One Market patron; and
- One City Councilmember.

In addition, a number of At-Large positions may be created to increase the board's flexibility, especially during the busy peak market season.

To ensure diversity among the board members, criteria for eligibility can be established. For example, three of the vendors should be full season Market participants of at least four years and the other should have fewer than four years as a vendor at the Market.

Potential board members would be able to nominate themselves or be nominated by another market participant or group of participants, but ultimate appointment to the Advisory Board would be done by the Mayor and City Council.

Operations

Like any other City advisory body, the bylaws of a Market Advisory Board would be created by the Board itself; however, the steering committee recommends the following:

Guaranteeing representation of all the diverse Market stakeholders implies a logical and fair composition of board members. Since certain interests are more central to the mission of the Market, however, a weighted system of voting may be appropriate, with gravity given to food-related vendors. The Board would vote on recommendations to the City Council and on smaller policy issues over which the Board has authority.

Board appointments should have clear term limits, three years being the City standard, with terms staggered so that multiple members from the same category would not be replaced in the same year.

Most board members, being participants at the Market, would by nature have the greatest difficulty being available for board business during the busy summer months. A meeting schedule that favored the winter months for the most time-consuming tasks would be ideal.

Implementation Program Matrix

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Implementation Strategy	Type of Strategy	Related Goals & Obj.	Timing	Responsible City Agencies	Other Responsible Entities
Goal 1. Preserve and enhance the character of Urbana's farmers market.					
Obj. 1.1	Policy	Preserve the essential components of the Market: direct access to fresh, healthy, local foods; a venue for social activity; and the presence of local artisans, community groups and local performers.	Ongoing	Mayor & City Council, Community Development Services, <i>Market Advisory Board</i>	
1.1.1	Action	Conduct a patron survey to learn more about patron needs and wants.	Near Term, Ongoing	Community Development Services, <i>Market Advisory Board</i>	
1.1.2	Action	Provide comment cards to Market participants to provide an opportunity for vendor and patron feedback.	Ongoing	Market Staff	
Obj. 1.2	Special Study, Action	Continue to enhance and improve the Market's streetscape environment.	Ongoing Long Term	Community Development Services, Public Works, <i>Market Advisory Board</i>	
1.2.1	Special Study, Action	Improve shelter from the weather (rain, sun, heat) by studying the desirability and feasibility of a permanent structure for (part of) the Market (see strategy 6.2.1).	Long Term	<i>Market Advisory Board</i> , Community Development Services, Public Works	
1.2.2	Action	Enhance social gathering spaces, in particular seating areas, by locating them in desirable areas within the Market (i.e., as opposed to on the edge of the Market) and ensuring the availability of shade. Also try to locate seating areas near vendors of food meant to be consumed at the Market.	Short Term	Market Staff, <i>Market Advisory Board</i>	
Goal 2. Ensure that the provision of a variety of fresh, healthy, local foods remains the cornerstone of the Market.					
Obj. 2.1	Policy	Consider the importance of local food to our community when setting policies about the Market.	Ongoing	Mayor & City Council, Community Development Services, <i>Market Advisory Board</i>	
2.1.1	Action	Prioritize fresh, healthy, local foods in vendor selection.	Short Term	Market Director, <i>Market Advisory Board</i>	
2.1.2	Special Study	Create an updated definition of 'local'.	Short Term	Community Development Services, <i>Market Advisory Board</i>	

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Implementation Strategy	Type of Strategy	Related Goals & Obj.	Timing	Responsible City Agencies	Other Responsible Entities
2.1.3 Consider modifying the name or rebranding <i>Urbana's Market at the Square</i> to reflect its core mission as a <i>Farmers Market</i> .	Special Study, Action		Short Term	Community Development Services, <i>Market Advisory Board</i>	
Obj. 2.2 Promote continuity and stability for the Market to encourage the continued investment of growers and producers.	Policy		Ongoing	Community Development Services, <i>Market Advisory Board</i>	
Goal 3. Encourage a dynamic, diverse, and quality Market.					
Obj. 3-1 Continue to pursue an optimal ratio of food to craft vendors.	Special Study, Policy, Action	2	Ongoing	Market Director, <i>Market Advisory Board</i>	
Obj. 3-2 Promote a diverse range of quality goods within each of the vendor categories and retain quality vendors by continuing to attract a large number of patrons and giving vendors a voice on the Market Advisory Board.	Policy, Action		Ongoing	Market Director, <i>Market Advisory Board</i>	
3-2.1 Identify gaps in vendors and actively market to and recruit these types of vendors.	Special Study		Near Term, Ongoing	Community Development Services, <i>Market Advisory Board</i>	
3-2.2 Continue to promote the Market as a premier community gathering place that draws visitors to Downtown Urbana.	Action	6	Ongoing	Community Development Services, Economic Development Division	Urbana Business Association
3-2.3 Include the social aspects of the Market, including special events, in marketing plan.	Action		Ongoing	Market Director, Economic Development Division	
Obj. 3-3 Continue to promote a variety of events at the Market, including those related to public arts, bicycle safety, fire protection, and other community initiatives.	Policy, Action	6, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3	Ongoing	Market Director, Community Development Services, Fire Department, Public Works	Other organizations as appropriate

Implementation Program Matrix

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Implementation Strategy	Type of Strategy	Related Goals & Obj.	Timing	Responsible City Agencies	Other Responsible Entities
Goal 4. Promote the inclusion of stakeholders in the decision making process for the Market.					
Obj. 4-1 Create an advisory board that includes vendors, patrons, and Urbana business representatives to assist staff and advise the Mayor and City Council regarding policy decisions and issues that may affect the Market.	Council Action, Policy, Action	2.1, 2.2	Short Term, Ongoing	Mayor & City Council, Community Development Services	
4.1-1 Periodically revisit Market Strategic Plan.	Action	2.1, 2.2	Long Term	Community Development Services, <i>Market Advisory Board</i>	
Goal 5. Consider future growth of the Market that is consistent with its mission.					
Obj. 5-1 Optimize the current site by considering aspects such as traffic flow, congestion, layout, and proximity to utilities.	Special Study		Near Term	Market Staff, Public Works, Community Development Services, <i>Market Advisory Board</i>	
Obj. 5-2 Consider providing additional opportunities for the Market by lengthening the season, lengthening the hours, or adding an additional Market day of the week.	Special Study		Long Term	Community Development Services, Public Works, <i>Market Advisory Board</i>	
Obj. 5-3 Ensure the Market has the ideal infrastructure for it to realize its potential into the future.	Special Study	1.2	Near Term	Community Development Services, Public Works, <i>Market Advisory Board</i>	
5-3-1 Create a subcommittee of the Farmers Market Advisory Board to study the desirability and feasibility of a permanent structure for (part of) the Market and to consider the possibility of a dedicated Market location.	Special Study	1.2	Long Term	Community Development Services, <i>Market Advisory Board</i>	
Obj. 5-4 Work with the Urbana Business Association and Lincoln Square Village to provide a smoother transition between the Market with the annual Holiday Market.	Action		Short Term	Community Development Services	Urbana Business Association Lincoln Square Village
5-4-1 Create an advertising campaign to inform patrons about differences between Urbana's Farmers Market and the Holiday Market.	Action		Short Term	Economic Development Division	Urbana Business Association

Implementation Program Matrix

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Implementation Strategy	Type of Strategy	Related Goals & Obj.	Timing	Responsible City Agencies	Other Responsible Entities
Goal 6. Enhance the quality of life in Urbana by providing community activities which foster social gathering and interaction.					
Obj. 6.1 Continue to encourage community groups and performers to participate in the Market.	Policy Action	3.2.2	Ongoing	Community Development Services	
Obj. 6.2 Continue to promote family-friendly activities at the Market.	Policy Action	3.2.2	Ongoing	Community Development Services, Economic Development	
6.2.1 Ensure available space for special events such as those related to public arts, bicycle safety and fire protection.	Action	3.2.2	Ongoing	Market Director & Market Staff	
Obj. 6.3 Seek out new events for the Market.	Action		Near Term	Market Director, Community Development Services	
Obj. 6.4 Continue to work with the Urbana Arts Program on Arts programming at the Market.	Policy Action		Ongoing	Community Development Services, Public Art Coordinator	
Obj. 6.5 Partner with community health organizations such as the Campaign-Urbana Public Health District to enhance the Market's role in promoting community health.	Policy Action		Ongoing	Community Development Services	Other organizations as appropriate
Goal 7. Promote the Market as an educational forum for consumers to learn the uses and benefits of quality, locally grown or prepared foods.					
Obj. 7.1 Continue to develop educational programming for the Market.	Action	2, 10	Short Term	Community Development Services	Others as appropriate
Obj. 7.2 Include educational component in advertising.	Action	2, 3.2.2	Short Term	Market Director	
Obj. 7.3 Pursue special events such as a seasonal foods/ dish tasting and developing recipes highlighting foods available at the Market.	Action	2, 6	Short Term	Market staff	Volunteers
7.3.1 Partner with local restaurants and other food-related businesses to develop samplings/tastings.	Action		Short Term	Market staff	Restaurants Businesses

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Implementation Strategy	Type of Strategy	Related Goals & Obj.	Timing	Responsible City Agencies	Other Responsible Entities
Goal 8. Ensure that the Market continues to have a stable funding source to ensure its long-term continuity and fiscal health.					
Obj. 8.1	Action	Establish a "Friends of the Market" not-for-profit organization to support the Market through volunteerism and fundraising efforts.	Short Term	Community Development Services, <i>Market Advisory Board</i>	
Obj. 8.2	Action	Seek out and apply for grants to support the Market's marketing campaign and/or to fund new or existing programming at the Market.	Ongoing	Market Director	
8.2.1	Action	Seek out in-kind donations for marketing program.	Ongoing	Market Director	Others as appropriate
Obj. 8.3	Special Study Action	Conduct a cost-benefit analysis for the Market to ascertain:	Long Term	Public Works, Finance, Community Development Services, <i>Market Advisory Board</i>	Others as appropriate
8.3.1	Special Study Action	Whether the Market fees are appropriate and revisit fee structure if appropriate.	Long Term	Public Works, Finance, Community Development Services	Others as appropriate
8.3.2	Special Study Action	The economic impact of the Market on the City.	Long Term	Public Works, Finance, Community Development Services	Others as appropriate
Goal 9. Strengthen the Market's role in the City's economic development efforts in the downtown and elsewhere.					
Obj. 9.1	Action	Promote collaboration with downtown businesses.	Short Term Ongoing	Economic Development Division	Urbana Business Association
9.1.1	Action	Develop a program with the Urbana Business Association to feature downtown businesses at the Market.	Short Term Ongoing	Economic Development Division	Urbana Business Association
9.1.2	Action	Enhance the Market's role as a link between Market patrons and downtown businesses.	Short Term Ongoing	Economic Development Division	Urbana Business Association
Obj. 9.2	Action	Work with the Urbana Business Association to develop a program which encourages Urbana businesses to take advantage of the Market's local and regional draw.	Ongoing	Economic Development Division	Urbana Business Association

Implementation Program Matrix

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Implementation Strategy	Type of Strategy	Related Goals & Obj.	Timing	Responsible City Agencies	Other Responsible Entities
9.2.1 Encourage downtown businesses to take advantage of the Market's draw by being open during Market hours by developing an annual mailing campaign.	Action		Ongoing	Economic Development Division	Urbana Business Association
9.2.2 Encourage the Urbana Business Association to promote cross promotional opportunities by creating a program where the businesses would receive some advertising at the Market and then offer a sale/discount for customers with Market goods.	Action		Ongoing	Economic Development Division	Urbana Business Association
9.2.3 Investigate the possibility of the Market supplying transportation between the Market and downtown with a golf cart, trolley, or similar type of vehicle.	Special Study		Long Term	Economic Development Division, <i>Market Advisory Board</i>	Urbana Business Association
Obj. 9.3 Promote a "Buy Local" campaign which educates the community on how to strengthen the local economy by purchasing locally grown foods and artisan products.	Action	10.1	Ongoing	Economic Development Division	Urbana Business Association
Obj. 9.4 Encourage local restaurants and shops to buy from Market vendors.	Action	10.3.1	Ongoing	Economic Development Division	Urbana Business Association
9.4.1 Include a question about buying produce from the Market during Economic Development retention visits to restaurants.	Action		Ongoing	Economic Development Division	Urbana Business Association
Goal 10. Enhance the Market's role in the local food system.					
Obj. 10.1 Work with appropriate public agencies and elected officials to ensure the viability of local food.	Policy Action	2	Ongoing	City Council, Community Development Services, <i>Market Advisory Board</i>	Other organizations as appropriate
Obj. 10.2 Increase collaboration and coordination with the area's farmers markets.	Action	2	Ongoing	Market Director	Area farmers' markets
Obj. 10.3 Build and maintain relationships with food-related organizations, agencies, and businesses that contribute to the local food system.	Action	7	Ongoing	Community Development Services	Other organizations as appropriate
Obj. 10.4 Connect existing and potential vendors to existing certified kitchen resources to support local food entrepreneurs.	Action		Ongoing	Community Development Services	Potential Vendors

Appendices:

- A: Market Rules and Regulations
- B: Survey and Results
- C: Stakeholder Profiles
- D: Notes from Small Group Discussions

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