



Foothills Farmers Market of Cleveland County Planning & Development Strategy – 2009-2010

Mission: The Foothills Farmers Market (FFM) is a “We grow what we sell”, grower-certified market designed to supply local residents with the freshest produce available. The market will also supply a sense of community, increase public awareness about the benefits of fresh produce, and support the local economy.

Planning & Development Method:

- 3 teams of at least 5 people working on the critical questions regarding the market’s future – ***Production, Promotion, and Organization.***
- At least 1 person from the steering committee serves on each team providing support for their work and linking that group with the FFM steering committee.
- Teams are supported by individuals on the steering committee with experience in developing collaborative groups, and by bringing in outsiders with special knowledge and skills to help in the learning and planning process.
- The team planning and development process is to broaden participation and ownership of stakeholders in the market, to empower producer/vendors to guide the learning and planning process, and to build a process for stakeholders in the market to regularly examine FFM operations and its future, and to make improvements constantly.
- Teams will operate within the overall guidance provided by the steering committee in this document, select their leaders, set priorities, and make recommendations to the FFM steering committee that meets monthly. Teams are encouraged to seek clarification of these guidelines where necessary, be creative and to take initiative, operating within the guidelines and oversight of the steering committee – i.e, budgets with proposed revenue and expenditures, operating policies and procedures, promotional ideas for community-wide impact that need wide discussion and support, and scheduling decisions that also require wide review. The steering committee is responsible to ensure that the overall direction and values of the market are clearly communicated, to ensure that the work of each team is coordinated with the work of the other teams through effective communication, and to oversee the acquisition and allocation of resources – volunteers and funding – for the market.

Charges to the Teams:

Production

Overall goals: To increase diversity/specialization of products and to extend the growing/selling season through careful collaboration among producers and support for developing new capabilities for production. Specific guidance:

- Inventory current crops and products, determine producers’ interest and willingness to grow new varieties and extend the season, and identify specific information and resources (growing, small business operation, value-added opportunities, etc.) desired by producers.
- Identify the information and resources required to support producers in planning for developing their own businesses as well as enhancing the market.
- Engage producers in developing product plans and schedule for the 2010 market.
- Plan and conduct series of workshops for producers providing useful information about growing new products, extending the growing season (early and late) and bringing in experienced producers from other areas.

- Research and make recommendations regarding strategies for labeling methods used in growing food products, including pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, etc. This task is based on the assumption that consumers need to know the conditions in which their food has been grown, and that reasonable efforts are needed to employ natural growing strategies that reduce chemicals in food. (coordinate with Promotion team)
- Conduct research on other markets and farms that have a similar mission, including visits to them.
- Identify any season extending strategies for Thanksgiving and Christmas that are feasible at this point in the year and get that ball rolling.
- Update the craft policy for FFM, drawing on examples from other markets and input from FFM vendors.
- Investigate and make recommendations regarding FFM strategies that support addition of value-added products.
- Evaluate and refine the consignment policy and procedures, based on test conducted in August and September, 2009. (coordinate with Organization team)
- Develop strategy for recruiting new producer/vendors (with Organization Team).
- Research strategies that support local producers' creation of co-operative organizations that would provide a structure for them to combine their efforts in production and marketing.
- Research strategies supporting local producers in creating Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operations that would also enhance the FFM. (coordinate with Organization team)
- Volunteers:
 - Loyd Lewis
 - Ronnie Roper
 - Chip Camp
 - Cynthia Glidden
 - Daniel Shires
 - Lori Welmon
 - Lara Worden

Promotion

Overall goals: Develop and implement a comprehensive, regular promotional strategy for the FFM that will establish a brand-name for this community enterprise that is different from local experiences with farmers markets, and that will increase the number of people from Cleveland County and beyond who shop at FFM regularly. Specific guidance:

- Develop a regular calendar of musical presentations and other attractions (fire truck, rescue vehicles) plus food-related demonstrations – these activities can then be publicized and delivered to increase the foot-traffic through the market.
- Engage uptown merchants and restaurants to feature seasonal items in their establishments.
- Develop a cloth market bag with the FFM logo to enhance the branding of FFM and to generate income.
- Develop a regular drawing for gift baskets of items donated by FFM vendors, promoted by local merchants.
- Investigate/secure use of the community billboard at the Wal-Mart entrance on route 74.
- Research retailing and display strategies – signage, product presentation, product labels and pricing, etc., and make recommendations to the steering committee regarding new policies, resource materials and other markets with exemplary methods, resources needed for the market and producer/vendors, implementation strategies, etc.
- Support the process of writing and photography that produces articles for The Star and the Shelby Shopper.
- Develop longer range plans for enhancing the shopping experience and promotional activities through research on other markets, literature about farmers markets, and ideas from providers. Try things for 2009 that are feasible in the short run, developing others for the 2010 season.

- Link with Uptown Shelby promotional committee, Destination Cleveland, Cleveland County Arts Council, etc., to ensure synergy in promoting retail and leisure activity in uptown Shelby.
- Research and make recommendations regarding strategies for labeling methods used in growing food products, including pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, etc. This task is based on the assumption that consumers need to know the conditions in which their food has been grown, and that reasonable efforts are needed to employ natural growing strategies that reduce chemicals in food. (coordinate with Production team)
- Volunteers:
 - Tim Crotts
 - Thomas Lewis
 - Wade Nichols
 - Jackie Sibley (Nov.-March)
 - Pat Steele
 - Lowery Young

Organization:

Overall goal: Develop leadership structure and processes necessary for continuing the growth and development of a sustainable Foothills Farmers Market. Specific guidance:

- Develop clear, easy to understand and use bylaws, adapting examples from other producer-only markets, clarifying how decisions are made, how leadership development takes place, how all stakeholders are included in decisions, etc. There are a variety of examples available that can be adapted to fit the FFM and Cleveland County.
- Secure 501 (c) 3 status, including incorporation with NC Secretary of State.
- Develop grant proposals for a facility, for promotional activities, for education and development of producers (existing and new farmers), and to support market operations.
- Develop business plan with revenues, expenditures and strategies for 3 to 5 years.
- Identify the metrics that will be used to manage FFM development and operations, and ensure that data about market operations (total sales, foot traffic, consumer input regarding their interests and reactions to the market, etc.) are secured and used in the planning process.
- Develop the concept and size estimates and other specifications for a permanent space.
- Develop specific plans for increasing the number of producer/vendors in step with the development of additional space and a permanent location.
- Evaluate and refine the consignment policy and procedures, based on test conducted in August and September, 2009. (coordinate with Production team)
- Research strategies supporting local producers in creating Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operations that would also enhance the FFM. (coordinate with Production team)
- Volunteers:
 - Anne Short
 - Pat Steele
 - Chad Stout
 - Greg Traywick
 - Christy Underwood