

Vision Team Ideas Template

1. Who are the members of this Vision Team?

Anita Scheelings & Bob Scheelings

2. What was the focus of your Vision Team at the beginning of the process?

Agri-tourism. This was the group we joined at the November townhall and we participated in some follow-up meetings which focused more specifically on downtown tourism. As agricultural producers, we think a weekly farmers market is the best way to leverage local farmers to increase consumer traffic in the town square. This proposal is about agritourism and downtown tourism growing together.

3. Describe the project/key ideas in detail. If there are several being suggested, please describe each separately below.

We are proposing the formation of a Fayetteville Farmers Market which would be a weekly event, likely on Saturdays, that would occur year round.

Unlike the current farmer's market, this would be a market for local food producers. Only food is sold in the market. As well, the market would only be for producers, not resellers. Members must certify that they are growing/making the items they sell at market.

The market will prioritize organic, chemical free, nutrient-dense produce and products.

By occurring on a weekly basis year-round, the market will become a viable commercial enterprise as well as a viable shopping venue so that local consumers can do their weekly grocery shopping locally in a manner that puts money into the hands of local growers.

4. What are cities/examples, if any, that you are drawing ideas/inspiration from for this project?

The number of farmers markets have expanded exponentially in the past 10 years. Most states have seen an increase of 200% in this time. All large cities in Tennessee have them. Mid size cities like Franklin have them. Even cities smaller than Fayetteville, like Sewanee, have them.

5. Are any of these cities/examples nearby that could be visited in a day trip? If so, which ones?

Sewanee and Franklin have well established markets which could be educational and provide useful data in the designing a Fayetteville market. Both are Saturday markets. Sewanee also has an online shopping portal where people can purchase online beforehand and pick up on the market day. This means local shopping can be quick/efficient as well.

6. What community needs are being addressed through this project?

Fayetteville is technically a 'food desert'. Most food options are fast food or gas stations. WalMart and Geralds provide very few organic options and almost no products from local producers. To buy fresh local produce, Fayettevillians must drive to Meridianville, Huntsville or Franklin. A weekly farmers market would address all of these issues. A farmers market would make fresh, healthy, clean food available on a regular basis within a short drive, or even walking distance, for residents of the city. Moreover, the money spent on food at the local farmers market would go into the hands of local growers, for local spending and reinvestments, not into the hands of large corporations where it simply exits the community.

7. What is the expected cost to implement the project? Please include a *rough* estimate of core costs.

The major costs for a farmers market are marketing/advertising and management. To be successful the market will need to market itself to growers to attract a stable cohort of vendors. As well it will need to consistently advertise to the community to attract and grow a customer base. Ultimately this cannot be done by the growers themselves but requires an employee dedicated to this role and to the general coordination of the program. As such a strong farmers market will have a full time coordinator who carries out marketing and liaises with vendors and coordinates logistics of the market itself.

8. What activities, if any, are already underway in the community that can be built upon to support this project?

There have been attempts at creating a sustainable farmer's market. The current farmer's market is not well located, is poorly organized and attracts mainly produce re-sellers, as well as more flea-market style vendors. Still this market has introduced the farmers market concept to the community as a starting place. More recently, in 2017, there were three Friday evening farmers market sales on the Square. As well, Sir's Marketplace had begun to host various sellers under its awning before fire closed the store in early 2018. The initiatives on the square are better examples of what a sustainable market would look like. Nonetheless, none of these models will be effective because they do not occur on a regular, predictable basis so that shopping habits can form, and none have managed quality by setting standards and reaching out the wider network of vendors in the area. However, these previous activities do indicate that demand exists for local fresh food. The 2017 Farm to Table event sold out in just minutes when tickets went on sale. This is another indication that a significant audience exists which would patronize the market for the regular shopping. We expect that vendors would come from a 40 mile radius and that buyers would come from a least a 20-25 mile radius.

9. Who are the target groups that would participate in and/or benefit from this project/activity?

Consumers: Fresh local food is not sold in this community. A farmers market would be an asset to all community members. It would save time and gas for those travel out of the county to buy groceries in Huntsville or Franklin. It would provide fresh and affordable options for those who live downtown and do not have the resources on hand to travel a minimum of 50 miles round trip to get higher quality foods.

Producers: Statistically, small agricultural producers make most of the revenue from direct sales. Currently there are few places for small local food vendors to sell profitably. A regular farmers market would provide a viable income for multiple small producers, creating local employment and sustainable livelihoods which would take advantage of the rich growing environment here in Lincoln County/Middle Tennessee.

10. What support and resources (if any) are needed from the city?

The farmers market would need an agreement with the city and county to occupy a designated space, probably the interior ring (or some portion of it to being with) of the courthouse parking area on a weekly basis. Some grant or loan assistant could be helpful in the early stages of the project, but a farmers market is a income-driven, money-making business. Once things are established, the market will be a revenue generating program, enough to pay a staff member/manager and enough to pay off any debts accrued in the start up stages.

11. Given that city resources are limited, what resources that are not related to city/county funding can be gathered to implement the project? These could include volunteer labor, public-private partnerships, unused facilities in the community, etc.

There are likely some private foundation grants available from groups like Robert Woods Johnson Foundation. Many local growers and downtown merchants would be willing to volunteer to get things off of the ground for a downtown market come off because it benefits both parties. Using the inner parking ring of the square does not cost anything and creates additional spending for downtown merchants and adds tax revenue to the city each time there is a market . Significantly Anita Scheelings has created and managed multiple farmers markets and is a valuable resource in designing a viable and lucrative farmer' market for this community.

12. Please provide an estimated timeline for how long it would take to implement the project.

There would be several phases:

- 1) Permission and planning: getting sign off from the city/county to use part of inner courthouse ring each weekend, year round. Time to complete: 1-3 months
- 2) Start up: creating the business plan, vendor fee structure/agreements and logistical set up to get the market open. Time to complete: 2 months

- 3) Building a base and scaling: Once the market is open, it will take some time to attract the optimal number of vendors and an equal number of consumers. However with good advertising, this can be done quickly and effectively. Time to complete: 6-12 months.