

Regional Farmers Market Collaborative

Addendum to the Stevens Point Interim Report

The Regional Farmers Market Collaborative hosted a presentation on Thursday, November 2, 2017 in Stevens Point to report its findings on the local farmers' market back to the community. The Collaborative specified five recommendations and included examples of how other communities around the country had implemented similar strategies or activities. These recommendations were determined based on feedback that the Collaborative received from its summer outreach to various stakeholder groups. Community members in attendance had the opportunity to share feedback and comments after each recommendation. This Addendum to the Interim Report serves as the Final Report of the Regional Farmers Market Collaborative's information gathering project and includes a summary of the feedback collected during the presentation.

1) EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY BUILDING: INFO SHEETS AND VENDOR SIGNS

Community members suggested that info sheets could compare total pricing information of various farmers' market products to the amount or percentage that goes back to the farmer. They could include similar information for both farmers' market products and items purchased at a store. Attendees also articulated that the need still exists to reach people that do not currently visit the market. They would like to see information about the market and the local food system extend beyond Farmshed's table (Farmshed's booth space at the market).

2) INCREASED FOOT TRAFFIC: ADVERTISING AND ONLINE PRESENCE

Regarding this theme, attendees discussed other possible outlets for informing the community about the farmers' market. They suggested distributing info at food pantries, such as Operation Bootstrap, through backpack programs at some of the area schools and via a mailing with the City's water bills early in the season. Community members also commented that a market newsletter detailing which products are available could be helpful. The importance of educating kids in grades K-12 was also mentioned.

3) FOODSHARE/EBT (ELECTRONIC BENEFIT TRANSFER): PROMOTION AND STRUCTURE

The conversation surrounding recommendation two (above) blended together with this topic. Community members at the meeting asked themselves the question, "Who are the messengers for FoodShare?" They described working with individuals within the FoodShare community that already visit the farmers' market so that they could become trainers or ambassadors to other FoodShare clients on how the process works to use their benefits at the market. Meeting attendees again mentioned the importance of youth educational opportunities, such as cooking in schools. They noted that the first step to increasing market use and attendance in general is to transform how people eat.

4) MANAGEMENT: REVISITING POSITION DESCRIPTIONS AND CREATING CLARITY

Discussion of this recommendation revealed several themes. These included improving communication to show unity among vendors on common issues, encouraging networking and collaboration among vendors and promoting and establishing greater transparency of market management. One community member expressed that, in general, poor management practices result in financial losses to businesses. More research could be done to determine the dollar value of strong management and evaluate which practices could strengthen current market management.

5) INCREASED FOOT TRAFFIC: NIGHT MARKET

One point made by community members at the presentation about the possibility of an evening market included carefully selecting the purpose and brand of the market. For example, one concern was they do not want it to only become a place for people to come and hangout without making purchases, if that is not the purpose or goal of the market. Attendees noted that the market should not try to be "everything to everyone".

6) BONUS TOPIC: TRANSPORTATION AND PARKING

All comments regarding transportation and parking during the presentation have been compiled into this additional section for easier reference. In regards to alternative transportation options, one person shared that Stevens Point is looking to bring a new program called "Cycling Without Age" to the community. Through the program volunteers could use bikes fitted with rickshaws to shuttle the elderly and those with limited mobility to the farmers' market.

The notion of a night market in particular initiated discussion among community members that an evening market could attract additional customers, thereby increasing car traffic too. Some attendees park in the Mid-State parking lot for the Saturday market, stating that it is technically a City lot and open to the public. They agreed that having stakeholder meetings with organizations like Mid-State and providing clear signage to the location of municipal lots could be helpful in minimizing parking challenges. (Editor Note: Signs at Mid-State read "Parking Reserved For Students, Staff, & Visitors of Mid-State Technical College during regular hours of operation". Therefore, while this may be a solution for the Saturday market it may not work for an evening market. Conversations with key players should take place before any official promotion.)



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**Farmshed has a presence at the Stevens Point and Wisconsin Rapids (Rapids Mall) Farmers' Markets*
For more information about this project please contact Farmshed at 715-544-6154 or info@farmshed.org

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