



DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Economic Development Division

Urbana's Market at the Square Staff Report

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Introduction

The following Market at the Square Staff Report describes activities of Urbana's Market at the Square. The report includes information regarding projects which are in progress, recent requests and recommendations from the public, staff activities, and upcoming events.

Updates Since Last Advisory Board Meeting

- **CSA FAIR:** The Market held its first annual CSA Fair on Wednesday, January 21st at the Urbana Civic Center. Over 100 potential customers attended the event and vendor participants provided positive feedback. Staff is exploring ways to expand the event in 2016.
- **2014 ANNUAL REPORT:** Overall, the 2014 Market was a success. Market staff estimated total patron attendance for 2014 at 123,733 visitors, which is nearly identical to the 2013 season in which the estimated patron count reached 123,933. To break that down, the Market averaged an estimated 4,582 patrons weekly during 2014. There were a total of 161 vendors which participated during the 2014 Market season, up slightly from 2013 which brought 158 vendors. Combined with the 71 community groups which attended Market, the Market saw over 231 registered participants in 2014. A full summary of the 2014 season is available at www.urbanaininois.us/marketreports.
- **2015 SEASON UPDATE:** Applications for the 2015 season became available on February 1, 2015. Applications are once again available online through Manage My Market. This online system is widely used among farmers markets across the country, and locally is used by the Champaign and Bloomington farmers markets. Updated vendor and community group handbooks are available online at www.urbanaininois.us/application. There are no major changes at the Market this season, however, any updates to the handbook are noted with yellow highlighting.
- **FARM FRESH & FAST!:** The Market Director and Maria Ludeke of Createive Health negotiated a weekly cooking segment on WCIA News Channel 3's afternoon lifestyle program, ciLiving. The segment will piggy-back on a new initiative at the Market alluded *FARM FRESH AND FAST!* set to kick off with the start of the 2015 season. *FARM FRESH AND FAST!* is a series of weekly recipe cards featuring dishes that are quick, healthy, in-season, and easy to prepare. The ciLiving segment will allow the Market Director and

Maria to demonstrate the recipes live on TV and offer the Market Director the opportunity to talk about vendors and Market programming. The first segment will air on April 30th and continue for 28 consecutive weeks. Each recipe card will be available on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, the Market website, and via Market Mail (the weekly subscription email newsletter). A printed card will also be available at the City tent located in the northwest corner of the Market.

- **EAT LOCAL CHALLENGE:** The Market Director is seeking funding for an Eat Local Challenge. The purpose of the challenge is to encourage the community to eat at least one meal of locally grown food per week during the four-week challenge. Challenge participants will make a commitment to one of four tiers of local food strictness. Participants may upgrade or downgrade their level of strictness from week-to-week, but starting is the most important step. Having fun is the second. The challenge will help the public recognize what foods are from this area and educate the community about the nutritional, economic, environmental, and cultural benefits of eating locally sourced foods. This initiative will rely heavily on Market at the Square programming already taking place or planned for 2015, as well as other programs currently offered by our numerous project partners. We already have commitments for this initiative from multiple organizations, farms, and local businesses. Each partner has committed to offering outreach, education, and programming to link to and promote the *Eat Local Challenge*. A USDA FMPP grant proposal will be submitted in hopes of funding this initiative. The Market Director will share details on the status of this initiative as they become available.
- **SNAP/EBT:** The Market applied for as was approved to receive a free wireless EBT machine through the Farmers Market Coalition. The machine will come at no cost to the Market free for the next three years, and transition to a low-cost rental beginning with year four.
- **LINKUP ILLINOIS:** The Market submitted a proposal to LINKUP Illinois requesting funding to reinstate a double value program at Market at the Square. The Market has receiving double value funding from this organization in the past.
- **MARKET PROGRAMMING:** The Market will once again offer free programming at the northwest corner of the Market on specific Saturdays:
 - First Saturday of each month: Read at the Market
 - Second Saturday of each month: Art at the Market
 - Third Saturday of each month: Sprouts at the Market

Additionally, the Bloodmobile will be parked at the Market on select Saturdays during the Market season and the Eastern Illinois Foodbank will bring a truck to Market for

pickup of extra produce between July and September. All Market programming will be widely promoted throughout the Market season, with schedules always available at www.urbanaininois.us/market.

- **C-UPHD WIC OFFICE:** A representative of the C-UPHD WIC Office will be available on at the Market tent on select Saturdays from June through October. They will be present around the times each month when WIC coupons are distributed. The WIC representative will assist customers wishing to use their coupons at Market by providing information about eligible vendors, tours of the Market, recipes using seasonal produce, and more.