



DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Economic Development Division

Urbana's Market at the Square Staff Report November 19, 2015

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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.

- **2015 Season Recap**
 - The 2015 season has been a success so far, with patron and vendor numbers consistent with those reported in 2013 and 2014. (*Please see Log of Estimated Weekly Patron Counts*)
 - Customer feedback was overwhelmingly positive. A brief survey was sent to vendors and community to solicit their feedback on the 2015 season. Results from this survey will be taken into consideration when making any updates to the 2016 vendor and community group handbooks and market layout for the 2016 season.
 - Market breakdown by type of participant:
 - Grower Vendors: 49
 - Processed and Prepared Food Vendors: 49
 - Arts and Crafts Vendors: 74
 - Community Groups: 63
 - A complete report of the 2015 season will be presented to Urbana City Council on January 11, 2016 at 7 p.m. in the City of Urbana Council Chambers.

- **SNAP/EBT and WIC Update**
 - The Market received \$1,000 from the Illinois Farmers Market Association to provide incentives for Women, Infant and Children (WIC) recipients in an effort to increase the redemption rates of Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) Vouchers. This was a very successful program and already the redemption rate for these vouchers have increased over the rate reported in 2014.
 - The Market received \$5,000 from LinkUP! Illinois to provide incentives for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients. The purpose of the grant was to increase the affordability and accessibility of nutritious foods sold at Illinois farmers markets for low-income Illinoisans, rebuilding linkages between local agricultural producers and consumers. The funding provided "double value tokens" for LINK Card (Illinois' SNAP program) shoppers. In other words, the Market was able to offer the customer up to an additional \$20 per weekend through this program. The Market has offered this program in previous seasons, most recently in 2013. The program began in mid-July and funds were exhausted during the October 10, 2015 Market day. Staff are exploring opportunities to continue this program in 2016.

- **Illinois Farmers Market Association**

- The 2016 statewide conference will be held on February 16-17, 2016 at the Chicago Cultural Center in Chicago, IL. A fundraiser will be held during the conference on February 16th which includes a screening of *A Farmers Road*, a documentary about Prairie Fruits Farm & Creamery (a Market at the Square vendor).
- Natalie Kenny Marquez is enrolled to participate in the Market Manager Certification which will take place in January and February 2016. This is a program sponsored by the Michigan Farmers Market Association and in partnership with the Illinois Farmers Market Association and University of Illinois Extension.