

Plainfield Farmers' Market

The goal of the Plainfield Chamber of Commerce is to grow from its original farmers market on historic "Main Street," Plainfield's Town Center, to an additional market location/time in the town's newly opened regional retail center, the Metropolis Mall. This expansion will allow the Chamber to promote the use of innovative approaches in advertising and marketing, thereby expanding market infrastructure, providing for consumer-based education and market access. The direct economic benefit from farm vendor sales at the new market location will be significant. Additionally, in 2007 the Town Center market will be supporting alternative purchasing methods via its authorization as a Women, Infants and Children (WIC) marketplace.

[Final Report](#)

**Plainfield Chamber of Commerce
Farmers' Market Grant 2007
Final Report—September 23, 2009**

Summary

The Plainfield Chamber of Commerce was awarded \$15844 to establish a second farmers market at the Metropolis Mall, in conjunction with the original Town Center market, with promotional advertising to enhance the viability of the new market location. Marketing expenditures to expand consumer awareness was the primary strategy. Tactics involved the use of advertising dollars for print, radio, and signage.

How was problem addressed

The Plainfield Chamber of Commerce's farmers' market committee worked with Metropolis Mall management to develop advertising campaigns to create awareness of the market. At the beginning of the first market season provided for by the grant, it was reported that the mall's ownership had declared bankruptcy. The 2008 market was opened, through the dedication of mall personnel while transitioning through difficult times.

The roll out of the grant's funds for advertising in 2008 was centered around print advertisements in one two local lifestyle magazines, one huge banner over Main Street, and multiple live remote broadcasts from the market with a local radio station. These efforts were supplemented with press releases and weekly chamber e-news coverage.

Roll out of the 2009 farmers' market expenditures approved by the committee, incorporated a recyclable market bag advertising strategy. Multiple spot radio commercials were used in addition to live remotes at the markets. Printed recyclable market bags were offered in conjunction with a coupon advertisement distributed in over forty thousand homes as an insert in the local newspaper. Additionally, signage this year included feather banners, yard signs, and barricade banners.

Specific contribution of project partners

Collaborative efforts would be the best description of this project. From the beginning, the Chamber was successful in enlisting community minded business partners to help promote the farmers' markets. For example, Duke Energy provided and installed poles and guy wires for banners over Main Street (US 40, the old National Road) for our "Farmers' Markets" banner. Also, co-operative advertising rates were realized from all of our print and radio providers. Finally, a true community spirit to keep the markets going, has been exemplified by vested individuals even in the face of unseasonable weather, property ownership changes, road construction, and the 2008/2009 severe economic downturn.

Results, conclusions, and lessons learned

Our market survey suggests that the advertising dollars spent did indeed create market awareness. Transactions completed were from customers both living in Plainfield and regionally. Of total market purchases, 50% were for \$5 or less, 25% were for \$5-\$10, 20% were for \$10-15, and 5% were for over \$15. The overall experience at the markets was rated "9" and "10" with "10" being a great experience. Ninety-five percent of shoppers indicated that they would return to Plainfield Farmers' markets next year.

To say the Metropolis Mall farmers' market's success was adversely affected by the mall owner's declaration of bankruptcy in 2008 and its court appointed receivership in 2009 is an understatement. It is only through the Herculean efforts of dedicated mall staffers that the mall continued to function as if nothing was wrong to the general public. In 2009, the economic downturn further impacted the mall with the decline of retail sales nationwide. It is fair to say that without advertising dollars from the grant to create market awareness, the farmers' market at Metropolis Mall would have collapsed.

Finally, the recyclable market bag advertising strategy, with coupon insert into the local newspaper was a definite success. Also, the use of more short commercial spots with one hour live remotes extended our radio advertisement dollars. Signage dollars were used effectively. The lesson learned from our initial season use of such a large banner over US 40 taught us to remember once again that Mother Nature is all powerful.

Current & future benefits derived from project

The Metropolis Mall farmers' market has been sustained in spite of the property owner declaring bankruptcy in 2008 and the mall itself going into court appointed receivership in 2009.

The Town Center farmers' market was relocated to Plainfield Plaza due to road construction in front of the chamber office during the 2009 season and it is anticipated this location will be used in 2010 as road construction is scheduled to continue.

A new farmers' market on Thursday evenings was organized by another chamber business member, Chateau Thomas Winery, in 2009.

Entrepreneurial success of one of the farm market vendors has resulted in a new "winter" farmers' market at a local township park on Thursday evenings to begin in October 2009.

Through the lead of the Plainfield Chamber of Commerce's, the collective chambers of Hendricks County (Avon, Brownsburg, Danville, and Plainfield) petitioned the county health board to change health department rules for farmers' market vendor permitting. The petition was successful. This bonus for vendors decreased costs to participate in multiple markets and multiple locations within the county. Ultimately this change benefits the consumer with access to more vendors and increased competition.

Through the grant process and fulfillment the following peoples have benefited:

Local farmers and farm market vendors have benefited from the establishment of multiple markets in Plainfield with increased venues and increased revenues. This market proliferation has directly benefited the consumer allowing greater awareness and access to our “Buy Fresh, Buy Local” campaign. Finally, the Plainfield Chamber of Commerce benefits by satisfying its mission: “to provide services to the membership and promote business, economic development, and involvement in the greater Plainfield area.”

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