

Bad Axe Michigan Farmer's Market Visibility Initiative

To improve the visibility of the Bad Axe Farmer's Market through advertising and promotional campaign activities in order to increase patronage, promote new programs, and to make the market more profitable for vendors.

[Final Report](#)

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In the summer of 2006, The Bad Axe Michigan Department of Parks and Recreation decided to open a weekly farmer's market and combine it with an existing music in the park series. Charged with paying music entertainment, the Parks and Recreation's advertising budget was not sufficient to create the kind of awareness among the community that was needed to keep market vendors interested in selling at the market. Members of the committee that oversaw the market could see a chicken and egg situation in which customers would not attend the market without vendors, and vendors would not keep coming if there were no customers. The Bad Axe Farmer's Market Visibility Initiative in 2008 was aimed at drawing larger crowds to a potentially fun and exciting Friday evening venue in the city.

The Bad Axe Farmer's Market, a branch of the Department of Parks and Recreation looked to solve the problem by implementing a large increase in awareness and visibility. By doing so, the farmer's market committee hoped to make the market more profitable for vendors, and a regular meeting place for the community. The first step taken was in moving the market. The original location was adjacent to a section of road that carried a volume of less than 10,000 cars per day. The new location was visible from a road that carried more than 20,000 cars per day. The planned themed weeks were carried out by groups such as area banks who conducted a chili cook off. Next, a grant was attained from the USDA's Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) that would provide needed funds for a push in visibility. Money was allocated to purchase more comprehensive and wider reaching media advertising. A logo was developed and placed on cloth grocery bags, which were given to market attendees. Mini billboards were purchased that had beautiful interchangeable pictures that directed people to the market from the street. Lastly, the Parks and Rec. department was able to use previously budgeted advertising dollars to hire more musical entertainment to provide a backdrop for the market.

Many people from the area and beyond contributed to the 2008 Bad Axe Farmer's Market. For instance, four of the town's six banks sponsored a chili cook off (attractions included delicious chili a very entertaining 80's cover band); several area churches had bake sales and a concert on the church night; many local bedding plant growers brought their lovely creations for a special flower night. The committee of four or five people was at every market to direct traffic and put up signage. The head of the Parks and Rec Department oversaw each weekend and kept the bands up to schedule and paid.

The committee that oversees the Bad Axe Farmer's Market has had several discussions to analyze the effectiveness of the visibility initiative. The group believes that the initiative was a success in many areas. Every week that the market was open (three were cancelled due to stormy weather), there were many more customers parking and walking through the market. We felt that there was in fact an increase to 200-300 visitors each week (well above the 15% we talked about in the Project Narrative). A large portion of the visitors returned from week to week, thus turning the market into a regular meeting place for

many. While those objectives were reached, feedback from vendors was rather mixed. Some vendors did a fantastic business every single Friday they came to the market. Others attended several weeks and hardly sold anything. While the project succeeded in driving traffic to the market, the committee feels it might have failed in bringing the right kind of traffic to support the vendors. A more targeted approach to advertising and event scheduling might benefit vendors in the future.

Here is a link to the schedule of the Bad Axe Farmer's Market for 2008:
<http://www.cityofbadaxe.com/farmersmarket.html>

In the project narrative, it was stated: "The first people to benefit by better visibility of The Bad Axe Farmer's Market will be the vendors. By having more people shop their booths, they should experience higher sales and hopefully higher profitability. Keeping an extra \$2,000 or more in the pockets of local farmers and crafters is a tremendous benefit. Those shopping the market should also benefit from a more visible market because vendors will be able to afford a larger product offering. The weekly groups being hosted at the market such as 4-H, Blue Star Mothers, Boy/Girl Scouts, and others will benefit because they will experience a unique form of exposure. The companies creating media advertisements, mini billboards, and cloth bags will benefit in the form of more sales. Lastly, entertainers that may perform at the market will benefit by greater visibility because more people will be experiencing their talent. The Bad Axe Farmer's Market Visibility Initiative is unique because it attempts to draw such a broad range of people together as a community. Other markets in the area have applied for grants to enhance the physical market, or to attract a specific demographic. This one aims to draw everyone together, to inform them of what is going on from week to week, and to make adjustments as patrons and vendors demand." We truly feel that some benefit was brought to all of the people described as we hoped, and that all of those people would be beneficiaries of future Bad Axe Farmer's Market endeavors. Everyone listed above is eternally grateful for the FMMP for its role in boosting a very worthwhile project.

Respectfully Submitted:
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