

Walterboro Farmer's Market Revitalization Project

To attract more customers and vendors to a historic county farmers market in order to improve farm-based income and to improve consumer access to fresh fruits and vegetables in a very rural, racially diverse community where a sizable segment of households (21 percent) live below the poverty line.

[Final Report](#)

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Final Report
April 1, 2008

April, 2007

Many of the activities and plans outlined in the project narrative actually were implemented between the time the narrative was written (May, 2006) and when the grants were awarded the following September. Following is a brief description.

Capacity-building efforts included:

- Details of the market reorganization were publicized extensively through the media.
- Meetings of interested parties (community leaders, consumers, farmers and other potential vendors) were held and plans for expansion were made.
- The market opened May 24 and ran through October 31. It was open three days each week.

Marketing efforts:

- Frequent media coverage.
- Development of a logo.
- Design and purchase of 3 sandwich-board signs that were put at high-traffic corners directing traffic to the farmers market whenever it was open.
- Aprons with the logo were made for the vendors.
- Cloth shopping bags with the logo were used in promotions.
- Two health fairs were held, conducted by Lowcountry AHEC interns.
- A Farmers Market Cookbook of healthy recipes was developed by Lowcountry AHEC interns.
- A Customer Appreciation Day was held to kick off the EBT Program. It included special educational exhibits by Clemson Extension and the South Carolina Department of Agriculture, a watermelon-carving contest, free gifts, and attendance by city and state dignitaries. It also included a special recycling exhibit: customers bringing in plastic grocery bags to be recycled were given a cloth shopping bag with the WFM logo on it.

Other highlights of the 2006 season included:

- Using grant monies from Kellogg and the Ford Foundation, the South Carolina Department of Agriculture paid the salary of the Market Mangers.
- As many as 13 vendors participated.
- As many as 150 customers attended.
- The WIC Voucher Program was implemented and approximately \$9,500 in vouchers were redeemed at the market.
- The Senior Voucher Program was implemented, though it was very late in the season. An estimated \$800 in vouchers were redeemed.
- The market was one of only ten in the state to pilot accepting Food Stamp EBTs. It, also, was implemented very late in the season and there are no figures or estimates yet regarding transactions.

Plans for the 2007 season included the following:

- Monthly meetings of the Farmers Market Planning Committee were held to plan the 2007 market. Rules were revised.
- The market opened May 3 at the city parking lot downtown. It was open two days each week at the beginning and end of the season, and expanded to 3 days during the height of the season.
- The weekend before the market opened, the annual Rice Festival was held. The farmers market had an exhibit at the festival and a float in the Rice Festival parade to announce and promote the opening of the market.

Unexpected Delays or Impediments, 2007

A frost in early April caused extensive damage to crops. Farmers rushed to replant, but it still resulted in fewer vendors and less product offered at the first of the season.

Favorable Developments/Other Grant Funds

State Senator Clemente Pinckney submitted a line item in the state budget of \$200,000 for purchase of a permanent site for the farmers market.

In collaboration with the Downtown Walterboro Development Corporation, we submitted an application for a USDA Rural Business Enterprise grant for \$99,999 to be used to renovate property purchased for a permanent location.

Pending approval of these two funding sources, plans were made to create a Walterboro Public Market. It is to provide a year-round, indoor/outdoor venue for farmers and other entrepreneurs to market their products.

Downtown Walterboro Development Corporation agreed to fund up to \$5,000 yearly for maintenance of a permanent site.

For the 2007 season, the SC Department of Agriculture has offered to help with the market manager's salary (up to ~ \$800).

The WIC and Senior Citizen voucher programs were approved, worth a combined \$10,000 in vouchers that may be redeemed only at the Farmers Market.

Goals for 2007

- Work with City Council on location and layout for current season.
- Completion of USDA Rural Business Enterprise grant application.
- Press releases and other publicity.
- Development of a float and exhibit for the Rice Festival.
- Design/purchase of print advertising.
- Selection and purchase of supplies and equipment, including promotional items, produce scale, camera, etc.
- A number of items detailed in the budget summary were purchased prior to the awarding of the grant. Because of that and changing needs due to the possibility of opening a new Walterboro Public Market, the budget must be revised. With permission, I would like to revise the budget

immediately and then again after we know whether funding for purchase of a permanent location is approved.

- Open 2007 Farmers Market.

July, 2007

In late April, the Walterboro Farmers Market exhibited at the local Rice Festival and built a beautiful float for the parade. Several farmers and their family members rode on the float. It won two first-place awards, for Best Float and for Best Depiction of the Lowcountry.

At the request of the City of Walterboro, the Farmers Market opened its 2007 season on the first Saturday in May to coincide with the History, Arts & Antiques Festival. Advertising in the local newspapers, tv and radio produced a good turnout.

The market was enhanced this season with the addition of tables, umbrellas, canopies, a misting fan for the children (of all ages), a free-lemonade stand, a picnic table, new banners and new crowd-control partitions. We also purchased a digital camera to help with the publicity.

Special events included 3 health fairs, live music on several occasions and educational exhibits by Clemson Extension.

WIC and Senior vouchers were accepted at the market, as well as EBT transactions.

The SC Department of Agriculture agreed to pay our market manager's salary up to 100 hours this year so that was a tremendous help.

Most weeks there were 5-8 vendors.

October, 2007

August and September, as usual, were slower months for the market but we continued to promote it with radio shows and PSAs and attention from the print media. There were many storms in August but the market was open at least one day each week.

The farmers gladly participated in the Great American Bake Sale, and raised more than \$200 to help fight childhood hunger.

The highlight of the quarter was receiving word that both a USDA RBEG and appropriations from the SC General Assembly—totaling \$250,000 would be awarded to support the next phase of the market—acquiring a permanent space.

December, 2007

In October, three board members attended the Project for Public Spaces' "Creating Successful Markets" workshop in New York City. It was an incredible opportunity and an inspiring three days, touring seven successful markets in the New York area and learning ways to build and enhance our local market.

The Farmers Market wrapped up its 2007 season on October 15, to coincide with the last date that WIC and Senior vouchers could be accepted.

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April, 2008

The first quarter of the year was spent preparing for the market to open the first weekend in May. An advisory committee was formed, and a Walterboro Public Market Association was formed and convened to continue work on developing a permanent site for the market. Purchases of equipment, promotional items and advertising were made to help publicize and promote the market and to draw both more vendors and more customers. Then included:

- 10 8-foot tables
- 13-week advertising package in the local newspaper
- 4 custom canopies (Walterboro Farmers Market, Master Gardeners, Clemson Extension, Community Booth)
- Cloth Market Bags
- Vendor Aprons
- "Church-type" fans

The market will open in May to coincide once again with the local antiques festival, which draw many rural citizens and visitors to our small town. We have been authorized to hire a student intern to serve as market manager and are looking forward to an infusion of youthful creativity.