

The **Hosea Feed the Hungry & Homeless** of Atlanta, GA received \$30,430 to promote the availability and accessibility of local fresh produce; offer new EBT access to East Lake Farmer's Market patrons; double the average number of market vendors; create a sustainability plan; and evaluate the impact of the market on the local community.

[Final Report FY 10](#)

March 20, 2013

Martin Luther King Jr. Poor People’s Church of Love,
 DBA Hosea Feed the Hungry,
**Expanding Farm-to-Consumer Access While Creating Community:
 The East Lake Farmer’s Market in Atlanta**

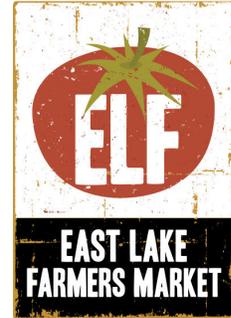
GA-257-2010-G-1143

Atlanta Georgia

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Final Progress Report

Stats At A Glance

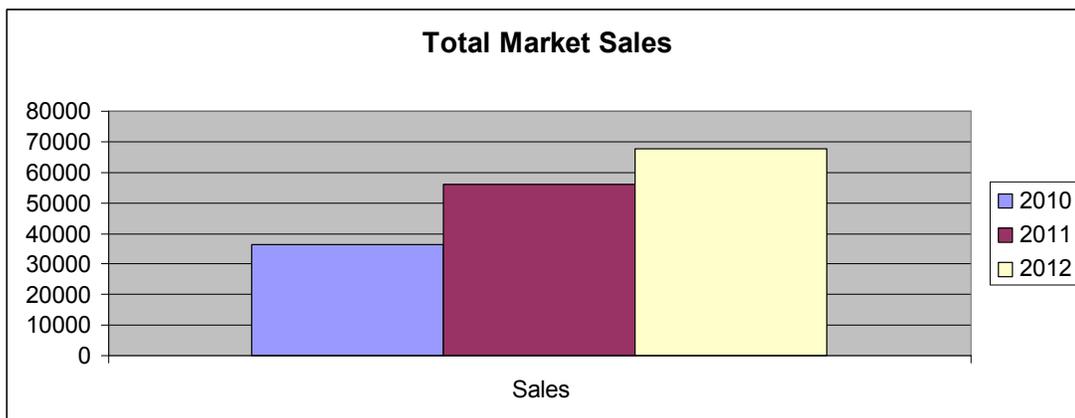


ELF Market Sales Stats 2010-2012

	Customer Count	Sales	Produce Sales	Avg vendors
2010	4238	36188	14614	8.3
2011	6308	56041	31382	11.3
2012	7181	67708	29609	13
2 year growth	69.44%	87.10%	102.61%	56.63%

ACTIVITIES AND MILESTONES related to Objectives:

- **Double Produce sales, number of vendors, and customers.** The East Lake Farmers Market completed the 2012 season. The total sales grew to \$67,708 up from \$36,188 in 2010. Produce sales grew over 102% from \$14,614 in 2010 to 29,609 in 2012, and the Customer count grew almost 70%. Only produce sales hit our target goal. Sales growth outpaced customer growth as we grew from an average of 8 vendors to 13 vendors a week.



ACTIVITIES AND MILESTONES continued...

- **To increase the size of the market in customer counts and in vendors.** The number of vendors leveled off at 13 a week; a 56% increase over 2010. Vendor counts have ranged from a high of 16 to a low of 6, but averaged 13 a day. Our biggest challenge has been that the number of farmers markets has doubled since we started 4 years ago, without sufficient vendors available to fill our demand for more vendors. Our customer counts in 2011 were up by 80 people a day, a 50% increase, but we had trouble having enough farmers to meet demand. In 2012, we started the market a month earlier, and had sales numbers equal to the first weeks of the 2011 season. The market ran a month later, through the end of November, but saw a substantial drop off as the summer produce was no longer available. We will continue the earlier start, but will go back to closing at the end of October. The customer counts for the beginning of 2012 were about the same, but we saw a significant reduction in November with less produce selection, which pulled our customer average from 242 in 2011 to 234 in 2012. Customer counts ranged from 503 on our busiest day in June, (Peachapalooza) to 70 in November at the end of the season. We saw a 47% increase in weekly customer averages over 2010.
- **Meet reporting requirements to state and federal agencies:** The Market has an accountant training and employed in not for profit work serving as treasurer. Our systems are set up to be in compliance with federal guidelines. We have an employment law attorney, and a fortune 500 H.R. professional on our board as well. Decisions involving federal and state oversight are run by these professionals to maintain compliance.
- **Strategic planning session/ Ensure operational stewardship:** At the end of 2010, we held a strategic planning session to set the course for the market. We are entering the 3rd year of that plan, and it has helped greatly. While we have not followed all aspects of the plan as scheduled, it has helped to have a direction and agreed upon goals. We also are fortunate to have a treasurer with not for profit training, and not for profit fund raising professionals on our board. While we have much to improve on, we are looking the best we ever have been going in to our 5th season.
- **Outreach to senior citizens, low-income families, and schools / increase diversity of the market to make it more reflective of the diversity of the surrounding community.** An outreach program was done in 2011 at local senior centers, community centers schools and churches. 10 Chef demos were done, as well as buses in field trips from community centers with the help of a committed SNAP intern. Response was positive and outreach was appreciated, but resulted in an average of only 8 swipes a week at market for the EBT program. In 2012, we did not have a committed intern, and our market manager

was heavily involved in developing the farm project. The lack of attention showed as our SNAP participation dropped to only 4 swipes per week, although these folks did spend a lot more on average, and we only saw a 27% decrease in sales while we had a 50% decrease in the number of customers participating. We have applied for additional grant support to target low income groups served by partner agencies, to get their assistance in reaching target groups. (Targeted groups are families receiving free reduced lunch at the local elementary school, families in section 9 housing, and families receiving reduced fees at the local YMCA.)

- **Launch EBT food stamp value doubling program / Make healthy food more affordable to families on food assistance.** In late 2010 the market started accepting EBT benefits, with a matching program from Wholesome Wave/Georgia Organics. We had no marketing support or budget and no participation during the 2 month period it was available. In 2011, we had an intern on staff to help implement the program, and saw an average of 8 visitors a week. In 2012, we did not have an intern, and our market manager was much less involved in outreach efforts. Even so, over 315 swipes were made over the 2 seasons, resulting in over \$8300 in tokens being distributed and spent on fresh local food at the market. In 2013 our manager will have more focused time and budget for this outreach.
- **Install electrical panel and pole.** This was done in 2011 and has been a huge asset, enabling us to support vendors needing power, especially refrigeration, and P.A. systems.
- **Conduct evaluation of market impact on surrounding community** Evaluation done by market intern through interviews with attendees, and neighbors at market and outreach events. Our market is generally seen as a positive addition to the community, but not one accessible to all. Those on SNAP can double their benefits, but the median income is \$35,000 annually per family, and many families are working poor who feel they cannot afford the produce at market. Upper income families attend at a high rate, either for health values, foodie appreciation, or because it is a great social experience. An intern was put in charge of outreach efforts in 2011, but that position was not filled in 2012 due to budget constraints caused by shortfalls in fundraising. The report feedback was that the community members were responsive to the market, and in general, neighbors saw the market as a positive. Crime in the immediate area has seen significant reductions as the corner is no longer an operation area for drug dealers.
- **Print and place posters, banners, yard signs, and flyers:** The market had a fully staffed marketing team on hand in 2012, and marketing efforts saw great improvement with weekly email blasts and a more coordinated effort by the team of volunteers. Lack of focus in areas under the responsibility of the market

manager hurt our efforts, and we did not successfully have a plan to get the signs up, as the manager was unwilling to do this part of the job.

- **Conduct kids activities** In 2012 we began partnering with the local schools coalition which resulted in a lot more kids activities, such as story time with local children's authors, as well as crafting classes and food sampling events. 2013 will see further partnering with the local elementary school.
- **Promote market through T-shirts, caps, bags, and bibs** The budget was never what we had hoped for, so using these as a successful marketing tool was never fully achieved. The market gear has sold well, and has helped build brand awareness for the market.
- **Maintain website with current information and market policies** Website was created in 2011 and was used and helpful in communicating events, and basic info in 2011. In 2012 lack of market manager engagement on this resource resulted in less effective use. The new market manager for 2013 is showing promise already in this area. We also have more support available from a board member experienced in web based creative media.

Other goals established out of strategic planning session.

- **Become the most vendor friendly/farmer friendly market in the Atlanta area.** We sought customer and vendor feedback on our practices, and in part due to their feedback, we moved to a shaded location. We also held more customer attracting events such as having live music, children's reading hours, and chef demos on site. Vendor feedback has been that our customer counts may be lower, but our people come prepared to spend, and are truly grateful for the presence of the market. While our customer counts are not the highest, our ratios of vendors to customers create a lot of opportunity for sales.
- **Expand the role of the market manager to better develop relationships with farmers and vendors, and do more outreach in the local community.** The market manager became involved in farm outreach last year, and also coordinates a market run CSA that helped draw the customers back to market every week for CSA share pickup. The market handled marketing and administration, and we saw growth from the 1st to 2nd sessions of 2011 from 28 families to 38, with 4 shares a week on average going to low income families who were able to double the value of SNAP benefits while purchasing CSA shares. Unfortunately, we did not have sales capacity to meet supply of the shares, and much of the purchased shares set aside for SNAP beneficiaries was given to local food banks. The market manager did not devote as much attention to outreach in 2012, which hurt our outreach. For 2013 we have hired a new market manager with more extensive experience in outreach and nutrition education.

All objectives from the grant narrative are also updated and covered in the attached spreadsheet, (G-1143 objectives spreadsheet).

General categories:**Advertising/Promotion/ Supplies**

The market is using yard signs in the general area on market days, plus posters and flyers distributed in the surrounding community for special events. We have a social media presence with 822 friends on facebook, and over 500 followers on twitter. The social media is free, and effective for reaching many current customers. The signs are helpful, but we need more effective outreach to low income families.

EBT/Credit Debit technology.

We have one machine for SNAP beneficiaries to use, and we double their benefits by giving them twice the value of the swipe to spend with farmers and qualified vendors. We do not currently accept credit or debit cards, but may offer that choice in the future, based on customer feedback.

We have gone from 0 to 8 people a week using SNAP benefits at market.

Education

In 2011 we did extensive outreach to the local housing project, and had 10 off site demos. These built awareness, but we still did not have a high rate of participation, compared with our goals. We are working with community partners, (Elementary school, YMCA, public housing) to try and target low income families more directly, and to use the schools and YMCA to compliment our efforts to improve diet choices.

PROBLEMS AND DELAYS:

- **to increase the size of the market in customer counts and in vendors.**

We are challenged to attract more vendors, as more markets continue to open. One of our competitors has put pressure on vendors to make a choice between us and them when it comes to hard to find producers, such as beef.

- **increase diversity of the market to make it more reflective of the diversity of the surrounding community.** This seems to be our biggest challenge, as many people report cost as a barrier to attending market, as there are many families who do not qualify for SNAP benefits, and feel left out of the discount programs for low income families. We also have not had the success we hoped for in SNAP participation, but continue in our outreach efforts there.

- **Cash Flow.** Our biggest area of problems for 2012 was cash flow. Delays in reimbursement from two of our grant partners created cash crises at the end of both seasons. In 2012, our market had to stop the manager from doing post season work as we completely ran out of money, and she quit in frustration.

Additional information:

The market received and completed implementation of a grant from the DeKalb County board of health, through the CDC communities putting prevention to work campaign, to build an urban farm, and expand the market season for 2012.



The East Lake Urban Farm, located on a site that was formerly a gas station. Notice the wooden box on the left with the ELF logo. This covers old gas pump lines which were filled with concrete. Over 60 raised beds sit on top of the old concrete lot, with mulch cooling the lot, and drip line irrigation feeding the plants. We also have a trailer for storage, and collect water off the trailer and hoop house which has been installed on site.

- The market moved to the lot next door, which is shaded, with a cooler temperature to operate in than our former location. This was in response to customer complaints about the heat from our old concrete lot location.

Old Location: (Note the same wooden box with the Elf Logo)



New Location



FUTURE PROJECT PLANS

We still plan to develop a plan for partnering with churches, and will expand our marketing efforts with their food outreach.

We are working to secure funds to do additional targeted outreach as described above working with our partners in the community. We are also examining the possibility of expanding the price reductions in place for SNAP beneficiaries to families not receiving SNAP benefits but still classified as working poor using proxy screening programs through housing assistance programs and free/reduced lunch programs.

Final Notes

The staff, board, and volunteers of the East Lake Farmers Market would like to thank the staff at the USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) program, and the staff at Hosea Feed the Hungry for making this grant possible. When we applied for this grant, the ELF Market was a 2 person operation, which was a community-supported response to crime and blight. It was our dream to be able to use a farmers market as a way to build community through food, to reduce crime, to change what people felt was possible, and literally grow community development through our efforts. What was once a site of blight is now a point of pride and growth. Crime has been dramatically reduced, and a community garden and farm have bloomed as we have helped nourish fertile ground for growth.

As we enter our fifth season, it is with hearts full of gratitude for the support we received through the staff of the USDA FMPP, and the folks at Hosea Feed the Hungry, who acted as grant administrator so that we could be eligible for these funds. It is highly unlikely we would be where we are today without the support of this grant helping to carry us, and we will remain grateful for this support.

Sincerely,

Doug Williams

Founder- East Lake Farmers Market