

Final Report to

USDA Agricultural Marketing Service

For

**SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM**  
**Agreement No. 12-25-B-0837**

Submitted by

**Connecticut Department of Agriculture**

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## **Hartford Regional Market New Facility Study and Design**

### ***Project Summary***

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture (DOAg) in working with the former Department of Public Works (DPW) now the Department of Construction Services (DCS), has spent the past three and a half years working on improvements to our seasonal farmer' market and other food hub improvements at our Connecticut Marketing Authority's (CMA) Hartford Regional Market (HRM).

In addition to designing a new, improved, larger farmers' market, the project has expanded to redesigning the entire regional market and new building layout.

The latter 16 months have been spent pursuing an easement, from Northeast Utilities, through property adjacent to the project site in an effort to provide efficient, safe, one-way traffic flow to and from the HRM site.

To summarize, the scope of the project has grown considerably. The new facility to be considered will not only replace an existing farmers' market pavilion and open area that currently houses the farmers' market, but will encompass the construction of a new ingress and egress road, upgrading existing wholesale market facilities, replacing roofs, plans to build new wholesale and retail tenant facilities including the new farmers market, new facility for food processing and related cold and freezer storage; expanded and improved rail line access; related business offices; and renovation of existing buildings where appropriate and/or demolition and rebuilding new wholesale tenant buildings creating a reclaimed food hub for the State.

### ***Project Approach***

In 2009:

The DOAg met with the DPW/DCS to discuss the study and design of the new farmers' market facility on the grounds of the state-owned Hartford Regional Market in Hartford. The new facility will replace an existing open shed that currently houses the farmers' market but must be moved due to planned construction

The two agencies signed and processed the agreement designating DPW as project manager. DPW/DCS requested an architectural consultant from the agency's on-call list.

DOAg and DPW/DCS researched farmers' market facilities owned by other state departments of agriculture and reached out to Fidel Delgado, AIA, at USDA's Transportation and Marketing Programs Marketing Services Division, who provided helpful information regarding planning a farmers' market facility.

In 2010:

DOAg sent letters to 23 potential vendors and customers of the new farmers' market facility, inviting them to participate in a meeting to discuss the new facility.

A Feasibility Study containing three conceptual design options for the site and building were submitted to DOAg and DPW/DCS.

All three options are variations of a facility with 20 indoor vendor stalls, 38 stalls under the cover of an open-air pavilion, and an outdoor area for approximately 20 additional stalls (configuration of outdoor area is variable). The total number of stalls is 78. With the option to add outdoor stalls based on configuration, these three conceptual design options are in alignment with our expected measurable outcome of a new facility having 80 total stalls.

All three options also provide increased customer parking, drastically improved pedestrian and vehicular traffic flow, and amenities for enhanced vendor and customer comfort, including additional shelter from the elements, indoor restrooms, lighted walkways, and landscaping.

DOAg sent a letter to all vendors at the existing farmers' market inviting them to a meeting with DOAg & DPW/DCS for a presentation of the Feasibility Study and the conceptual design options. A total of 16 farmers attended the presentation and provided feedback.

In 2011:

A change in administration occurred. The DOAg in conjunction with the DCS spent months pursuing an easement through property adjacent to the project site in an effort to provide efficient, safe, one-way traffic flow to the site. Highlights of this undertaking include the following:

DOAg/DCS met with attorneys for Northeast Utilities (NU), the adjacent property owner, to discuss the possibility of obtaining an easement.

DOAg/DCS contracted with Purcell Associates (PA) to provide consulting engineering services to prepare the proposal for the easement/access road across NU's property.

DOAg/DCS submitted a proposal to NU and awaited their review of the proposal.

In 2012:

Initiated the process of completing a design for an entirely new market wholesale and retail food hub facility that will provide new and improved buildings and room for wholesalers, processors, distributors, vendors, products, and customers, thus increasing the competitiveness of the state's specialty crop industry.

Completed the A-2 boundary survey plan of the access easement / access road across NU's property with Purcell Associates. This included the mapping of the easement wetlands and topography at 1' intervals.

DOAg/DCS has met with attorneys and representatives of Northeast Utilities (NU), the adjacent property owner, to negotiate the purchase of an 'access easement' over land owned by NU for safe ingress and egress for the Hartford Regional Market.

Initiate the NU easement five (5) step acquisition processes.

Initiated the appraisal process of the easement acquisition.

### ***Goals and Outcomes Achieved***

Meetings were held with farmers and tenants supporting the market. State Bond Commission officials from the Office of Policy and Management along with the Governor visited and met with tenants and farmer of the market. Proposed funding to develop and expand the market as a food hub was discussed and supported.

Progress has been made, a farmers' market plan developed, an A-2 boundary survey and wetlands mapped and road construction designed for new facility access.

### ***Beneficiaries***

A large number of Connecticut farmers benefit from having a more modern farmers' market and wholesale distribution market. Public access and use of the both the farmers' market and wholesale market (most of the wholesale tenants are also open to the public) will be safer and more accessible. Wholesale tenants will benefit by having more locally grown product available to buy and sell and increased public use.

### ***Lessons Learned***

Processing of internal paperwork establishing DCS as project manager was delayed due to state budget deliberations. Contract negotiations with the predesign consultant also extended longer than expected.

As the study proceeded, input was gathered, and the site was examined, the scope of the project expanded significantly, due to the need for extensive site work, environmental permitting, and the pursuit of an easement through adjacent property to provide efficient, safe, one-way traffic flow.

Under normal circumstances, the bonding process would be expected to take six to nine months. Due to the projected state budget deficit for FY 2011-2012, however, bonding was delayed, and alternative funding explored. While the project is supported by the administration, it is unknown how long funding might take to secure.

Surveying and preparation of the easement/access road proposal was hindered by record snowfall and accumulation during this period, which delayed mapping of the wetlands until spring.

NU's review of the easement/access road proposal has taken much longer than anticipated. NU has transition and distribution lines above the proposed easement/access road area, which require that their review be very extensive.

Even though the DOAg did not deplete the SCBGP Agreement No. 12-25-B-0837 funds because of time limitations, the DOAg remains committed to the completion of this project. The DOAg and DCS are proceeding with acquisition and construction of the access road, seeking bonding to fund. The acquisition is expected to take place the Winter/Spring of 2012/13. The construction of the access road is expected to occur the Spring/Summer of 2013.

We are also proceeding with the Regional Market Master Plan having gone out to bid with a request for proposals. The RFPs will be reviewed this winter, and we anticipate having the Master Plan completed the Spring 2013. Presently we are getting bids on replacing the roofs of the warehouse structures.

DOAg and DCS plan are committed fund design and construction of the new road and market facility. DOAg intends to work with the Wholesale Markets and Facility Design program offered by USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service during the design phase. Once the new facility has been designed, DOAg will seek state bonding and other funding if available for its construction.

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### ***Additional Information - Attachments***

1. A-2 Boundary survey by Purcell Associates of 'Proposed Access Easement over the land of Connecticut Light and Power in Favor of the Connecticut Regional Farmers Market'.
2. March 10, 2011 letter from Richard Terrell, DPW to Michael Green, NU.
3. March 15, 2012 letter from David Coleman, NU to Richard Terrell, DPW.
4. DCS Request for Qualifications for Regional Market Master Plan.