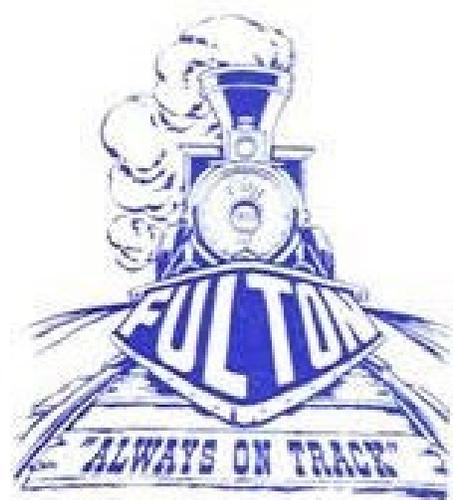


City of Fulton, KY



Downtown Farmers & Artisans Market Business Plan

Mike Gunn
City Manager

Phone: 270.472.1320
Email: fultoncmgr@live.com
www.fulton-ky.com

Ashley Wiseman
Grant Writer

Phone: 270.627.2566
Email: ashley@ktems.org

September 2020

History & Current Situation

The City of Fulton, Kentucky is federally designated as an opportunity zone. The municipality is living out that title as the community seeks to revitalize the downtown area. With an effort that began with The Twin Cities Restoration Foundation and their project titled “Let’s Paint the Town“, the City experienced success in getting volunteers to paint buildings of Fulton, KY and South Fulton, TN (The Twin Cities). Through breathing life back into downtown, new businesses moved in and offered downtown dining and shopping venues. This project combined with the renewed effort by Fulton Tourism Commission in reestablishing the Banana Festival, as well as the Banana Festival Committee’s commitment in making the annual event successful over the past years, has proven the desire of citizens to have a vibrant downtown. A private investor has constructed a 2.5-million-dollar motel project and currently offers a first-class menu of food and comfort when staying downtown. The investments made in the Downtown Fulton area have it primed for growth potential, to attract locals and visitors as they help retain current businesses and drive future expansion.

In 2019, the Farmers Market operated by KY Farm Bureau was closed due to safety concerns with traffic at its location on Middle Road. The location and infrastructure of the previous Market did not do justice to the vendors or the community in which it served. A metal carport and gravel area housed at the entrance of the Fulton County Transit Authority only allowed for 2-3 vendors to fit comfortably under the sheltered area. With large buses and vans traveling in and out frequently and the lack of a well-marked inviting structure boasting vendors with a variety of product, we believe the community support of the Market fell short of its potential.

That empty market stand is not reminiscent of the community’s lack of desire for a Farmers Market. With requests from the public, elected officials of the City of Fulton are seeking to establish a Farmer and Artisan Market in 2021. With almost 3,300 people residing within the city limits, and approximately 17,000 people residing within a 10-mile radius of downtown, the City feels confident that a Market located downtown could fit a niche that is currently unmet, while serving as the centerpiece of community gatherings and economic growth for downtown Fulton.

Neighboring Area Development

Rotary Park Farmers Market in bordering Hickman County, KY opened in the Summer of 2017. The Market has since expanded to include a playground, stocked pond, and walking trail. Collaboration with the Cooperative Extension Service has led to several annual, now established, community events including a Story Walk Celebration, Farm to Fork Dinner and Holiday Market. Observing their success and impact it has had on the small rural community has ensued a great desire for city leaders and residents to have a Market in their hometown.

With the addition of Discovery Park of America and the progression effect it continues to have on the Union City, TN area, the City needs to give residents and tourists a reason to visit Downtown Fulton.

New Beginnings

While the pandemic has been the center of 2020, it appears there is a light at the end of the tunnel for 2021. The long-awaited project, a new Amtrak station, will begin coming to fruition as architectural plans are scheduled for next year with construction targeted for 2022. A partnership with Amtrak is a positive for the area seeing as a new station will raise the bar for rail traveling visitors. The completion in the future, of the I-69 corridor, to the TN state line will improve motor vehicle travel through the area as well. With reliable means of travel combined with a pleasant hotel and shopping situation, the missing piece of downtown for residents and visitors is a Farmers Market. With successful planning and execution, the Market will benefit the livelihood and wellbeing of the community. The major driving forces for the establishment of the Farmers Market include:

- **Greater access to fresh produce.** The rising number of Farmers Markets, both locally and around the country, demonstrates that people will patronize alternative sources for produce and local goods. Consumers experience an improved quality of life by consuming healthy foods obtained from a Market.
- **Educational opportunities.** A Farmers Market provides an opportunity to teach youth where food comes from and help people learn to make healthier choices in their diet. Farmers also benefit from the education on good agriculture practices.
- **Farm to Table Approach.** Large agribusinesses tend to dominate food production in today's globalized economy. Produce bought directly from farmers supports local family farms and sustains local agriculture while offering a better product on local tables.
- **Keep money local.** Food and goods that are produced, processed, distributed, and sold in Fulton County keeps money in Fulton County. Visitors of the Farmers Market increase foot traffic into area businesses, supporting the local economy.
- **Stimulate economic growth.** Shops and restaurants experiencing exposure to more visitors in turn sell more products. Those businesses can afford to hire more employees, creating jobs and increasing salary rates. New businesses are attracted to fill empty buildings, providing additional goods and services to consumers.
- **Foster a sense of community.** While boosting social interaction for residents, a Farmers Market aids in building a relationship between farmers and their community. A market serves as a gathering place uniting citizens and visitors to the area.

The vision of a more vibrant downtown Fulton includes a Farmers Market and Artisan Village. The Farmers Market would be Phase I, consisting of a 40X60 building with a detached restroom and would provide a sheltered area for up to 10 vendors with comfortable space in between for patrons to browse.

Phase II of the project would be the Artisan Village. This project has gained the support of the Fulton Tourism Commission who has committed funding to support this phase of the project if grants are not secured. The idea behind the Artisan Village project is to give residents and visitors a place to shop and relax and provide small retail businesses the opportunity to get started selling their products in a high-visibility and high-traffic location.

The Village and Market would serve as a focal point to draw visitors and residents to the downtown area. It is an opportunity for the artisan to sell their products and test the market, hopefully incubating them to grow into a brick and mortar establishment. Furthermore, it should pull down barriers associated with entry into the sales market so artisans can try a business idea for significantly less money. A failure can be a learning experience, not a financial catastrophe.



Sample Village Market located in Tionesta, PA.



Proposed Farmers Market Pavilion Structure

KEY PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS

Mission

The mission of the City of Fulton Farmers Market and Artisans Village is to promote greater access to high-quality, fresh produce and hand made goods, encouraging local growers and artisans, while supporting agriculture, the arts and a revitalization of Downtown Fulton, KY.

Vision

The vision of the Farmers Market & Artisan Village is to provide an outlet for farmers and artisans to sell local goods, eliminating their need to invest in their own infrastructure. In doing so, sellers can retain more of the selling price by avoiding inventory, distribution, travel, and

shipping costs. Small farmers and businesses can achieve greater income potential. A family with a backyard garden can attain an additional source of income. Leftover produce donated by vendors to food pantries can aid in the food availability of those less fortunate.

Goals

The City of Fulton aims to weave together social, educational, and commercial activities to establish the Market as a civic institution. By providing an enjoyable atmosphere, the Market creates healthy traffic Downtown, which in turn boosts sales at existing businesses, spurs improvements and encourages additional development to the area. By promoting artisans to sell their products in the Village, the City attracts tourists to come to our community to shop.

Planning

Year 1

Once funding is secured, the City will first establish and elect the governing board/committee of the Downtown Farmers Market and Artisans Village. The first year will be dedicated to creating a consistent and professionally maintained facility, and to advertising and marketing the mission of the market. The City of Fulton, with the help of the Twin Cities Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Committee, will seek to obtain a minimum of five farm vendors, of which at least three shall occupy the market on any given Saturday. Based on public interest, the City will place five to ten Village buildings for artisan businesses to occupy. Throughout construction, the Market will begin the process of applying to accept EBT payments prior to opening day. In collaboration with various community partners, the City of Fulton will seek to fill a calendar of Saturday markets to ensure the presence of a program for children that will attract families, provide education and encourage the purchase and use of market foods. The market will also host a Holiday Market one Saturday in the Winter season. Vendors wanting to set up any additional days beyond the Saturday Market would be allowed to do so.

Years 2-3

Prior to the opening of the second season, the City will strive to obtain a minimum of three new vendors each year on top of replacing any previous vendor not returning. Furthermore, the City will pursue two of the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service Programs directly involved with Farmers Markets, including the WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program and the Seniors Farmers Market Nutrition Program through which eligible individuals can utilize coupons at the Farmers Market and for CSA programs.

Location

The City of Fulton has invested nearly \$25,000 in demolishing the previous deteriorating building where Stone Lang and Walnut Street Memories operated to make a home for a Market diagonal to City Hall. Located in the heart of downtown, this site is just steps from the Pontotoc Community Center and Unity Park where social events are already frequented. Low-income residents in government housing are offered a reasonable walk to the site, eliminating costs incurred from public transportation.



300 Walnut Street, prepared site for Market



Google Map view of proposed construction

The City will construct a parking lot designated for the Market; however, the parking lot to the right of the Market owned by the City and leased to the Post Office lot will serve overflow. Grassland provides an area for up to 15 Artisan village buildings to develop as demand increases. Food Trucks offering snacks or lunch can set up just a few feet away on “vendor row” in front of the Caboose between the Market and Pontotoc. A variety of resources surround the Market, including a grocery store, pharmacy, bank, bakery, library, post office and gym to name a few.



“Vendor Row” Caboose for Food Truck Accommodations



The Meadows Hotel, Pontotoc Community Center & Unity Park

Size of Market

For the first year, the market will need to have a minimum of three farm vendors under the pavilion structure each opening. A minimum of five artisans occupying the Village buildings will have to commit to maintaining hours during the Saturday morning Market and are free to open and close at any other time at their own discretion. The City feels this number of vendors and Village buildings open for business will provide the quantity and variety of product needed to attract consumers and make traveling worthwhile for out-of-town visitors.

Competition

There are a limited number of markets located within a 50-mile radius of Fulton:

Location	Distance from Fulton	Days/Times of Operation	Duration
Martin, TN	12 Miles	Monday & Wednesday 2-5, Saturday 8-12	Summer Months
Union City, TN	13 Miles	Tuesdays & Thursday 3-Sell out, Saturdays 8--12	Summer Months
Clinton, KY	14 Miles	Wednesday 2-5, Saturday 8-2	May-October
Murray, KY	37 Miles	Saturday 7-12	May - October
Paducah, KY	49 Miles	Saturday 7:30-1PM	June-October, Holiday Market in December

With the limited number of markets and distance required to travel to larger cities who boast flourishing markets, competition is not a large concern. Few residents travel to these markets on a normal basis and having a market in the community will encourage those who do to shop local while attracting newcomers. An important aspect for any market in facing competition is to keep vendors consistent and ensure there is a wide variety of goods available for purchase.

The City of Fulton intends to compete with local markets by expanding access of the market experience to low-income residents through EBT payments, and in the following two years, other Farmers Market Nutrition Programs. Free Wi-fi will be provided at the market and village, a requirement to accept EBT payments. By engaging a larger target market, the City of Fulton can draw in individuals other Markets fail to serve.

Cost for Vendors

For the first year, the City of Fulton will offer free use of the Farmers Market by vendors to establish a vendor and customer base. As the Market begins to grow and vendors see sizeable profits from setting up, the City and governing board of the Market can consider charging a reasonable fee to afford hiring a Market Manager if the project demands.

Marketing Strategy

There will be a limited amount of funds to be spent on advertising the Market, therefore efforts must rely and mainly free advertising and be creative. A Facebook and Instagram Social Media account will be established to promote and provide updates for Farmers Market specific information. The City will request the local newspaper serving Fulton, Clinton, and South Fulton to provide a story and follow the development of the Market, then advertise the Market Schedule during opening season in their current events section. Aligned with their support of Agriculture and Nutrition, the Cooperative Extension Service may include Market information in Newsletters and promote during community programming. The Chamber of Commerce will also be able to aid in the Marketing of the Village and Market.

To promote interest and encourage the involvement of the community, the City of Fulton will conduct a logo/t-shirt design competition. Once three designs are narrowed down, the community can vote on their favorite design to be sold on t-shirts that will aid in familiarizing the community with the logo. Permanent signage displayed at the Market will provide days and hours of operation, and any low-income programs available. Sandwich style signs advertising produce available that day will be placed at the entrance of the facility. Portable signs will be displayed informing of Market days at the entrance and around town. Depending on the date at which construction is completed, the City may host a Market Kickoff Event to bring the community to the structure prior to opening day.

Ownership/Management

The market will be owned, managed, and maintained by the City of Fulton. All financial expenditures will be performed by City personnel and reviewed by the Board of Commissioners and the governing board of the Market. The City Board of Commissioners shall appoint individuals as a governing board with designated management responsibilities from the following disciplines:

- Twin Cities Chamber of Commerce
- Cooperative Extension Service
- Tourism Committee

- Parks & Recreation Committee
- KY Farm Bureau
- Retail Businessperson
- Advocate for Low Income Population (Food Pantry Director, DCBS employee)
- Local Farmer (can be a vendor of the market)
- Community Member having special interest in the Market

SUMMARY

A Farmers Market and Artisans Village aids in providing the City of Fulton with diverse tourism experiences while benefiting local farmers and entrepreneurs. Fresh, healthy produce contributes to the wellbeing and livelihood of citizens who form a direct connection between the farmer and the food being eaten at home. The City of Fulton takes a special interest in a Farmers Market as it serves as the centerpiece of economic growth for the revitalization the downtown area.

The Mission of the City of Fulton Farmers Market and Artisans Village supports the sustainability of local agriculture and food security. The Market will serve as a spot for community gatherings helping foster a sense of community for the City and attracting visitors to the area. It would give tourists a reason to visit Downtown Fulton, KY. This project backed by community support, operated by the municipality, and cared for by a skilled leadership team, the Market will prove its success for many years to come.