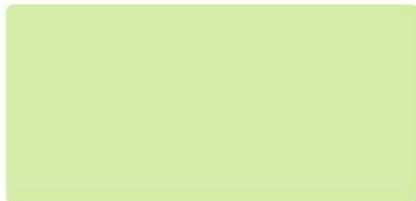


LOCAL FOODS, LOCAL PLACES

Technical Assistance Program



Local Foods, Local Places

An Action Plan for Jefferson City, Missouri

July 7, 2015



Community Story

Jefferson City is the capital of the U.S. state of Missouri. With a population of 43,079, it is the 15th largest city in the state and the principal city of the Jefferson City metropolitan area, which has a population of 149,807 and encompasses both Cole and Callaway counties. Jefferson City began as a wilderness trading post along the Missouri River, and was incorporated in 1825 and selected as the state capital because of its central location. Today the City and its attractive, historic downtown serve as an employment center where more than 14,000 state government employees come to work each day. Another strong local employer is Lincoln University, a historically black university founded shortly after the Civil War in 1866.

As a seat of state government, the downtown has enjoyed a stable economic base since its incorporation. However, City leaders have continually been challenged to make the City's core more of a vibrant neighborhood—not just a business district. Recent years have brought significant successes in revitalizing the downtown core: in 2013 the City received the distinction of being called the nation's "Most Beautiful Small Town" by *Rand McNally*. The downtown core is walkable and has an attractive streetscape with generous sidewalks, landscaping, historic buildings, and retail activity. Many of the downtown shops are independently and locally owned businesses. Much of the recent success can be attributed to these local merchants and active civic groups like Downtown Jefferson City, Inc. which seeks to make Downtown a central gathering place for civic life, commerce and entertainment. Current and prospective residents have named access to foods—particularly healthy foods—as one of the largest needs for making downtown livable. Additionally, fresh local food for residents and restaurants downtown is broadly recognized as an important part of the overall revitalization strategy envisioned by the leaders and partners of Downtown Jefferson City, Inc.

In 2014 Downtown Jefferson City partnered with Lincoln University's Cooperative Extension Program to bring the existing Lincoln University Farmers Market (founded in 2011) from their campus to Downtown Jefferson City for the month of May. Downtown businesses were extremely pleased with the traffic the market brought to their brick and



Figure 1 - Photo series from Jefferson City, Missouri.

mortar businesses. The market vendors saw an increase in sales and new market customers due to the added exposure of having the market in Downtown. Residents in downtown neighborhoods were pleased with having a walkable option to access healthy, local food. The downtown businesses have recognized the desire for local fresh food availability and several are in the process of expanding their existing offerings to include those items. The trial partnership and downtown May Market was a success, which led to a growing recognition that there exists untapped opportunity and room for improvement and expansion of both the Farmers Market downtown presence as well as greater local food access for the entire City.

There are other local initiatives happening in parallel to the Farmers Market that strive to improve access to food, particularly in underserved areas of the city. Several Downtown churches have partnered together on a food access project—the Common Ground Community Building (CGCB), located in an area of Jefferson City where many residents lack vehicular access and where there are no retail outlets for fresh, healthy food within a walkable distance. The CGCB includes a furnished kitchen, offers cooking classes, and plants a demonstration garden each year. Partnerships have formed around this increasing interest in the potential for local food. The convergence of multiple local food related efforts, including access, equity, revitalization, health and wellness, and economic opportunity led the community to submit an application for technical assistance from the federal Local Foods, Local Places program¹. The application for assistance was well suited to the goals of the Local Foods, Local Places program in that there was a strong intersection of food, health, economy, and place-making elements. The remainder of this report contains the results of this workshop and the action plan for next steps that workshop participants and key community stakeholders envision to move towards a healthier and more accessible local food economy that supports a vibrant downtown and engaged neighborhoods throughout Jefferson City.

Engagement

In April of 2015 Downtown Jefferson, Inc and local partners hosted a small team of federal staff and consultants for a two-day Local Foods, Local Places workshop to help develop a strategic work plan, timeline, roles, and responsibilities for the community stakeholders. The workshop included representatives of the Lincoln University Extension, the Common Ground Community Center, Cole County Farmers Market, representatives of City Council, City Planning staff, The Pantry, Jefferson City Public Schools, the Capital Region Medical Center, Missouri Consolidated Health Care, the Pantry, local churches, farmers and business owners, and the University



Figure 2 – Day one working groups.

¹ [http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/announcement - local_foods_local_places_2014_final.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/announcement_-_local_foods_local_places_2014_final.pdf)
<http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/sp-local-foods-local-places.html>

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of Missouri, among other interested residents. Federal agencies participating in the workshop included United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the Centers for Disease Control, Public Health Service (CDC). The workshop began with a community tour and discussion of potential farmers markets sites and key local assets and activities Jefferson City. The steering committee organized a walking and trolley tour that included notable downtown areas, potential and current farmers markets sites, and the USDA supported farm and gardens operated by Lincoln University Extension.

Those visits were followed by visioning, brainstorming, and action-planning discussions among a diverse group of citizens and local, state and federal stakeholders. These discussions helped participants identify the community values that underlie the action plan for their local food initiatives. These discussions also clarified how local foods can help make Jefferson City and the region healthier, more resilient, and contribute to economical vibrancy by further developing and showcasing the regional food culture. Participants identified obstacles to and solutions for expanding access to local foods and created the action plan described in this document. The workshop and the action plan presented below and in Appendix A focused on these four goals:

1. Create a successful and vibrant farmers market downtown that will increase local opportunities for local farmers, increase sales at the market, and increase visitors and vendors.
2. Coordinate between existing markets and other food system efforts to cultivate a deeper local food culture.
3. Develop criteria and weigh options for a permanent site for the Lincoln Farmers Market in the downtown area.
4. Explore methods, linkages, and actions to increase food access to downtown areas and neighborhoods.



Figure 3 – Action planning (left) Workshop group photo, end of day two (right).

The overall technical assistance process conducted for Local Foods, Local Places has three phases. The tours and the two day workshop are the middle phase. There were a set of calls prior to the workshop and post workshop. The graphic in Figure 4 below illustrates the overall phases of work for the technical assistance process.

The second visioning exercise involved participants sharing a story from the future—a headline and tell about something good that has just happened as a result of their diligence. These are the headlines shared by participants:

- “Local Foods Only” declared by 2035 State Legislators. Seeing across ideological lines for persuading buy-in across wide spectrum of beliefs and values.
- Jefferson City #1 State Capitol. Education, Quality of Life, Downtown are exceptional.
- 70% of food in Jefferson City is locally grown, including meals served in public schools.
- Local foods business partners feed the hungry and create jobs.
- Local restaurant owners buy out local farmers market, late comers upset with lack of inventory.
- Jefferson City dealing with “good problems” like lack of parking.
- 175th anniversary of prison, totally local food in all schools, and anniversary of the food hub.
- 15th anniversary of prison food hub, farmers market permanent location, and a zero waste event.

Day one concluded with a review of the workshop goals and discussion about the direction for action planning to follow the next day. Day two began with more presentations by the consultant staff on best practices, criteria, and case studies of farmers markets and other food systems initiatives that similar communities have used to achieve their goals. It included with a group brainstorming session on ideal features for site selection and amenities for a farmer’s market. A local food system asset mapping exercise was conducted to help map and illustrate the major actors and potential partners in growing and strengthening the local food system in and around Jefferson City. The results of these mapping exercises are presented in **Appendix B**. The final work session during the afternoon of day two was spent detailing the SMART goals tables that form the next steps action plan.

Action Plan

The primary product of the workshop is a strategic action plan to guide implementation. The plan is composed of goals, with actions that serve to meet those goals. Another purpose of the workshop was to further clarify, prioritize, and define roles and responsibilities for moving forward on these actions. Additionally, workshop participants identified regional partners, famers/vendors, markets, and potential customers through a mapping exercise. The goals and actions that are part of this plan are summarized below and are contained in their full detail in **Appendix A**.

GOAL 1: Create a successful and vibrant farmers market downtown that will increase local opportunities for local farmers, increase sales at the market, increase visitors and vendors.

- Action 1.1: Coordinate marketing and advertising for the 2015 and 2016 seasons, including logo and brand development, and broad stakeholder engagement.
- Action 1.2: Coordinate the Lincoln University Farmers Market with a downtown event.
- Action 1.3: Create a planning and advisory board: a working group of representatives from the City, Lincoln University, Downtown Jefferson City, and farmers to continue a coordinate effort to relocate the market.
- Action 1.4: Create and utilize surveys for customers, not-yet-customers, vendors, and downtown businesses to inform the site selection and policy development process.
- Action 1.5: Develop policies and guidelines for the Lincoln University Farmers Market

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- Action 1.6: Create a sustained and beneficial dialogue between vendors and customers, through specific activities and events.
- Action 1.7: Investigate and identify transportation options for getting to the market.
- Action 1.8: Create opportunities for farmers market member training, such as an annual training workshop.

GOAL 2: Coordinate between existing markets and other food system efforts to cultivate a deeper understanding of the economic and health benefits of local food production and use.

- Action 2.1: Create a food-focused event to build the food culture of Jefferson City, celebrating the local bounty, and utilizing food to build bridges across sectors.
- Action 2.2: Consider, and if determined necessary, conduct a community food system assessment.
- Action 2.3: Develop a community brand identity around local food.
- Action 2.4: Conduct education and outreach to involve all socio-economic sectors in building the food system.
- Action 2.5: Develop a coordinated/unified communication plan for all existing markets

GOAL 3: Develop criteria and weigh options for a permanent site for the Lincoln Farmers Market in the downtown area.

- Action 3.1: Host a booth at an upcoming downtown event to capture public sentiment and preference around market location and operating days and hours.
- Action 3.2: Develop a site-criteria matrix to assess potential market sites.
- Action 3.3: Develop an “infrastructure shopping list” to know the relative price and basic requirements for a new market site.
- Action 3.4: Identify potential programmatic collaborations and adjacency opportunities (ex: arts groups, downtown event planners, catering and venue operators).
- Action 3.5: Evaluate site for accessibility by underserved neighborhoods.

GOAL 4: Explore methods, linkages, and actions to increase food access to downtown areas and neighborhoods.

- Action 4.1: Engage the City of Jefferson City in utilizing transit options during market days and times, and conduct targeted outreach to neighborhoods experiencing low food access.
- Action 4.2: Conduct targeted outreach to neighborhoods experience low food access by working with organizations with a current presence in, or connection to, a neighborhood.
- Action 4.3: Create pop-up food stands for education and outreach to the market. Ensure that these efforts are connected to the Lincoln University Farmers Market.
- Action 4.4: Ensure that “leftover” produce gets delivered to food pantries, and include information on where the produce came from with the donation.

Implementation and Next Steps

Three post workshop conference calls were held in the May through July period. The May market downtown was reported to be a good success, despite having some challenges with constant rain which reinforced the need to arrange for adequate shelter at the new location for the market. The summer months are busy ones for Downtown Jefferson, Inc with numerous downtown festivals and events

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planned. There remains much positive momentum and interest in local foods. The Root Cellar market opened downtown, has been enthusiastically received, and is reported to be doing well.

The primary next steps going into the fall months are to convene a planning committee that is an extension of the group that met in April. The committee will have similar representation as the workshop to include farmers market managers, civic groups, retail and businesses, city representatives, health community, churches and higher education institutions like Lincoln University and the University of Missouri. This group will focus on the workshop's action plan as a starting point for work to be done over the fall and into the winter so that by the Spring 2016 season some of the specific next steps can be realized in terms of a more permanent market downtown and improved food access to neighborhoods. The work of the planning committee may be delegated to sub committees as needed, and the frequency of their meeting, and how they will communicate will be arranged when they convene.

Appendices

- Appendix A – Implementation Action Plan Tables
- Appendix B – Local and Regional Maps
- Appendix C – Workshop Participants and Post Workshop Planning Group
- Appendix D– Presentation Slides
- Appendix E– Workshop Photo Album
- Appendix F – Funding Resources
- Appendix G – References