

BROCKVILLE FARMERS' MARKET STRATEGIC PLAN MARCH 14, 2006

INTRODUCTION: The Brockville Farmers' Market has operated in its present location since 1832. For many of these years it has been an important feature of the downtown business activities operating Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday mornings from 7.00 am to 1.00pm. Originally it operated on both sides of City Hall ----- thus market street east and market street west.. All farm products were available ----- from maple syrup, wood chickens, and of course fruits and vegetables. Since the 1980's there has been a gradual decline in vendors and product availability, as well as decline in customer base. More non produce items are now available and produce vendors including flower growers fill only one-half of market street west. Saturday is by far the busiest day for customers and vendors alike.

In the fall of 2005, the Brockville Farmers' Market agreed to a strategic planning process to review the present and develop a one to five year plan for the market. The first report is to be presented at the March 14, 2006 meeting. The responsibility for conducting this exercise was given to Peter Carter and Doug Avery. Many meetings were held in the time period with customers of the market, market vendors and representatives of the Brockville D.B.I.A. and the Brockville Chamber of Commerce.

PLANNING PROCEEDURE: After some initial discussion with the core group of the committee a series of 5 questions were prepared for discussion by the vendors and interested persons during the winter months. The questions and summary of comments are listed below.

Question #1: Marketing and promotion of the Brockville Farmers' Market will be extremely important for several years to come as the focus at this time is on the north end big boxes, etc. Considering the following areas: print and radio advertising, packaging of products sold, signage of all kinds & descriptions, special on site features (corn roast, appreciation events, etc.), discuss in detail each of these areas listing +'s and -'s, evaluating/making suggestions for future directions – 2006 to 2010.

- Energy is required – can't we promote ourselves during market season?
- Keeping our name in front
 - image
 - bumper stickers
 - logo – Ontario starting logo
 - one thrust ... cohesive groups
 - 5 vendors – 25 sec. ... would everyone?
- \$500.00 up front to start
- consultant
- collaboration with partners ... who share the same values
- more vendors
- we don't promote ourselves

- quality of products
- selling the market as a source of healthy food
- in touch with people arriving in the area ... ?????? “real hope”
 - a person
- what image are we promoting?
- Define what we are? Promote it.
- A building ... cover
- Target: one person ... one or more partners
- Meeting place?
- Our expertise

Question #2: Logistics, mechanics or operations are to be examined in this question. Consider the days, times, hours of operation, length of season, East vs West, driveways, guidelines re. stall allocation, annual and daily fees, current and future location of the market.

- Some saw no desire to change days, times, hours of operation; can stay the same or similar noon closing. Others entertained the idea of a Market on Wednesday from 12:00 to 5:00 and Saturday from 8:00 to 4:00, which would be about the same total number of hours, but would allow for customer shopping in the afternoons. The issue was raised of the produce vendors not being able to pick in the morning due to dew on the plants and the prohibitive cost of having to hire extra labour to pick in the afternoon while they are at the Market.
- Some felt that Sunday was not an appealing day; not needed by consumer; producers need time off. Some thought there was no viable reason for a Sunday market. Others felt that some vendors might find Sundays a good option in the tourist season or during special events in the downtown area.
- Peek customer times: 1) 8:30 to 10:00; 2) 11:00 to 12:00; 3) 7:00 to 8:00 & 12:00 to 1:00; 4) 10:00 to 11:00
- Length of season: [no entry]
- Re. Customer Appreciation Day – not end of the market. Suggestion: – have 2 (3?) draws over the season with customers receiving tickets from the vendors they buy from so the more they buy, the more chances they have to win. The drawing(s) should be an “event”, promoted and publicized = a big deal!
- Status quo seems to be working [needs clarification]
- East vs West: start at centre on East side on Tuesday and Thursday, even ---?--- over Saturday [needs clarification]
- Make all vendors moving on each market day [needs clarification]
- Fees, annual and daily: [no entry]

Question #3: Partnership opportunities. There are lots of interesting possibilities where businesses work together for the benefit of both. List some partnership opportunities and how they might work, for example, neighbouring businesses (Tait’s, dive shop

operators), groups (DBIA), activities (Riverfest, Ribfest, Car Show). These could involve a longer market day or additional market days.

- Riverfest/Ribfest/Car Show are all competition for space and \$\$\$\$. Produce vendors are unlikely to sell. Perhaps items like maple syrup, honey, photographs would sell.
- Divers/Dive Shop – we are told that about 50,000 divers were in Brockville in 2004 and there were likely more people accompanying them, all needing services, lunches, 7 days a week, AM and PM sessions.
 - They don't shop at the market now – is that due to the Market times?
 - only 1 current vendor could provide lunches
 - we could host an event where they could provide information, do demonstrations, etc.
- Service Clubs, Lodges, Fraternal Organizations are possible “partners”
 - BFM could make presentations to these organizations as to who we are, what we do, etc.
 - BFM members could be speakers to these organizations on their expertise.
 - BFM could provide display space on a rotating basis to these organizations for their info sharing, fund raising, membership drives, etc. We would need to explore if this would conflict or compromise BFM bylaws.
 - The above would need a coordinator to manage.
 - Concern: BFM is in a rebuilding phase and may not be able to “put on a good show” or provide a large enough audience for these organizations.
- Health Unit: We need to form a cooperative relationship with them so that we are working together with mutual concerns. Perhaps a liaison person is needed for info exchange and keeping BFM up on all the regulations.
 - provide display space for them to disseminate info to the public
- DBIA: lack of confidence in this organization was expressed, as they seem to be somewhat disorganized.
- Tait's, Ogies, etc.: These businesses are seen as competition for some market vendors and they do not patronize the Market even though vendors patronize them. It seems that in the past there was some reciprocal business. Needs more discussion.
- Restaurants: It seems that local restaurants no longer buy from the BFM, though they did in the past and some vendors used to deliver to them directly.
 - do a promotion for the chefs of the independent restaurants informing them of the items available. (Keystorm, Buds on the Bay, Jons, Tango)
 - Concern – vendor inconsistencies and product unpredictability
- Clubs, musical/choral groups, school activities – provide display/performance opportunities for them to “do their thing”.

Question #4: The Market needs new vendors – baking, prepared foods, niche items, cheese, meats, plants and of course produce, both fruits and vegetables. Recruitment of new people is very important. What are the needs? How do we go about it? What about fruit coming from Niagara?

- There is the age-old question of which comes first – the increased customer base or new vendors/products?
- For items such as poultry, meats (fresh/frozen/processed), cheeses that need refrigeration or a heat source, what facilities are needed? Certainly a reliable source of electricity. An equipped vehicle is a major expense, especially for an uncertain customer base. Large markets have covered permanent fixtures.
- Produce from other parts of Ontario: if allowed, these should only be items not locally grown, such as peaches, etc.
 - would these be brought in by individual vendors or by the BFM? If the latter, who would manage this?
- Concern: as the BFM is in a rebuilding phase, how do we attract and keep new vendors? Sometimes they come with high expectations that were not met quickly so they do not stay.

Question #5: This question deals with several very basic items that are relatively new to the operation of the Market. Firstly, the ambassador concept. Two years have now been completed. Please evaluate and suggest a future direction. Joe Lor has been doing the website, newsletter and bus trips to Quebec. What are the advantages and disadvantages of these contributions? What should be the future direction of these aspects?

- **Website:** Joe has been a key guy, keeping everyone in the loop. Joe's contribution is fantastic. Would he consider being a candidate for ambassador? A great advantage. All vendors need to make a greater effort in informing Joe Lor on what they are bringing to the Market in enough advance notice for him to post them on the website for each week. Represent --?--, one person; approached on his ideas. The website has been going for 3 years; contract --?—
- **Bus trips:** – definitely – could go a lot more for the market. All three trips were well received though there was some question of the trip to Quebec City being all the same day. The bus trips are the only fund-raiser for the Market at this time. If these funds are set aside they can be used at a later date for some major change to the Market.
- **Ambassador:** – need another George --?—. Integrated promotional focus. Longer contract. This position has to be more focused. It is currently too loose and scattered. The ambassador needs more direction, needs a job description, fuller coverage of the market. Funds are limited. **Ambassador Roles:** - make contact with the public, i.e. discuss, direct, assist “with delicacy” – must love the Market, know the Market - does not consider the pay essential – willing to spend the time – more than willing to promote the Market.
 - Integrated approach [needs clarification]
 - Concept [needs clarification]
 - Consistency in projection [needs clarification]
 - We need to be responsible for the content and direction

Question #6: In this area, the Brockville Farmers' Market organization should prepare a manual that deals with all the regulations that influence the Market, i.e. The City of

Brockville, the Province (Agriculture and Food, etc.) the Feds (Health Canada), the Health Unit, etc. Most of this assignment is a detailed listing of the influencing groups.

- Not discussed

General comments:

- Extra days may not be worth the cost and effort required. Would there be product available? Space? Enough interest from vendors to make a reasonable show?
- Explore the feasibility of using empty storefronts on King St. for advertising, displays, etc.
- Explore the possibilities of advertising or “spot promotions” in local businesses with like interests, i.e. Country Depot. Could these businesses also advertise at the Market?
- Concern: Downtown businesses seem to be in decline. How does that impact the BFM?
- Concern: BFM is in a rebuilding phase. How are we perceived by others? Do we have the manpower/energy for partnerships?
- There is no place on the Market to have coffee, a snack or bite to eat. Could there be a few tables, umbrellas, etc.? What are the regulations concerned in having a snack wagon/chip wagon/hot dog vendor at the Market?
- Is the future a change in the “flavour” of the Market? Will the “farmer” be taken out of it so that it just becomes a “market”?

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **COMMUNICATIONS:** The Brockville Farmers’ Market must improve it’s communications within the membership of the organization. Information around stall allocation, membership lists, proposed activities, bus trips, and other issues must be shared on a regular basis. Regular monthly flyers, revised annual meeting schedules could resolve this communication issue.

ACTION TIMEFRAME: To start immediately for 2006 season and review at end of season by membership and executive

2. **BFM AMBASSADOR:** The market ambassador to provide a link between the vendors and the customers is a key role which could enhance the market experience of the customers to the market. A detailed task description must be developed and adhered to in 2006 to resolve the difficulties experienced in 2005.

ACTION TIMEFRAME: To implement update ambassador program for 2006

3. **SENIORITY AND STALL ALLOCATIONS;** A definite policy must be developed for implementation as soon as possible. A proposed policy is attached.

ACTION TIMEFRAME: To implement for 2006 season by vendors of 2006

4. **BUS TOURS:** The role of the bus tours is defined as follows: The first purpose is to provide opportunities for vendors of the Brockville Farmers' Market to gain experiences of other markets which might be implemented at Brockville. By including other persons on these tours, it then gives the BFM and opportunity to increase revenue for the Brockville Farmers' Market.

ACTION TIMEFRAME: To implement by Brockville Farmers' Market for 2006. Treasurer to prepare materials for distribution by early May 2006. Executive contact for the bus trips is Doug Avery

5. **PUBLIC RELATIONS:** For a number of years there has been a degree of friction between the Brockville Farmers' Market and a number of groups. In this day of co-operation and partnering, the BFM should undertake to improve relationships with these groups.

ACTION TIMEFRAME: The Executive should contact in writing – the City of Brockville, the Brockville Chamber of Commerce, and the Brockville D.B.I.A to start a process to enhance a relationship between the BFM and the above groups. Initial contact to be completed by April 30, 2006

6. **SHARED FACILITIES:** To enhance the long term future for the Brockville Farmers' Market, the BFM should select a committee to pursue the opportunity for a shared facility in the Downtown core of the city for a year round market with outside and inside display possibilities.

ACTION TIMEFRAME: A 2-3 person committee of the Brockville Farmers' Market should be established immediately to start this process and initially report back to the BFM by fall of 2006. The total timeframe for this recommendation is 3-5 years.

7. **RECRUITMENT COMMITTEE:** A 2-3 person committee should be established to spearhead a total vendor committee to search out potential vendors (fruit & vegetable in particular) for the market for the 2007 season. This can be done by visiting other markets, flea market, fairs, etc looking for perspective vendors.

ACTION TIMEFRAME

Promo material to be prepared by Executive by the end of April 2006 for distribution to the members for a summer prospecting venture. The committee is to accumulate a list of prospective vendors for presentation at the fall meeting of the BFM

8. **WEBSITE:** The website has become a major part of the promotion of the Brockville Farmers' Market. Whereas the Market website receives positive comments, some vendors indicate that they do not see an increase in customers or

sales at their stall resulting from the website. It is very important for the vendors to keep Joe Lor (webmaster) informed as to the products coming to the market.

ACTION TIMEFRAME: The Brockville Farmers' Market has accepted a contract from L&G Tourism (Joe Lor) for the 2006 website program as outlined to the vendors. Executive contact for website is Peter Carter:

9. **SPECIAL EVENTS:** There are a number of special events which are staged in the general area of the current location of the Brockville Farmers' Market-----
Riverfest, Poker Run, Ribfest, Car show, Sidewalk sales, and Triathlon. (maybe others)

ACTION TIMEFRAME: The BFM is recommending that vendors work with the Riverfest committee to have a full 1 day market on July1,2006 for those vendors who wish to stay until 4.00pm. This is a regular market day from 7.0am to 1.00pm

10. **HEALTH UNIT ISSUES;** This issue is presently being discussed with Farmers' Market Ontario and the Ministry of Health for resolution.

ACTION TIMEFRAME: All vendors are encourage to allow the two organizations mention above to resolve the issue. All questions should be referred to Rob Chorney at Farmers' Market Ontario at 1-613-----