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# Farmers' Markets **PROPOSAL**

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## **Farmers' Markets Proposal**

Farmers' Markets are markets usually located out-of-doors and in public places where farmers can sell their produce and other goods to the masses. The produce that is sold at a Farmers' Market is normally supplied by local farmers and is notorious for being very fresh. This is because the distance that the produce has to travel is relatively short when compared to the distance most produce travels to the grocery store. With Farmer's Markets everyone wins; the farmers sell their produce, the customer gets the freshest and finest produce around, and it is very beneficial to the environment because less fossil fuels are used in the produce transportation process. Also, since the travel time for the produce is so short, it allows for the food to be harvested at an optimal level or ripeness because the lead time between harvesting and consumption has been greatly reduced. In addition, a big selling point in today's Farmers' Markets is that a lot of the produce sold is grown organically. Not only does this attract customers to the Farmer's Market, but also organically grown produce has proven to be very environmentally friendly in the long run.

Municipally and locally run Farmer's Markets can also provide a great economic boost to the cities and towns in which they are located. These markets generate revenue for the farmers, stimulate the local economy, and they can also provide a sense of community. Farmer's Markets allow the farmer to cut out the middle man and not have to sell their products at wholesale prices. Also, since the money spent at a farmers market is usually between locals, it helps to stimulate the economy within the community. Farmer's Markets can be found around the world in cities of all sizes and customs. "Sometimes they are in the town square, local fields, or fair grounds. In the U.S. and Canada, Farmers' Markets have skyrocketed in popularity from 1,755 in 1994 to 4,385 in 2006 in the U.S., in part to the increased interest in healthier foods, a greater

desire to preserve local types of cultivars or livestock and an increased understanding of the importance of maintaining small, sustainable farms on the fringe of urban environments (Wikipedia)." This is simply a brief overview of the many benefits that farmers markets have to offer. For these reasons, it is important for Alachua County to execute an appropriate plan and strategically launch as many Farmer's Markets as the county demands.

Our goal is to find the optimal location of two new Farmer's Markets in Alachua County. We have several criteria that we used to help us decide on our final locations. In our criteria we had both inclusive and exclusive characteristics; there were qualities that we did want in our site and there were qualities that we did not want in our site.

However, before we could create and define criteria for our locations we had to determine who would be included in our target market. As a group, we decided to approach this challenge with a dual market strategy. We were trying to target two distinctly separate groups of potential consumers. The first group we wanted to cater to was the lower to middle income population. The second group of potential consumers that we were targeting was the middle to upper income category of the population.

In defining our target population we also wanted to create a situation that was beneficial for the farmers. In doing so, we wanted to be relatively close to the farms so that our suppliers, the farmers, would have easy access to the market thus providing for a low delivery time, fresh products, superb quality, and reduced transportation costs. Second, we wanted to locate in an area of relatively high population density in order to give us a chance to be close to a larger amount of potential customers and consumer traffic. Also, we decided to locate close to an existing grocery store in hopes that people would have a greater likelihood to visit a Farmers' Market when already out on a trip to the grocery store. Our reasoning behind locating near a

grocery store was purely strategic from the standpoint that the grocery store and the Farmers' Market would complement each other. We were hoping people could buy their meat from the grocery store and walk across the street to buy their fresh produce from the Farmers' Market.

In addition to locations that we wanted to be near, there were also a number of locations that we wanted to stay away from. The first, and most important of these, was other Farmers' Markets. We did not want to assume the risk of trying to directly compete with an existing Farmer's Market. Also, we wanted to stay away from any areas of hazardous waste because of the negative perception it would bring to the market as well as the possible health consequences of being located near one of these sites.

At this point we had defined our consumer target, we had set criteria for locations we wanted to be near, and we had set criteria for locations where we did not want our prospective Farmer's Markets. Our next step was to create buffers based on our location criteria in ArcGIS. Until now, we have provided you with broad general criteria for our locations. In order to actually create the buffers we needed to take our broad criteria and narrow it down to something very specific. So, before we began to run our buffers to try and select an ideal location for our two farmer's markets, we had to decide on the exact criteria for our buffers. We decided that we wanted to be within one mile of a grocery store. This would allow us to directly complement the grocery stores in terms of attracting produce shoppers who may be attending the grocery store for other reasons. Farmer's Markets can typically beat grocery store prices and quality when it comes to fresh produce. Our hopes are that consumers will realize this and choose to come to our Farmers Market for more freshness and better quality in their produce. We also wanted to be within one mile of an area of high population density. In addition, we wanted there to be at least one farm, and hopefully more, within three miles of each of our markets. This would allow us to

make it more convenient for the farmers to supply our market. Because of this convenience, transportation cost and thus our total cost to acquire the farmers' goods would be reduced. We decided to locate within ½ mile from a bus route. We did this in order to accommodate the lower socio-economic groups as well as to accommodate older populations dependent upon public transportation. Lastly, we decided that we wanted to be located at least five miles away from any existing Farmer's Markets in an effort to stay away from our competition. We also did not want other Farmers' Markets location, quality, and prices to detract from our consumer base.

Upon running our first buffer of being within a mile of a grocery store we found many potential sites to locate our farmers market. Building upon our previous buffer we then added our next buffer of being located within three miles of a farm; this narrowed down our possible locations significantly. Our prospective locations became even more restricted once we added our bus route buffer. Here, we started to get a very clear idea about where our Farmer's Markets could be located based on our criteria. Finally, we looked to compare our map with all the buffers active with the locations of current farmers markets. After analyzing all the information on our map, we decided on a location near the intersection of SW Archer Rd and SW13<sup>th</sup> St (Location One), and a location at the intersection of US 441 and NW 140<sup>th</sup> St (Location Two). We decided to choose location one because it was consistent with our criteria but more importantly, it allowed our Farmer's Market to be accessible to people of all income levels. We decided on location two because it upheld the constraints of our farm and grocery store buffers. Additionally, it fell within our criteria of being located away from competing farmers markets. It should be noted however, that location two was not decided on while taking into account the bus routes buffer. This proposed site was generated to target the middle to upper income

consumers whom we felt would be more apt to use their own means to transportation to attend the Farmer's Market.

Assuming that government and other regulatory agencies would not impede on a Farmer's Market being placed at these two locations, it is safe to say that based on our criteria these two locations are optimal. We defined our consumer target and successfully created criteria to filter out sub optimal locations for our Farmer's Markets. In doing so, we found two prospective locations that would exploit the needs and wants of our desired group of consumers.

Location one is perfect for low to middle income families, because it does take into account the fact that they can reach this market via the public transportation system. In addition, the fact that the market is located near a grocery store allows these families to obtain all their groceries in one trip. The Farmer's Market allows them to not be confined to typical overpriced and less fresh grocery store produce. This will lift a heavy burden off the lower socio-economic classes in Gainesville.

Location two was projected with the idea that this could potentially become a rather sizeable Farmer's Market. Taking into account our location criteria and that most of the people attending this market would be using their own means of transportation, we were really able to cater this location to the benefit of the farmers. This location fell within the buffer of three farms and a grocery store. With that many farms near this location there is the potential for a huge variety of produce and goods that could be present at this market.

The social and economic value of Farmer's Markets are truly underestimated. Socially, the market serves as a means to bring people together and create a sense of family among members of the community. Economically, the market can serve as a great stimulus for the local community. In terms of a stimulus the market allows for farmers to cut cost all while cutting

cost to the consumer. And not only does the consumer spend less money, but they also get a better product in the end. In essence, the Farmer's Market creates a symbiotic relationship for the farmers, the consumers, and the community.