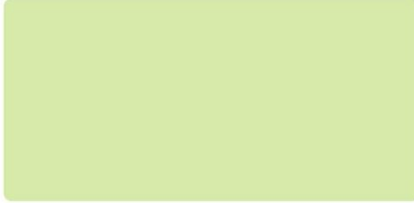
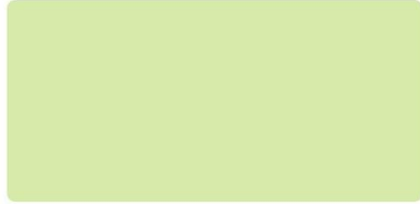


# LOCAL FOODS, LOCAL PLACES

## Technical Assistance Program



## Building Our Local Food Economy Workshop

### A Strategic Action Plan for Loyal, Wisconsin

July 29, 2015



## Community Story

Loyal is a city of about 1,200 people located in Clark County, in western Wisconsin. The town is named so because of the patriotic nature of the local men who went off to protect the Union during the Civil War in the 1860s. Loyal was then established in 1870.

Logging and pioneer farming brought settlers to the area that is now well known for its productive land use and dairy heritage and serves as a hub of a large agricultural area. While Clark County is well-known for having a 2:1 ratio of cows to people, Loyal is best known for its annual Corn Fest held each August, which features a 5K/10K run/walk, a truck and tractor pull, and a parade down Main Street.

While Loyal has a compact and walkable downtown undergoing redevelopment, there has been a growing realization about the importance of local food access within the community. As Loyal does not have a full-service grocery store, its downtown farmers market is the only local option for fresh produce and other farm products. Key stakeholders – including the City of Loyal; community organizers; and agencies focused on planning, economic development, and downtown development – want to strengthen the downtown farmers market to improve access to healthy, local food; boost economic growth downtown; and enhance the sense of place in downtown Loyal. These goals led the community to apply for technical assistance from the federal Local Foods, Local Places program.<sup>1</sup>

The City aims to capitalize on the growing demand for local food while fostering a healthier, more sustainable community by finding a new permanent home for the farmers market near their downtown Main Street that will help promote and advance the region's food culture. The City currently hosts a small farmers market with 4-10 Amish



Figure 1 - Photo series by Loyal Corn Fest  
<http://www.loyalcornfest.com/>

<sup>1</sup> [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>

farmers and vendors in the parking lot adjacent to City Hall along Main Street. The market has changed locations several times over the last couple of years after the site on which it had long been located was redeveloped into new commercial building. The market has struggled since then to find a prominent location that attracts residents and meets the needs of the Amish vendors who use horses and buggies. Additionally, there are produce auction houses and neighboring farmers markets near Loyal that the farmers market competes with for both vendors and customers. A planned 2017 Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WDOT) reconstruction of Main Street, from Helm Street to Elm Drive, has sparked a discussion in the community about how the project construction will affect the farmers market and how it could be an opportunity to implement wayfinding and placemaking strategies that would help revitalize downtown and strengthen the farmers market in a new, permanent home.

## Engagement

The City of Loyal hosted a small team of federal staff and consultants for a two-day Local Foods, Local Places workshop on May 19-20, 2015, to help develop a strategic work plan to strengthen the Loyal farmers market, including a timeline and identified roles and responsibilities. The workshop, entitled *Building our Local Food Economy*, included representatives of the West Central Regional Planning Commission, Loyal Historical Society, University of Wisconsin – Extension Office, and neighboring communities such as Owen and Neillsville. Federal agencies participating in the workshop included the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).



Figure 2 - Workshop group photo in downtown Loyal

The workshop began with a tour and discussion of potential farmers markets sites in Loyal including the Loyal Historical Society site, the Festival Grounds area, the Cold Storage Building site, and the West Side Community Park. Participants also visited the existing site of the farmers market, within the City Hall parking lot. 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 goals, which include strengthening Loyal’s farmers market and community revitalization. These discussions also clarified how local foods can help make Loyal and the Clark County region healthier, more resilient, and economically vibrant 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 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 was a set of preparation calls prior to the

workshop and a set of follow-up calls after the workshop to help the community carry the momentum generated during the workshop forward into action. The graphic below illustrates the overall phases of work.

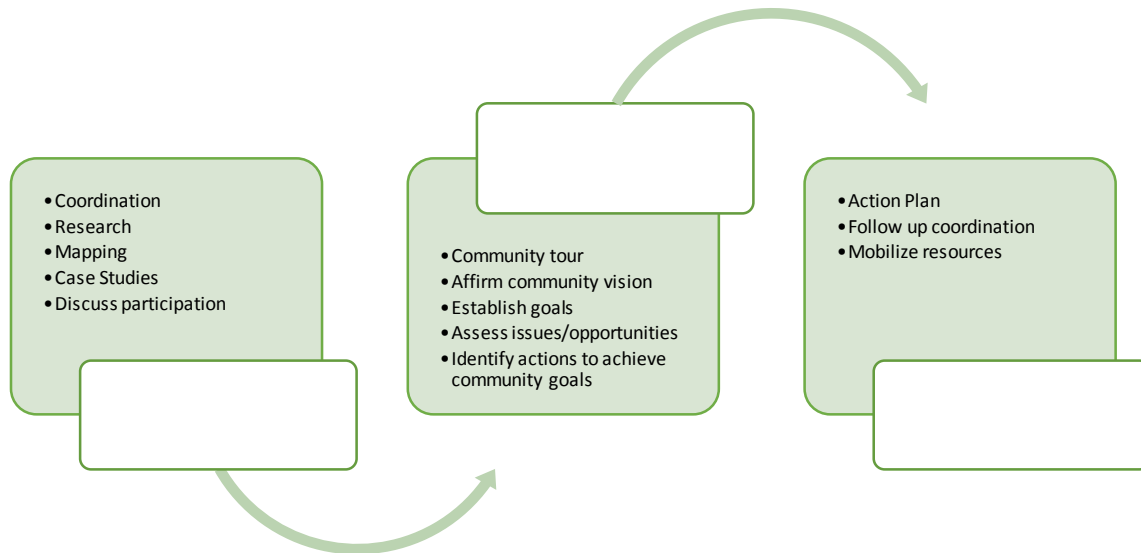


Figure 3 - Technical Assistance Process Diagram

## Vision and Values

The first night of the workshop began with exercises to have participants share some core values and beliefs. Values drive aspirations for the future, and voicing these are key to paving the way to the more detailed work of action planning the following day. Two sharing exercises were conducted. First participants were asked to individually stand and say something they believed about their community and about the local and healthy food in Loyal. The full details of participants’ responses can be found in **Appendix B**.

Using the responses from workshop participants from “This I believe about downtown Loyal...” a “word cloud” was created to highlight some of the common themes amongst the responses (Figure 4). This exercise revealed that the community feels the City has a lot of great potential and the people living and working here are what make it a great place.





Figure 6 – Working Session

## Action Plan

The primary product of the workshop is a strategic action plan to guide implementation. The plan is composed of goals, with actions to meet those goals. The full detail of the action plan is contained in **Appendix A**. The workshop’s purpose was to define roles and responsibilities and prioritize actions for moving forward. Additionally, workshop participants identified regional partners, farmers/vendors, markets, and potential customers through a mapping exercise shown in **Appendix B**. Appendix B also shows the location of eight potential farmers market sites that participants evaluated, including their assessment of each site’s pros and cons. The goals and actions that are part of this plan are summarized below and are contained in their full detail in Appendix A.



Figure 7 - Working group completing community asset maps and action plan table.

Goal 1: Improve market organization, coordination, and engagement with the community

- Action 1.1: Form a steering committee that will coordinate efforts, plans, and partnerships with agencies and groups.
- Action 1.2: Hire a market manager
- Action 1.3: Get local businesses and organizations such as the Lions and the Historical Society involved with the farmers market
- Action 1.4: Get local youth groups involved with the farmers market

### Goal 2: Move the farmers market to a new, more visible permanent location

- Action 2.1: Site selection phase one – Identify temporary farmers market location
- Action 2.2: Site Selection phase two – Identify permanent farmers market location
- Action 2.3: Create visually interesting infrastructure between Main Street and the market site (both temporary and permanent locations)
- Action 2.4: Identify and implement needed site improvements for the temporary and permanent market locations (e.g., ADA compliance, restrooms, etc.)

### Goal 3: Increase the number of farmers market vendors

- Action 3.1: Identify additional vendors who could supply the Loyal Farmers Market
- Action 3.2: Host a new vendor workshop to empower and educate local people in Loyal
- Action 3.3: Conduct ongoing distribution of flyers and personal visits to local farmers and vendors to stir interest in selling at Loyal's farmers market

### Goal 4: Increase the number of market customers

- Action 4.1: Ask vendors that participate in other farmers markets to advertise at those markets when they will be selling in Loyal
- Action 4.2: Organize city-wide placemaking/signage plan
- Action 4.3: Create an education plan for the products sold at the farmers market
- Action 4.4: Create a "Buy Local, Buy Loyal" program/branding

### Goal 5: Increase programming of community events at the market

- Action 5.1: Plan a designated entertainment venue at the farmers market and form an entertainment committee to promote/organize events
- Action 5.2: Create a calendar of events for the farmers market
- Action 5.3: Coordinate with local organizations to host events at the site in conjunction with the farmers market

## Implementation and Next Steps

- Mayor Dave has been working to form a "Friends of the Loyal Market" committee that will help implement the Action Plan. The first "Friends of the Loyal Market" steering committee meeting was held Tuesday, July 21, 2015, and met at the City Hall to discuss the Action Plan and Implementation Tables. This committee intends to meet about once a month to keep momentum going forward, pursue funding opportunities, and carry out the work of strengthening the market through implementing the action plan.
- Sheila has been working with workshop members, connecting economic development people with chamber of commerce folks, as well as creating a brochure of businesses. She is going to work with the community to get companies and their websites mapped on Google Maps. Loyal is the first community in Clark County to produce material and information for this project.
- Fundraising next steps (Melissa from extension has grant writing experience). Extension remains committed to supporting the market. They don't have dollars but do have experience and knowledge and connections, and are committed to helping the market keep going.
- Friends of the Loyal Market is reaching out to local businesses along Main Street to see if they would be interested in having sidewalk sales during farmers market hours on Thursdays and Saturdays.

- John Dzeikan will be staying on as Market Manager. Two members of the Friends of the Loyal Market volunteered to assist John with the market operations. Additionally, they are working on connecting with the local schools to see if any students would be interested in volunteering.

## Appendices

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