

All Things Local Working Group Meeting

Cushman Market; 8:00am- 10:00am ; June 4, 2012

Attending: Bernard Brennan, Jeremy Barker-Plotkin, John Thibbits, Tina Clarke (facilitator), and John Gerber (recording).

We began with a check in and then created a list of agenda topics, which are:

- Business Plan
- Site selection
- Task Teams
- Working group role and expansion
- Clarify mission & goals

1. DECISION: We agreed to use Local Roots as our model. We will develop our own business plan so it is customized for Amherst.

A discussion followed:

- We want to create a place where it is easy for local producers to sell, and easy for consumers to buy, and to which components can be added, such as restaurant, bakery, convenience store
- A buying club for non-local items might be added later but it is difficult to compete with the box stores
- Our purpose is to be a local market supporting local producers and crafters
- We want to create a destination where people feel good about hanging around
- Some people shop for quality and perceived value first, price next.
- Convenience is important.
- “Local” is a niche that no one else provides. How much non-local stuff should the store offer? John T. shared an analysis of retail competition: We can’t begin to compete with big box stores on price and extent of non-local products. Better not to try. A little bit of fair trade is fine, but we will do better to focus on “local”.
- Also, carrying non-local products goes against our mission.
- Atkins found that carrying non-local products in small quantities can actually work against you: the prices for non-local items are higher than what people pay in the big box stores. People can have a bad feeling about your store because the non-local stuff costs too much: they may suspect that all your prices are probably too high.

2. DECISION: Develop mission statement. Bernard and Tina will draft for circulation to Working Group.

Discussion: There is a potential tension between serving people with low incomes (who may not be able to afford local food, and may not have a car) and serving local producers and crafters by providing a destination for consumers with means who are able to pay more and may prefer locations that are less easily accessible by bus.

- Let’s choose a place that is close to a bus line.

- Let's encourage producers with lower incomes to use the store as an outlet for their creativity and products.
- All Things Local needs to be a place all people want to go. It needs to be welcoming. Beauty/community space is important. Parties!
- The larger mission is to support local producers.

3. Building a buzz - memberships!

- House & farm parties to attract consumer members
- Determine how many producers are interested
- It is difficult to assess the potential for micro-enterprise startups in 5 years

DECISION: Work on a business plan.

John Waite, Exec. Director of Franklin County CDC, has offered to help us with a business plan. John White has expressed interest in convening a working group on structure/business plan types of questions. Tina will ask John White about setting up a meeting with John Waite and Amy Shapiro, who works with local businesses in Franklin County.

DECISION: Let's compile lists of local producers.

Emily Stephens is convening the Producers Task Team.

4. Site Selection discussion

DECISION: Tentative list of Criteria for a Site:

- supports local producers
- a community place that is welcoming and accessible
- "small enough to be cozy" but potential to expand (possible expansions: cafe, food processing, storage, commercial kitchen, buying club, flea market, shared office space, shared craft-making space, workshop & meeting rooms)
- room for existing producers as well as startups
- potential to own the building
- size supported by business plan (not unsupportable expenses)
- possible rental space to organizations with common values
- parking is easy (needed in the short term anyway)
- close to downtown or on a major bus route (or future trolley line)
- close to excited people who will volunteer
- close to people with means and values consistent with All Things Local
- Amherst centered
- People with money will shop there – find it convenient

5. Business thinking

- Two main sources of income (memberships and 10% of sales)
- Two main operating expenses (rent/utility and employees)
- Can we think about membership covering the cost of the rent and utilities?
- Can we think about 10% covering the cost of employees?

- Lets think about renting to own? Or perhaps starting outside of town where it's cheaper and then obtaining a store downtown if economic changes lead to store closings?
- Before choosing a site, we should have our mission inform our business plan.

6. Downtown or village center (north/south/east) thinking

- do we imagine the store expanding?
- where do people live?
- will they be able to drive?
- will there be a trolley car in the future from town center to village centers?
- center of town is a crossroads because of transportation
- will food processing and storage be part of this project?

7. What's next?

DECISION: Invite Michelle Parrish, Leslie Cox, and Ruth Hazzard to join the Working Group.

- Let's confirm Task Teams:
 1. Business plan/structure - John White and Robin Luberoff to lead with Jeremy Barker-Plotkin. John Waite & Amy Shapiro will help.
 2. Outreach Task Team – volunteers, memberships, parties - Tina and friends from Tuesday night meeting & Transition Amherst
 3. Site Task Team - John Thibbits will convene a group to investigate sites. He'll contact everyone on Working Group when he finds a site worth visiting, so that anyone interested can join in the site visit
 4. Communications Task Team - John Gerber will work with Tina and Gabor on the web page
 5. Arts & Crafts – Michelle Parrish was interested/volunteered. Need to follow-up to confirm
 6. Producer - Emily Stephens & Bernard to lead, with Jeremy

DECISION: Major decisions will be vetted by the full Working Group after being proposed by Task Teams.

The meeting adjourned at 10:00am with good will and great cheer!