

ST. LOUIS STREET MARKET

SOCIAL CHANGE PROJECT FOR THE CITY OF ST. LOUIS

I. SUMMARY

The **St. Louis Street Market** will be an outdoor public marketplace with **music, art, food**, and a **diverse collection of shops or stalls**; it has the potential to become a vibrant cultural center within St. Louis. The primary objective of the street market is to **stimulate economic opportunity for the working poor**. Although economic inequality keeps poor families from ever achieving social stability or upward mobility, a street market can effectively narrow the gap in economic opportunity between the poor and rich.

During the first year, the street market will occur **monthly on Saturdays**. We will focus our efforts on four areas: (1) **securing a location**, (2) **recruiting vendors**, (3) **advertising the market** to generate foot traffic, and (4) **general street market operations**.

II. SOCIAL and ECONOMIC BENEFITS

For users of the market, a street market:

- Directly gives vendors an opportunity to earn extra income;
- Minimizes financial risk and encourages persistence in entrepreneurial efforts by providing a venue for start-ups that incubates businesses;
- Reduces vendor susceptibility to and involvement in crime by providing an alternate, meaningful activity and source of income;
- Instills a sense of community spirit by encouraging social networking and mutual exchange of information between diverse groups of people; and
- Entertains consumers who find bargains and treasures while enjoying themselves in an atmosphere bustling with activity.

For non-users of the market, a street market:

- Addresses the need for vibrant and lively locations which can have spillover benefits on the surrounding area;
- Spurs the local economy because of vendors who will spend money on suppliers and at fixed-location stores outside the market;
- Creates jobs and generates income from newly formed businesses;
- Addresses problems associated with street peddling; and
- Reduces crime and criminal justice system expenditures.

III. LOCATION

We are currently trying to secure a location in or near North St. Louis, particularly on Grand Boulevard. Such a location will be in close proximity to potential vendors as well as have the ability to attract a large amount of foot traffic. For the first year, we estimate that the market will occupy 5,000 to 7,500 square feet of space.

Alderswoman Kacie Triplett has assured us that if the market takes place on private land, we would be exempt from most city regulations. We will continue to work with the appropriate alderpersons and city authorities in order to comply with all city regulations. In addition, the market will be covered by special events liability insurance.

IV. VENDORS

Recruiting Vendors. The primary target population for vendors of the street market will be the working poor. In addition, artists and musicians will be recruited to add entertainment and cultural value to the market. We will begin our recruitment efforts by working with relevant organizations and government agencies, such as Habitat for Humanity, Better Family Life, and St. Patrick Center.

Becoming a Vendor. A permit and license will be required to become a vendor. A license will give vendors approval to sell certain merchandise, and a permit will give them a space at the market. To obtain the license or permit, an application will be required.

Selling at the Market. Unlike farmer's markets that focus on fresh fruit and vegetables, vendors of a street market can sell a wide variety of goods, ranging from used goods (similar to what is sold at the typical yard sale) to new merchandise (clothing, CDs, etc.) purchased through wholesalers.

V. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN & EVALUATION

Phase I - Initial Implementation & Evaluation (Summer & Fall 2009)

During the first year, the market will occur monthly on the first Saturday of September, October, and possibly November. The implementation phase will be characterized by measures that get the market up-and-running: (1) securing a location, (2) recruiting vendors, (3) advertising the market to generate foot traffic, and (4) general street market operations. Start-up funding will come from personal contributions and donations.

The experience gained from the market day will serve as lessons for the improvement of subsequent market days, including adjustments in publicity and recruitment strategies. We will consult various community leaders and field experts to evaluate the street market. Our goals by the end of phase I are at least 25 vendors and over 100 visitors at any single market day.

Phase II - Sustainability (Fall 2009 through Fall 2012)

We hope that Saint Louis Street Market will outlive our time in St. Louis. In order to achieve the sort of sustainability we envision, there are two major considerations: funding and governance. In order to cover costs, we will rely on revenue generated from vendor license fees and vendor permit fees. We will also seek additional sources of funding, such as private donations, foundation grants, and fundraisers. We will also need to establish a governance structure that handles day-to-day operations.

Phase III - Expansion (starting Spring 2009)

The idea for St. Louis Street Market stemmed from an interest in Mohammad Yunus' novel concept of microfinancing, the idea of lending small amounts of money to the poor who have virtually no access to credit. In the future, we hope to test the feasibility of adding a microfinancing component to St. Louis Street Market. Microfinancing could allow vendors to expand their businesses. It could also give the market the ability to assist an even poorer population of St. Louis by providing them with start-up capital to open a stall at the market. From interest payments, microfinancing could become a self-sustaining endeavor.

Other expansion plans include:

- (1) Broadening the street market's audience both in terms of vendors and visitors,
- (2) Having a longer street market season,
- (3) Securing a larger, more permanent location, and
- (4) Becoming a cultural hotspot within St. Louis.

VI. ABOUT MAXWELL STREET MARKET

Maxwell Street Market is a bustling street market that has become a cultural center in Chicago. It has been featured in the 1980 film, *The Blues Brothers*, and is where the “Maxwell Street Polish” sandwich and Chicago Blues originated. The market started about a hundred years ago when the families on Maxwell Street informally set up booths on the sidewalks. Now, the city officially closes off four blocks between the intersection of Roosevelt Road and Des Plaines Avenue every Sunday year-round for the market, which sees over 70 vendors and 500 visitors each day. The market is a Chicago tradition of bargains with an international flavor, where vendors can earn money through self-employment and where visitors can find great deals on nearly everything, including baseball caps, shirts, hardware, and much, much more.

Alfonso Morales is a professor at University of Wisconsin-Madison, who has done extensive research on street markets, particularly Maxwell Street Market. He has guided us during the formation of our idea and will continue to assist us as we turn our idea into reality. To encourage discussion about street markets, he has started a website: <http://www.openair.org/>.



Maxwell Street Market in Chicago, Illinois

More pictures of Maxwell Street Market available at:
<http://www.stlstreetmarket.org/>
(About the Market > Maxwell Street Market)