

**Report to the
Rutherford County Board of Commissioners
and the
Town of Forest City Board of Commissioners**

**EXPLORATION OF THE
RELOCATION AND EXPANSION OF
THE RUTHERFORD COUNTY FARMERS
MARKET**

November 22, 2013

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THE RUTHERFORD COUNTY FARMERS MARKET**

Table of contents

Executive Summary.....1

I. Background.....2

*II. Findings of Focus Groups -
Relocation/Expansion Initiative.....3*

III. Farmers Market Site Analysis.....6

*IV. Potential Expansion- Agriculture
Innovation & Solutions Center.....7*

V. Potential Partnerships.....9

VI. Potential Funding Sources.....11

VII. Recommendations and Timeline.....11

VIII. Appendix

A. Consumer/Vendor Focus Group Verbatim Responses

B. Rutherford County-owned Property Listing

C. Properties Reviewed for Farmers Market Relocation

D. Florence Mill Site Plan

E. Agriculture Innovation and Solutions Center - Diagram

F. Steering Committee Membership

Executive Summary

The exploration of the relocation and expansion of the Rutherford County Farmers Market is a joint partnership of Rutherford County, the Town of Forest City, and the NC Cooperative Extension Service-Rutherford Center. In August 2013, the Rutherford County Commissioners and the Town of Forest City Council passed a joint resolution in support of the concept and charged the administrations of the County, Town, and NC Cooperative Extension Service-Rutherford Center to conduct an in-house feasibility study and report back to the Boards within ninety (90) days.

In the ninety-day period, the staff accomplished the following:

- Formed a Steering Committee of growers and customers of the current Farmers Market;
- Conducted five focus groups and two special meetings with 125 participants;
- Conducted interviews and gained the support of seventeen local and regional potential partners, ranging from the local school system, hospital, and agricultural-related agencies to the regional *Advantage West* economic development organization;
- Developed a selection criteria for the relocation of the Farmers Market structure and researched all county-owned properties plus the Town-owned Florence Mill property;
- Narrowed the relocation search to six eligible properties that met the criteria to present to the Steering Committee;
- Assisted the Steering Committee in selecting the Florence Mill site for the Market relocation;
- Developed a concept for the use of the 15,000 SF Florence Mill 1922 Warehouse building entitled ***the Agricultural Innovations and Solutions Center*** which will include an indoor market, value-added processing center, and office and educational space;
- Worked with a private sector developer to determine the feasibility of using historic rehabilitation tax credits to fund the approximate \$2 million renovation cost for the 1922 Warehouse building and received a strong interest from the developer to develop the project;
- Applied for two grants that, if awarded, will fund the design and development phase of renovating the 1922 Warehouse building as an agricultural complex; and
- Developed a matrix of potential funding sources and met with the USDA/Rural Development on four separate grant categories than could be available for the project.

There are four recommendations in the report: 1) select the Florence Mill Redevelopment Area as the site for the Rutherford County Farmers Market and move the structure by the 2014 season, 2) move forward with the design and development concept for the 1922 Florence Mill Warehouse building, 3) complete the architectural and business plans and development agreements for the ***Agricultural Innovations and Solutions Center***, and 4) consider the inclusion of a full time staff person in the 2014-2015 Rutherford County budget to implement the agricultural economic development strategies outlined in this report.

If Rutherford County and the Town of Forest City elect to move forward on the project, the staff will bring the estimated cost for moving the Rutherford County Farmers Market to the Florence Mill site and a draft agreement to the January 2014 Board meetings. Work will also begin, pending funding from the two grants submitted, for the design and development phase of the ***Agricultural Innovations and Solutions Center***. This will include developing the ownership, management, and operational structure for the agricultural complex and the partnership agreements between the County, Town and private sector developer.

I. Background on the Farmers Market and Agriculture in Rutherford County

Rutherford County has a rich and diverse agricultural base comprised of 705 farms with roughly 65,898 acres in production. Agricultural production is very diverse, ranging from fruit & vegetables, ornamentals, field crops, forestry to livestock. Annual agricultural and forestry income exceeds \$34 million dollars.

In 2007, a study was completed entitled *Rutherford County Agricultural Center Facility Program*. This program laid out three primary areas of development: 1) a new and expanded outdoor farmers market structure, 2) a livestock arena, and 3) an office complex to house agricultural agencies and educational programs.

The Rutherford County Farmers Market, established in 1974, has been and continues to be a marketing vehicle for small- to medium-sized fruit and vegetable producers. The Rutherford County Farmers-Market is open April-October on Tuesday & Saturday mornings, and Thursday afternoon. Seasonally, it averages 325+ individuals a week visiting the Market for produce, plants and handmade goods. It has been an active member of the

Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP) along with the Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP). On average, the Market has 36 vendors that utilize the current facility over the season.

Until 2011, the Rutherford County Farmers Market operated out of the former Livestock Barn, which was constructed in 1945 as part of the County Fairgrounds. In recent years, Rutherford County conducted a study to develop plans for a new market structure and there was also a Federal request for funding to support a Processing/Loading Area and Commercial Kitchen (2005) in support of the agriculture producers. During 2012, a new facility was constructed in a temporary location on the Daniel Road property owned by Rutherford County. Current economic development priorities for the county include marketing the Daniel Road property for commercial and/or light industry. The County is currently working with Duke Power through their site readiness program to assess property for economic development opportunities. Based on the assumption that the Daniel Road property may be used for economic development, a search began for a new and permanent location for the Rutherford County Farmers Market.

In the summer 2013, the County approached the Town of Forest City about the possibility of relocating the current outdoor structure from the Daniel Road property to downtown Forest City. The initial approach was considered by the County because of the trend toward the location of farmers markets in downtown areas and the successful downtown program of Forest City. The Town of Forest City offered to work jointly with the County and NC Cooperative Extension Service-Rutherford Center to determine a permanent location for the Rutherford County Farmers Market. It was decided that a number of sites throughout the county should be assessed, including the Florence Mill site. As part of this effort, the Town suggested that the 1922 Warehouse building in the Florence Mill complex be considered for redevelopment as an agricultural facility and indoor market.

On August 5, 2013, an agreement was reached through a joint resolution of the Rutherford County Board of Commissioners and the Town of Forest City Board of Commissioners to explore alternative locations for the permanent site of the Rutherford County Farmers Market, including the downtown Forest City site. The two Boards instructed the administration to move forward in a 90-day time period and conduct an in-house feasibility study on the relocation and possible expansion of the Rutherford County Farmers Market. A Steering Committee of growers and consumers was formed to provide direction and approval of the site selection and the potential expansion of services (Appendix F). Focus groups with stakeholders and citizens were used to insure community input in the process.

One positive development based on the 2007 Agricultural Facility Plan is the recent development of the livestock handling facility, built at the former Shiloh School and officially opened in November 2013. This facility was developed with a majority of private funding as a joint partnership of Rutherford County, Rutherford County Cattlemens Association and NC Cooperative Extension-Rutherford Center.

II. Findings of Focus Groups – Relocation/Expansion Initiative

As part of the community input process, five focus groups were held in Forest City, Spindale, and Rutherfordton. In addition, brainstorming sessions using the focus group questions were also held with participants at the Rutherford County Senior Center and participants at the annual *Farm-City* banquet. There were 125 participants in the community focus groups.

Five questions were asked of each group. The participants were able to think about the questions and jot down notes on the questions before the verbal brainstorming began. The written brainstorming sheets were collected and the verbatim responses can be found in Appendix A. Overall, the participants felt that the Farmers Market was important because it helps the local farmers by providing a market to sell their produce and it helps county residents by promoting healthy eating.

The following questions were asked:

1. *What do you think are strengths of the current Farmers Market?*
2. *What do you think are the weaknesses of the current Farmers Market?*
3. *What would you like to see added or changed – both in terms of a seasonal outdoor market and the possibility of a year-round indoor market – what would you like to see in an indoor facility?*
4. *What will prevent us from accomplishing the idea of an expanded market facility? What will hold us back?*
5. *Where do you think an expanded farmers market could go?*

A summary of the responses was compiled. Seven major categories were mentioned the most throughout all the groups:

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------|
| 1. Location | 5. Vendors |
| 2. Structure | 6. Barriers |
| 3. Produce/Products | 7. Opportunities |
| 4. Promotion | |

1. **CURRENT LOCATION/FUTURE LOCATION.** While there are issues with the current location on Highway 74 By-Pass, a number of participants felt that the current location had merit. It is a central location to the county and located on a main highway. The biggest negative issue with the location is the highway access. The current outdoor Market structure is located on the eastbound lane of a divided highway and the only legal access is from the eastbound lane. There is an intersection close to the entrance to the Market, but it does not align with the access road and drivers illegally cross over from the westbound lane. While there is a lot of traffic that passes by the location, it cannot be seen well from the road and there is not the adequate signage to allow people to know that the Market is there.

Participants were asked where they thought an expanded location could go. A number of people felt that a current location on the Hwy 74 By-Pass is good, if a location could be found that solved the highway access and signage issues. There was concern that putting the Market in any one town might not allow for easy access by all of Rutherford County. When the possibility of a year-round indoor market and a commercial kitchen was discussed with the relocation of the Farmers Market to the Florence Mill site in Forest City, participants saw real value in that opportunity and the Forest City downtown site was looked upon more favorably.

2. **STRUCTURE.** All participants agreed that the current structure is much better than the former structure at the fairgrounds. It is adjacent to the parking lot (which most people thought could use improvement) and accessible to elderly and handicapped shoppers. The current outdoor structure is adequate in size and the paved floor makes a difference, although some people thought a larger structure would be better. While the outdoor structure does have electricity and water, it is not adequate for the number of vendors. Outlets at every booth and more accessibility to water were important. Also a better quality of table rather than just plywood and sawhorses would make the space look more attractive. The most mentioned inadequacy is the lack of permanent restrooms (there is a portajon available for vendors and shoppers).
3. **VENDORS.** The majority of the participants in the focus groups felt that the current vendors were helpful, knowledgeable, and friendly. On the downside, it was felt that there needed to be more vendors in order to provide a wider variety of produce and products. There was a difference between the number of vendors on the weekdays and on Saturday, and that some participants expressed frustration on attending the

weekday market and finding only a few vendors with limited produce. Participants felt like it was important to put an emphasis on locally grown produce and not resale. They felt that people who come to the Farmers Market want to know the grower and where and how the produce was grown.

4. **PRODUCE/PRODUCTS.** There were a variety of opinions on whether there was an adequate variety of produce and products. Many people felt that one of the strengths was the variety of good, local fresh produce, yet there were an equal number of participants that felt that there needed to be a substantial increase in the variety to make it a more viable market. Generally, participants felt that there was not a full complement of what needed to be available on the weekdays. Particularly there needed to be more eggs, fruits, refrigerated/frozen items, dried and canned goods and more produce such as mushrooms.
5. **PROMOTION/HOURS/SEASON.** It was almost universal across the focus groups that there needed to be more promotion, marketing, and advertising. Most participants would like to see extended hours and an extended season. They recognized, however, in order for that to happen, more consumers needed to be attracted to the Market to make it worthwhile for the vendors. Clearly they felt that the key to a successful market is having more of the community shop at the Market on a regular basis.
6. **CONSTRAINTS AND BARRIERS.** The constraint and potential barrier that was mentioned the most was the lack of funds to take the Farmers Market to the next level. There needed to be more public support for the Market as well. The difficult highway access and the lack of adequate signage were seen as a barrier to growth. The Market would also need the support of community and county leaders, including the local governments.
7. **OPPORTUNITIES.** With financial and community support, the participants saw a bright future for the Farmers Market. More vendors, more produce, and more promotion were all important for the market to grow. The participants would like to see more natural products and hand-made crafts, but not a flea-market atmosphere. Special events in conjunction with the market hours would bring more people. Several participants mentioned creating a place within the indoor market where people could buy prepared foods in a café-type setting with seating areas outside. The need for competent and innovative management and leadership for the expanded market was seen as a necessity.

The participants were asked about the Forest City location and the possibility of a year-round indoor market, and the majority of people thought the indoor market would be an excellent opportunity. If it was publicized and had a wide variety of produce and products, it would be successful. The commercial kitchen and value-added processing center was thought a valuable addition by both the growers and customers alike. The customers saw it as an opportunity to have educational classes on cooking and preparing healthy foods.

III. *Farmers Market Site Analysis*

The Rutherford County Farmers Market is temporarily located at 1630 US 74A ByPass Highway in Spindale. In review of currently owned county properties, several main criteria were discussed, including:

- the site needed to allow for adequate public access,
- the potential for the area to allow for future expansion,
- a centralized proximity to the resident population,
- amount of additional site development that would be needed, including grading, utilities, and parking areas.

Based on the property listings obtained, the Steering Committee narrowed the listing to six possible tracts and also included the Florence Mill property. (Appendix B & C).

<i>Pin Number</i>	<i>Property Description</i>
1602283	Fairhope Street
1614249	Fairgrounds
1615763	Shiloh School
1616984/1616985	Ruth School
1634225	Dallas Street
1642470	Florence Mill/Depot Street

Tracts 1602283 (Fairhope Street), 1614249 (Fairgrounds Road) and 1634225 (Dallas Street) are currently in active use by the county. Tracts 1615763 (Shiloh School) and 1616984/1616985 (Ruth School) have enough land area to accommodate the Farmers Market structure and allow for expansion. In discussions with the Steering Committee, the Shiloh School site was thought to be too far removed from the center of the county population base. The disadvantage of the Ruth School property was the uncertainty of how the Rutherfordton 221 Highway By-Pass will affect the future of that property. Both the former Shiloh and Ruth School sites would need substantial site and utilities development in order to relocate the Farmers Market structure.

The Florence Mill/Depot Street site was reviewed with the potential to relocate the Farmers Market within the current parking lot area on Depot Street. The parking lot area under consideration is 21,112 Square Feet, and can easily accommodate the 4,000 SF outdoor market structure allowing for ample room of vendor vehicles and additional parking for customers. There are two adjoining parking lots that join the 21,112 SF lot that are also available for customer use. Additionally, a large greenspace on-site is well suited for customer seating as part of the outdoor structure complex. Water and electricity are available at the site. The entire parking area is complete, however the final pavement surface would need to be added after relocation of the outdoor structure.

IV. Potential Expansion – Agriculture Innovation and Solutions Center

By relocating the Rutherford County Farmers Market structure within the Florence Mill redevelopment property, there is the opportunity to continue to expand agricultural economic development opportunities far beyond the traditional Farmers Market. These opportunities center around the development of the 15,000 SF Florence Mill 1922 Warehouse building that is directly across from the Depot Street parking lot.

The proposed Center, tentatively named the ***Agriculture Innovation and Solutions Center***, will be both a physical location and program delivery vehicle that includes an indoor market and value-added product sales center, value-added processing facility, community outreach area, and office and classroom space for agricultural-related businesses/agencies.

The ***Agriculture Innovation and Solutions Center*** would be an economic development engine that would expand and enhance the marketability of agricultural products produced within the county and surrounding region. It would also assist growers in finding innovative approaches to maintaining and expanding a sustainable agricultural economy within the region.

Projected use of the 1922 Warehouse building

The 1922 Warehouse building is divided into three separate bays areas (each 5,000 SF). While additional architectural programming and schematics need to be developed, the initial concept would be to divide the bays into the following distinct areas (Appendix E):

- 1) **Bay 1 - The Indoor Market will create a year-round** sales center for seasonal and value-added products produced in Rutherford County and the surrounding region, and possible outlet store for *Valley Fine Foods/Pasta Prima*. Open 6 days a week.
- 2) **Bay 2 – The Office/Technology and Community Education Area** will be comprised of office space for agriculture-related service agencies, along with partnership opportunities with local schools, businesses and organizational linkages. The space will also house a portion of the artifacts from the Rutherford County Farm Museum in permanent rotating exhibits.
- 3) **Bay 3 - The Value-added Processing Facility/Commercial Kitchen** will allow for the development of canned processed fruits, vegetables, herbs, honey and bakery items. The Bay will also house educational and demonstration classroom space.

Proposed financing for renovation of the 1922 Warehouse Building

Using the estimated figure of \$135 per square foot, the renovation costs for the 15,000 SF Warehouse building is estimated at \$2 million. There are three different scenarios on how the building renovation can be financed:

- 1) **Public Sector financing.** The current Rutherford County Farmers Market is financed by Rutherford County and user fees. Often such facilities as described in this report are the responsibility of the public sector to finance. This report is not suggesting that approach for the renovation of the 1922 Warehouse building. .
- 2) **Private Sector financing.** The 1922 Warehouse building is on the National Register of Historic Places and eligible for federal and state tax credits which make it advantageous for the private sector to be involved. It is unlikely, however, that the entire cost of renovation and equipping the building would be shouldered by the private sector.
- 3) **Public-Private Partnership financing.** The renovation of the 1922 building for a public purpose makes an ideal project for a joint effort by both the public and private sectors through a development agreement. Historic tax credits can be used to make the renovation project viable and profitable for the developer. Financing for equipment and furnishings, which are not eligible expenses for tax credits, can often be obtained through grant resources.

All of the buildings in the Florence Mill redevelopment area are on the National Register of Historic Places and are eligible for historic rehabilitation tax credits from the state and federal governments. In addition, in North Carolina, there is a higher level of tax credit available which is specifically designed to be applied to former industrial sites, including textile mills. In order to be eligible for the higher industrial tax credit, the project must have a minimum threshold of \$3 million in construction costs.

The historic tax credits enable the developer to renovate the 1922 Warehouse building at substantially less cost as opposed to new construction. In order to take advantage of the historic tax credit, the developer must own the building for not less than five years. It would be the intention of the private sector developer to lease the building back to Rutherford County at a favorable rate. The profit margin for the developer is a combination of the tax credits and the annual rental rate.

Currently the Town of Forest City is working with a developer, Gene Rees, to renovate the adjacent 1941 Warehouse into a condominium project with six residential owner-occupied units. Mr. Rees has indicated his interest in developing the 1922 Warehouse as a tax credit project. If Mr. Rees can develop the 1941 Warehouse and 1922 Warehouse as a phased project, the entire project qualifies under the higher industrial building tax credit. The difference is substantial. The tax credit for the residential portion in the 1941 Warehouse is 40%. The tax credit in the income producing 1922 Warehouse is 60%. For instance, on the \$2 million redevelopment of the 1922 Warehouse, Mr. Rees' tax credit may be worth up to \$1 million.

Projected Revenue Streams for the 1922 Warehouse Building

The next phase of design and development of this project will analyze and determine the potential income streams. The intention is to develop each one of the three bays areas with an income stream such as rental and user fees that would equal the lease payment.

Oversight of Operations for the 1922 Warehouse Building

The next phase of design and development will outline in detail the ownership and management structures. Agreements will be drawn up between the Town and County and

the private developer. Examples of organization and management structures could include a for-profit or nonprofit cooperative, non-profit organization, public-sector ownership or a combination of these models.

V. Potential Partnerships

The Steering Committee met with public/private organizations in accessing potential partners that would network with the ***Agriculture Innovation and Solutions Center***. Initial review of the project and the potential linkages that the Center would establish were shared with each organization.

The key partners – Rutherford County, the Town of Forest City, and the NC Cooperative Extension Service-Rutherford Center are committed to the long-term development of the project. Seventeen additional partners have been identified to date. Discussions have been held with surrounding counties on a regional, cooperative approach to ensure that sustainable agricultural enterprises remain an important aspect of the regional economy. Partners range from the local school system and hospital to regional partners such as Advantage West and Blue Ridge Food Ventures. Listed below are those who have reviewed the project.

Local, State, and Federal Public Agencies:

Economic Development Commission. A presentation was made on the proposed Florence Mill site to the EDC Board at their November Board meeting and it was met with a favorable response and a pledge of support.

Farm Service Agency, Natural Resource & Conservation Service, Rutherford County Soil and Water Agencies. These agencies provide services for agricultural producers/landowners. Discussions have been held on possible relocation of the agencies as proposed in the Agriculture Facilities Plan for Rutherford County (2007).

Isothermal Community College. Informal discussions have taken place for sustainable agriculture classes offered as continuing education and degree options.

Isothermal Planning & Development Commission. Discussions with IPDC centered around assistance with grant writing and partnership with the other three counties in Region C – Cleveland, Polk and McDowell.

Rutherford County School System. Linkages to the Center have been discussed with Vocational Agriculture programs within the high schools. Linkage to primary grades in the further development of agriculture awareness would serve as a resource to both teaching staffs and students. There is potential for the establishment of an Intern Program as part of the community outreach and value-added product development/marketing.

Tourism Development Authority. The Authority has a strong interest in promoting agritourism and the recently formed Tourism Asset Foundation has agriculture as one of its three main focus areas.

USDA- Rural Development/Shelby District Office. The Federal agency has a number of grant programs specifically designed for the development of agricultural facilities and farmers markets. The director of the office has expressed strong interest in the project and has toured the 1922 Building several times.

Private/Public Sector Businesses:

Blue Ridge Food Ventures. This highly successful value-added processing facility located in Buncombe County is part of Advantage West's economic development interest in agriculture. A potential partnership has been briefly discussed for the value-added processing /commercial kitchen area in the 1922 Building.

Rutherford County Hospital. Discussions have been held on linkage of their continuing education opportunities being utilized as part of the educational outreach of the Center. There would be emphasis on healthy food selection, diet, exercise, as it links to local food production and consumption

Valley Fine Foods (Pasta Prima) – Discussions with local plant personnel have centered around community outreach of their product lines and networking with the Farmers Market in consumer commodity awareness. Also discussed was a potential outlet store for their product line and community involvement in events and programs. In addition, *Valley Fine Foods* could potentially partner with the Economic Development Commission in attracting additional food-related manufacturing facilities to Rutherford County.

Non-profit Organizations:

ASAP- Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project. The Rutherford County Farmers Market has been involved with this organization in the regional promotion of the Market. There will be continued development of market expansion to institutions, funding for Farmers Market promotion, and Farm-to-Community networks.

Rutherford County Beekeepers Association. The potential for processing and market sales of honey & honey by-products through the value-added facility have been discussed.

Rutherford County Farm Bureau. There is awareness and support for the project.

Rutherford County Chamber of Commerce. There is awareness of project and assistance in networking with the grower/vendor group of the Farmers Market.

Rutherford County Farm Museum – The Board of Directors of the Rutherford County Farm Museum will exhibit a portion of the museum's collection within the Center and work to expand educational programming of local agriculture and its

heritage. This association with the Agricultural Center will strengthen the museum organization's overall outreach and assist in stabilizing, this valuable agritourism asset. Other cultural organizations such as the *Rutherford County Visual Arts Guild* will also be contacted to be a part of the exhibitions and sale of local crafts.

VI. POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

Two grants have already been submitted to assist in funding the design & development of the next phase of the ***Agriculture Innovation and Solutions Center***. The Town of Forest City submitted a proposal to the *'Liveable Communities'* grant program of the ARC (Appalachian Regional Commission), which, if awarded, will fund technical assistance and some implementation for the project. Rutherford County submitted a grant request to the *WNC AgriVentures* program of Advantage West that, if awarded, will fund architectural services and business plan development. At present, funding of these grants have not been determined, however, a decision should be made on the awards in December 2013.

One major funder of the facility will possibly be USDA/Rural Development. Several discussions have been held with the Shelby office staff and they have assisted in identifying several grant categories including 1) the Farmers Market Promotion Program, 2) Community Food Projects Program, 3) Rural Business Opportunity Grants, and 4) Rural Business Enterprise Grants.

In addition, other funding possibilities that have been reviewed including the NC Department of Commerce Main Street Solutions Fund, Economic Development Administration, Golden Leaf Foundation, Tobacco Trust Fund, Department of Energy, Facebook, and private foundations.

If the project concept is moved forward by the County and Town in December, work will begin immediately on developing these grant funding stream proposals.

V. Recommendations & Timeline

1. Select the Florence Mill Redevelopment Area as the permanent site for the Rutherford County Farmers Market structure.

The Town of Forest City owns the site and 1922 Warehouse building which is part of the 9-acre downtown Florence Mill Redevelopment Area. To date, \$3 million has been expended in making the site "shovel ready" with the infrastructure and parking areas in place.

Following the review of potential relocation sites for the Rutherford County Farmers Market, the Steering Committee chose the Florence Mill site as its first priority. The group also made the decision that if the Florence Mill location is not selected that it is their opinion that another property location be selected and purchased to establish the Farmers Market. The existing county-owned properties do not meet the criteria of public accessibility, potential to allow for future expansion of the Market, proximity to the population and limited additional site development to accommodate the existing Market structure.

Pending the location site decision, cost estimates for the relocation of the Farmers Market structure will be finalized and available for the respective January Board meetings. Final approval is needed by February 2014 in order for the Farmers Market to be ready for the 2014 season. The Town of Forest City is interested in the assurance that the outdoor structure is in keeping with the design qualities the Town is striving to maintain and will work with the County on the relocation plan and look of the structure.

2. Move forward with the design and development concept for the 1922 Warehouse Building as the *Agricultural Innovations and Solutions Center*.

As part of the Florence Mill site relocation, the 1922 Warehouse building provides the potential for expansion of services that the Rutherford County Farmers Market could offer to the community. In order to move forward on the decision to renovate the 1922 Warehouse building, architectural drawings and a comprehensive business plan with detailed cost-estimates & revenue streams still must be developed.

3. Pending approval to move forward with the design & development concept, instruct the Administration to complete the architectural renderings and comprehensive business plan within 120 days, dependent on funding being available through the two pending grants.

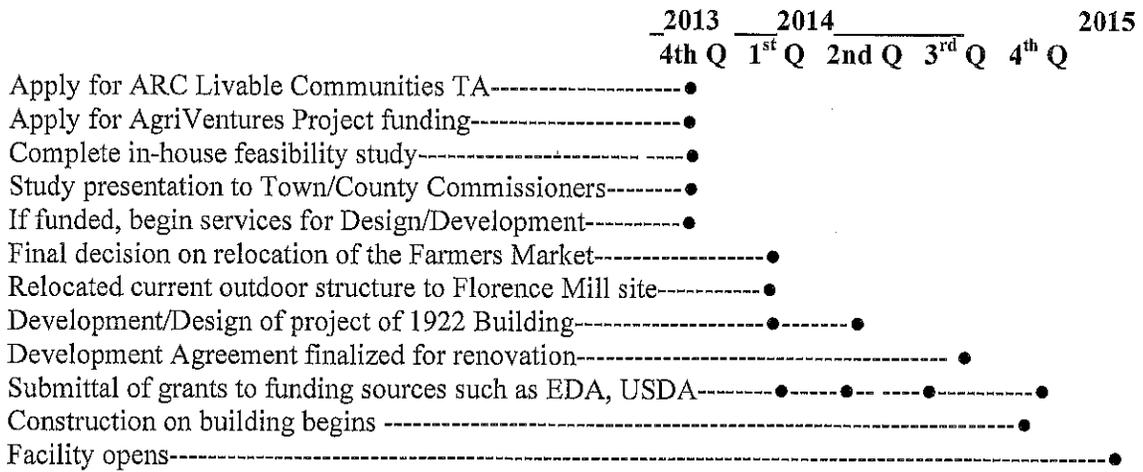
After grants funds are secured, then work will begin on the design & development phase and the results will be delivered to both Boards within 120 days (estimate mid-April 2014).

4. Strongly consider for the 2014-2015 Rutherford County Budget the inclusion of a full-time county employee to implement the Agriculture Economic Development strategies outlined in this proposal.

The staffs of Rutherford County, NC Cooperative Extension-Rutherford Center, and Town of Forest City will continue to play a major role in the implementation of the outlined recommendations. The staff person will work to build a strong agricultural economy for Rutherford County and the recruitment of food-related industries and companies to the county.

TIMELINE

The project timeline on the following page includes the proposed recommendations of the Rutherford County Farmers Market relocation and the development of the 1922 Warehouse building. This timetable illustrates the earliest completion of the relocation of the Farmers Market and the development of the 1922 Warehouse building projects with the understanding any delays will move completion further into the future.



VIII. Appendix

- A. Consumer/Vendor Focus Group Verbatim Responses**
- B. Rutherford County-owned Property Listing**
- C. Properties Reviewed for Farmers Market Relocation**
- D. Florence Mill Site Plan**
- E. Agriculture Innovation and Solutions Center - Diagram**
- F. Steering Committee Membership**

A. Consumer/Vendor Focus Group Verbatim Responses

FOCUS GROUP VERBATIM RESPONSES

Report on the Relocation and Expansion of the Rutherford County Farmers Market

**The numbers in parenthesis indicates that more than one person gave the exact response*

1. WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE STRENGTHS OF THE CURRENT FARMERS MARKET?

- location (10)*
- location can easily be seen from the road
- central location (2)
- mid county location
- located on a main highway
- major seeder road
- physical location
- convenient
- paved parking
- appropriate size and space
- lots of exposure
- visibility
- lots of traffic already passing by
- visible and more convenient than Old Fairgrounds
- lots of space (2)
- looks neat
- easy to move about
- accessible for handicapped and elderly
- variable hours open (2)
- wide variety of products (6)
- provides sources of county produce
- local fresh food(7)
- good produce (4)
- variety of products (5)
- diversity of product
- vendors (4)
- local vendors (3)
- friendly vendors (5)
- vendors very helpful
- dedicated participants
- form trusted friendships
- very nice people
- the people who run it
- local growers present to answer questions
- farmers pulled from all over the county
- the structure (3)

- large shed
- covered facility makes a big difference
- number of vendors has increased
- friendly people
- keeps money in the county
- more days and times
- needs more room
- get more people to come
- multiple sales days
- variety of bakers, veggies, crafts
- prices fair
- easy to find
- has plenty of room
- paved floor
- light and water
- good manager
- more well known than in previous years
- provides local farmers a market
- helps the vendors and the farmer
- helps local farmers as well as customers
- accepts WIC vouchers
- helps the farmers earn money
- good place to get local food and help growers and expand the economy
- educational value

2. WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE WEAKNESSES OF THE CURRENT FARMERS MARKET?

- Location (8)
- location not seen from the road
- location because of the road/highway
- location especially traffic intersection
- inconvenience of the entrance and exit
- inaccessible with the traffic pattern
- traffic light with poor merging into traffic
- not the greatest access with 4 lanes of traffic
- access bad (2)
- poor access to market (2)
- location - i.e., entrance/exit
- entrance and highway access
- no easy entry
- getting back onto the highway at the light

- difficult to get on and off highway
- no entrance from the east
- highway inaccessibility
- drive in and out is dangerous
- better parking needed
- not enough room
- nothing else around the area where it is located/isolated
- location could be better
- need more signage from main road
- far away from stores with not a lot of variety to buy
- uncertainty of how long it could be there [current location]
- not enough vendors
- few vendors
- need more vendors (3)
- inconsistency of vendors
- need more farmers
- not enough participation from local farmers
- Tuesday not as busy with fewer farmers
- each vendor should have signage about their products (local or purchased in other place)
- limited what on is sold
- not a full complement at every market day
- comprehensive ag products and services
- need more promotion of the market and "localness"
- lack of advertising (2)
- product offerings lacking - mushrooms, more eggs, fruits
- need more space - would bring more people
- too much produce being bought and resold
- re-sellers allowed
- lack of events to attract customers
- lack of public participation
- need more leadership
- more advertising (2)
- more promotion
- better marketing/visibility
- promotion in local newspaper and radio stations
- no restrooms/bathrooms (5)
- hate the porta-potties

- lighting
- hot/ no fans (3)
- no water (2)
- no sinks for washing
- need parking for handicapped
- weather variations – hot/cold/windy/rainy
- need more exposure online
- short hours (2)
- need more hours (3)
- longer hours – I go to work early and get off late – hard to get there
- too seasonal
- location could be better I terms of entering and existing (dangerous)
- getting back out on the road at the stoplight and traffic
- no easy entry
- public knowing where the market is
- parents not educated in preparing food – eating fast food instead
- need to encourage relationship with needy families, food kitchens, education, healthy eating
- no sinks for washing
- space limitations/not enough space (tables)
- uncertainty of the future
- no long term lease
- we didn't get the great plan we wanted
- open air only
- could use a little more enclosure
- police so that non-local food is limited

3. WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO SEE ADDED OR CHANGED – BOTH IN TERMS OF A SEASONAL OUTDOOR MARKET AND THE POSSIBILITY OF A YEAR-ROUND INDOOR MARKET – WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IN AN INDOOR FACILITY? THE SKY IS THE LIMIT!

- Bathrooms/restrooms (7)
- restrooms with washing facilities
- certified/commercial/approved kitchen (5)
- value-added kitchen
- more advertising (3)
- wider variety of products (4)
- more produce more organic
- more local products to be available

- more canned and dried products
- hope everything is locally grown
- fresh produce year round (even if not local)
- good variety with fruits and vegetables
- year-round market (5)
- have a longer season (2)
- longer hours of operation (2)
- one day with longer hours for folks who work
- helps vendors and farmers have a central location to see their produce
- agricultural facility with easy access to highway
- room for livestock shows and sales along with farmers market
- indoor facility with outdoor spaces attached
- indoor facility like they have in Asheville
- would like to see a year-round indoor market with exterior shed for occasional sellers (like Shelby used to have - good for vendors and buyers alike
- indoors - crafts, dried flowers and grasses
- classes in gardening and nutrition
- more cooking demonstrations
- need enclosed building
- enclosed weather protected area
- enclosed facility
- the old indoor market in Shelby was a very nice place - enclosed with lighting/heat, café
- fast food grill
- prepared food and a place to eat
- food vendors using market's food in demonstrations
- place to eat (3)
- café with local foods - farm to table
- restaurant would be great
- restaurant with local foods offered
- restaurant - not a chain restaurant
- power and water easily accessed by all vendors
- booths that need electricity and climate control for frozen meats, pasta, etc
- heat
- refrigeration and freezers (3)
- more refrigerated products
- better tables

- outlets at every table (2)
- water close to vendors (2)
- better lighting (3)
- office
- good opportunity for Christmas marketing
- local artisan products, value-added products
- sell other ag products/seasonal crafts and commodities
- a lot of crafts – more people would come
- more special events added (cooking, music, etc)
- events planned to bring in more consumers
- places to eat, rest, recreate
- year round market
- picnic tables for eating
- extended season
- teaching kitchen with space for students to work with their teacher
- value-added products from either homegrown or local produce
- more local vendors courted to re-join
- more consistency of vendors
- more vendors
- location in downtown Forest City is a great idea
- Forest city location would be good
- Downtown – good idea
- Don't want to see changed to Florence Mill as I think it would be better to have it in a more open area with more accessibility to the public
- If Florence Mill is used, maintain the historic architecture and atmosphere
- Idea of incorporating the farm museum and textile history could help draw people and help preserve farm museum long term
- more vendors
- consistency of vendors
- access to ATM (some customers do not come with enough cash)
- push to get the word out
- signage and advertising exposure
- great marketing/promotion
- better weekly coverage
- more advertising to let people know you are here
- more outside marketing to larger areas – Charlotte, Asheville
- surrounding counties can participate
- get people aware of Facebook page

4. WHAT WILL PREVENT US FROM ACCOMPLISHING THE IDEA OF AN EXPANDED MARKET FACILITY? WHAT WILL HOLD US BACK?

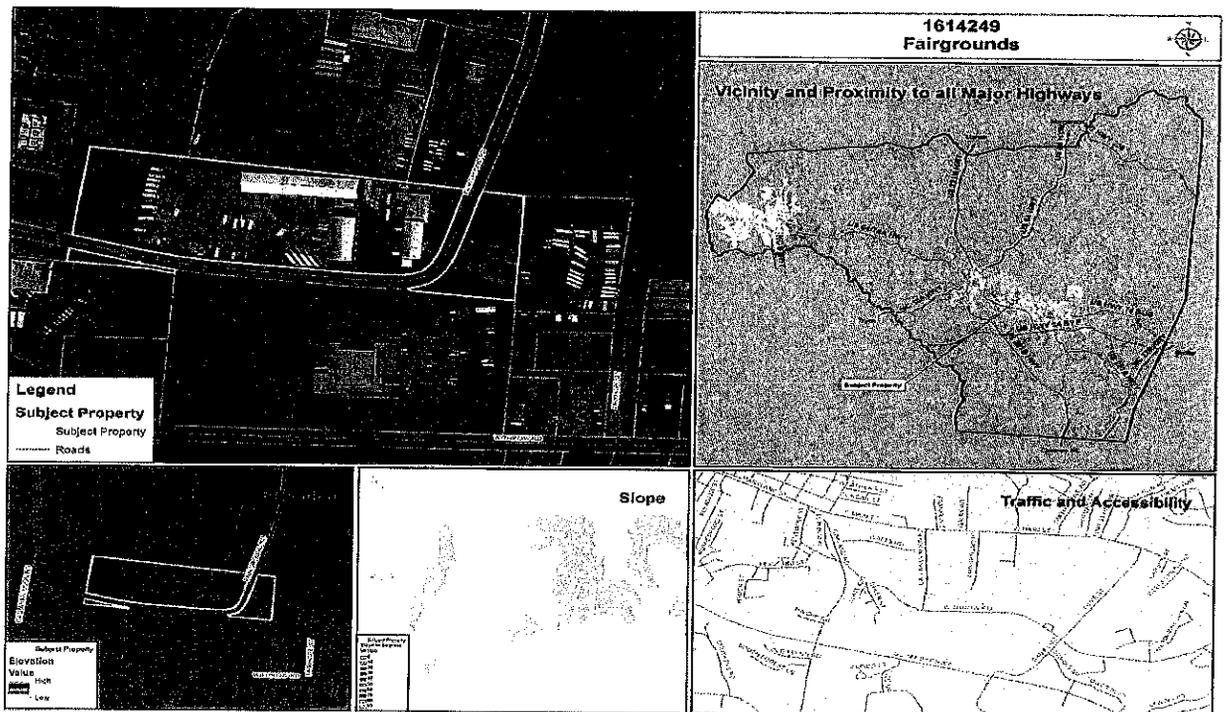
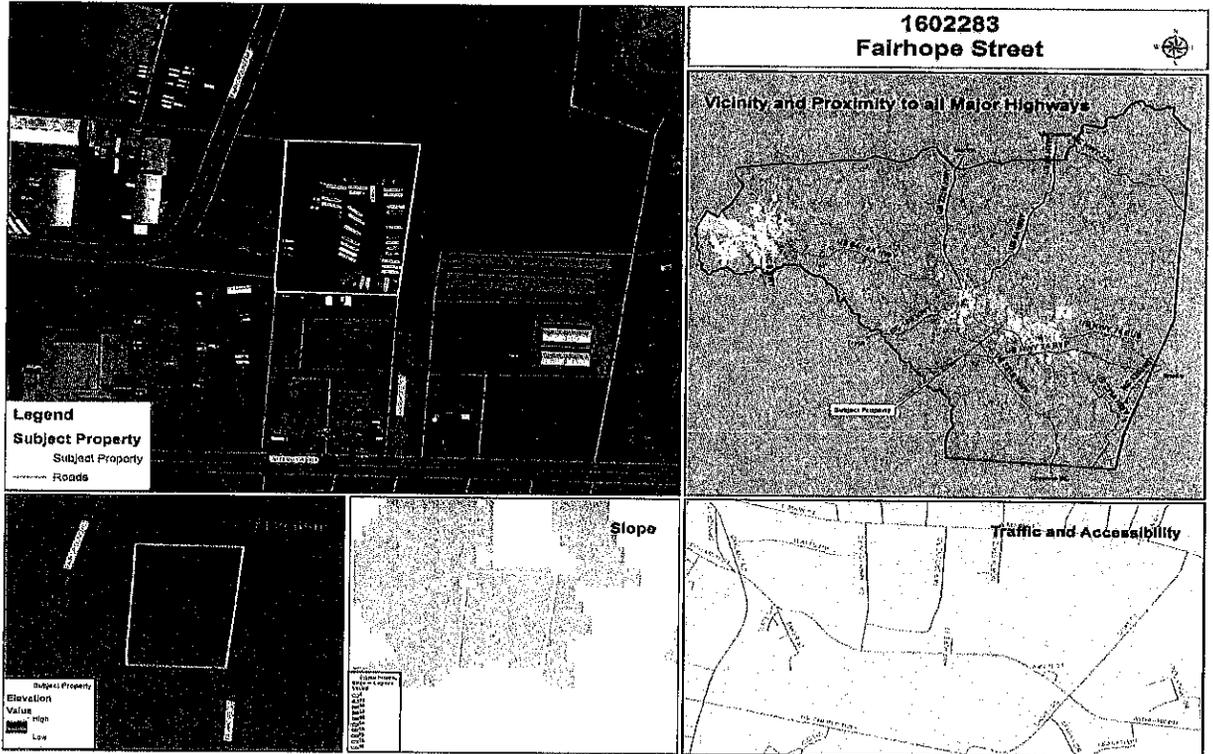
- money (14)
- money. Money, money
- funding (6)
- funding sustainability
- finances
- cost
- cost of new buildings
- expense
- lack of public support (5)
- need younger people to share interest in growing food
- politics (3)
- hopefully jealousy between towns doesn't develop
- if it could be conceived as a county wide venture and not just a Forest City project, it will be better supported
- ask for donations
- hard to find for some people
- space (4)
- parking (3)
- enough customers (lack of customers)
- need more local support and willingness to buy local
- location availability
- bad location
- a location away from where people normally shop
- permanence
- not enough room
- lack of vendors
- not enough vendors
- lack of participation from the growers
- need more interaction between growers and consumers
- not enough produce
- less resale - we have a good flea market
- commitment of management to provide location
- lack of support of towns
- opinion of city and county leaders - most of whom are not farmers
- lack of support from officials (3)
- if too many people are involved in decision making
- lack of people working together to help make market grow

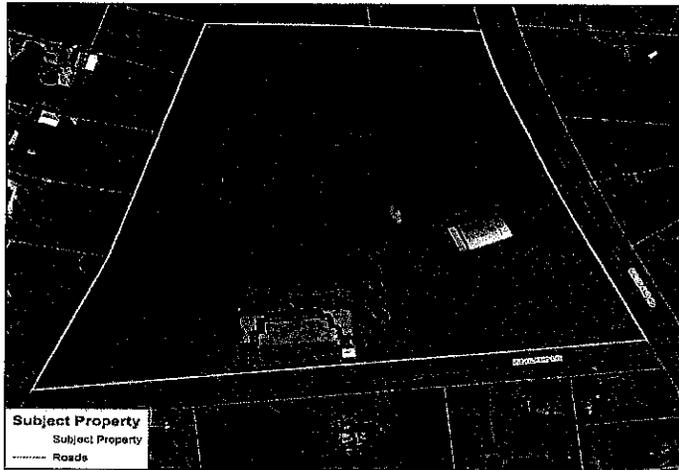
- a good indoor market would profit vendors and public
- pace
- not a flea market
- need "extras" to help draw people to that location [downtown] so they will visit farmers market too
- bad rules that are too restrictive
- effective management
- need good competent, innovative management and leadership
- no advertisement
- lack of advertisement
- thinking too small – we can always add on as money becomes available
- nothing

5. WHERE TO YOU THINK AN EXPANDED FARMERS MARKET COULD GO?

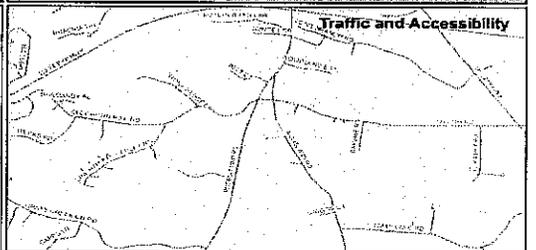
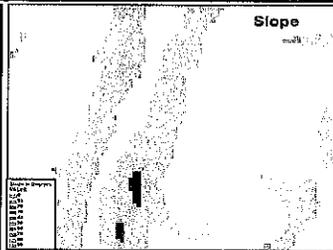
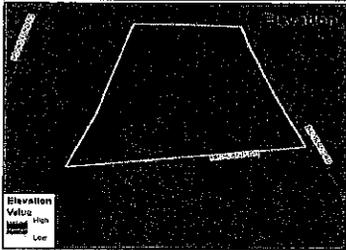
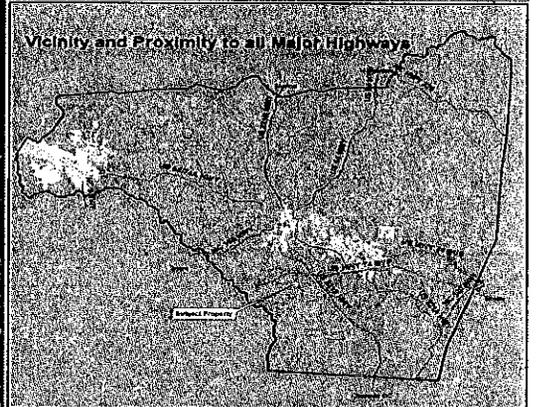
- central location
- like where it is (2)
- current location is good or somewhere near this area
- centrally located - Rutherfordton
- good parking
- easy access
- visibility
- stay here is possible or where we have plenty of parking and customer parking
- easy to get to
- not an isolated spot
- the closer to other shopping the better
- Forest City – so much to offer for expansion
- mill property in forest city is the best site
- Forest city would be the best place
- Not sure downtown Forest City would encourage usage from countywide citizens
- Forest city is great
- Old Forest City flea market site
- The mill place in Forest City would be great
- Old Kmart or WalMart (2)
- Would be great in a walkable area near trails and sidewalk areas

C. Properties Reviewed for Farmers Market Relocation

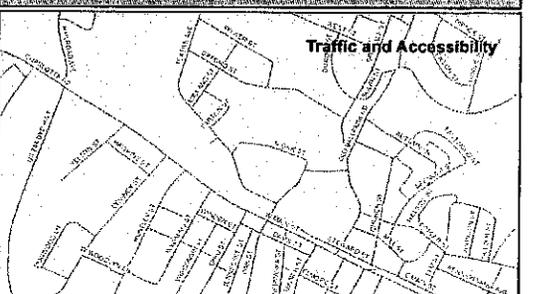
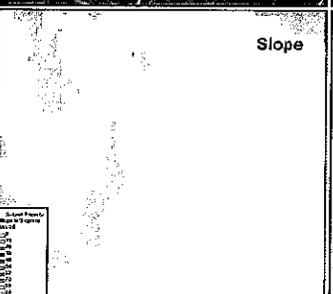
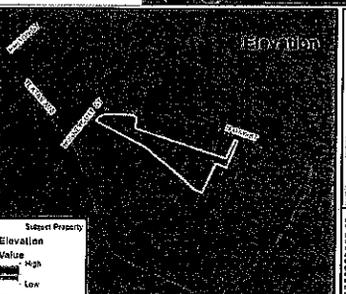
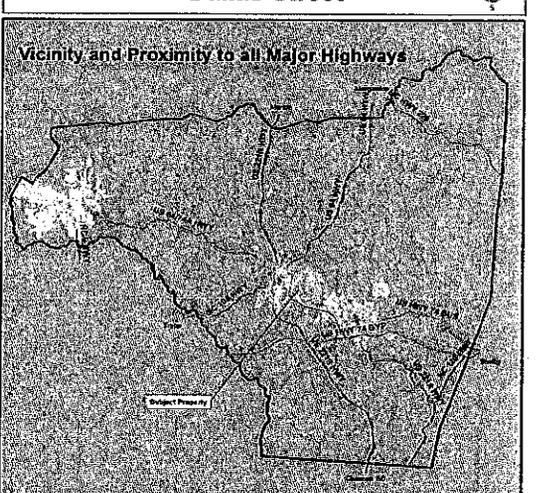


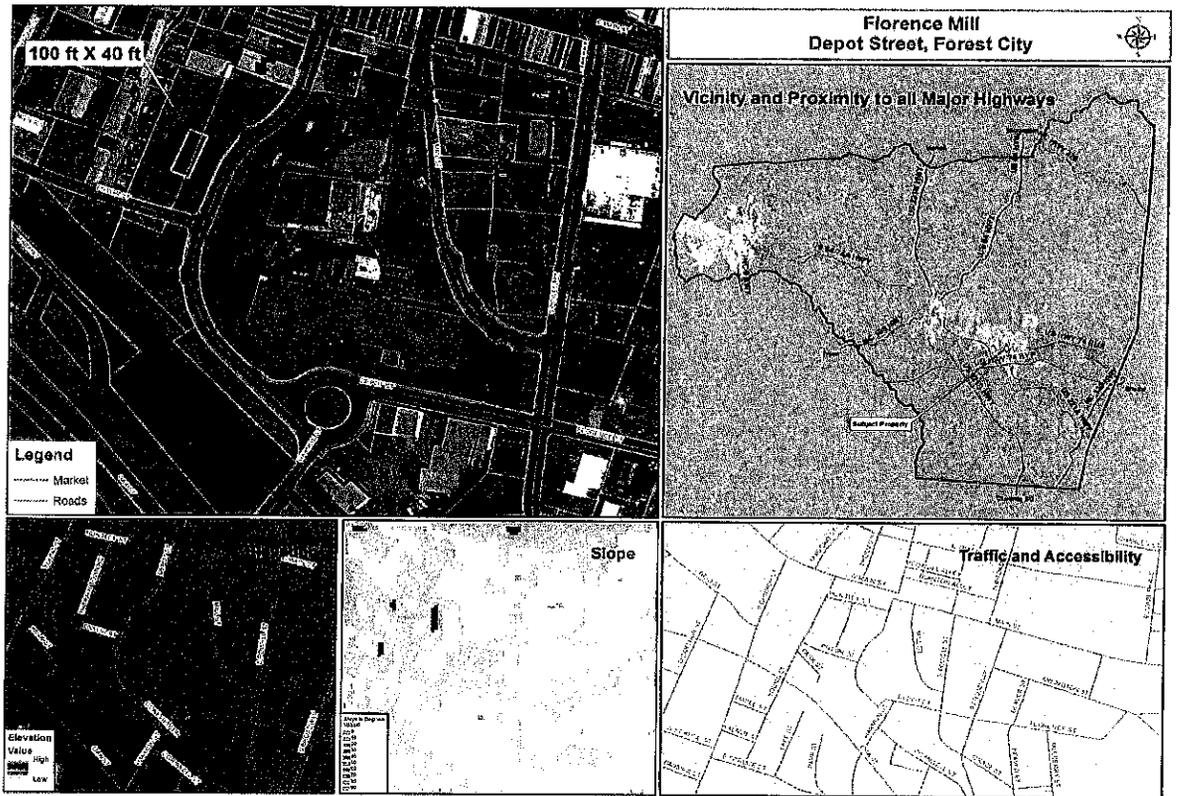
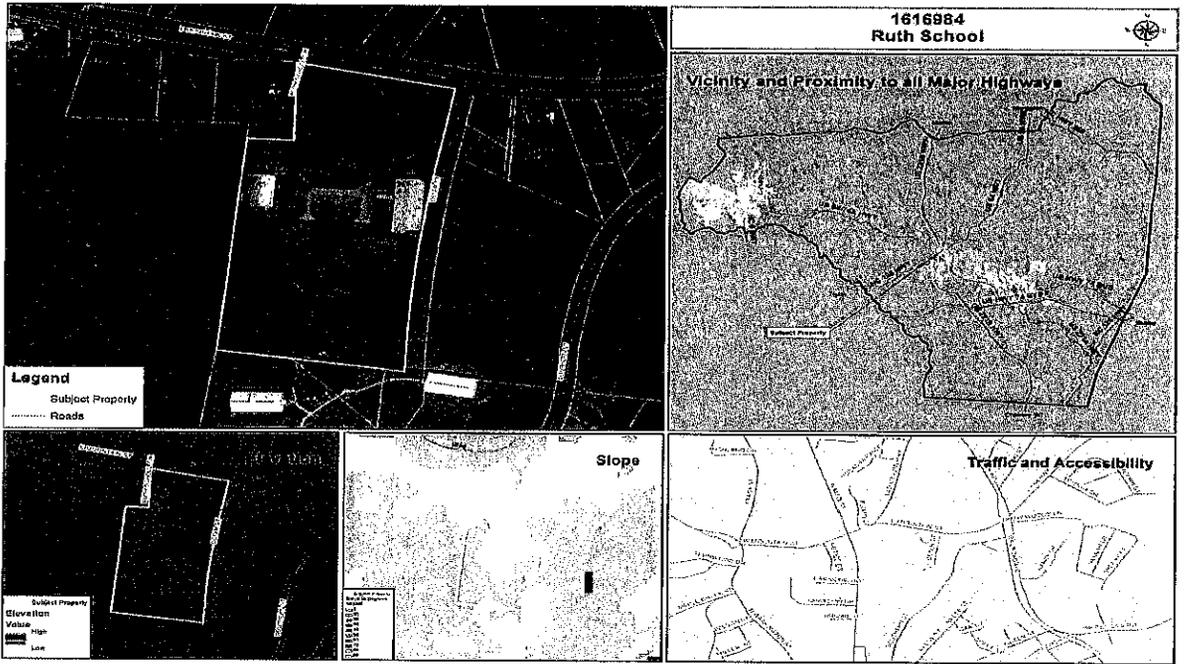


**1615763
 Shiloh Property**



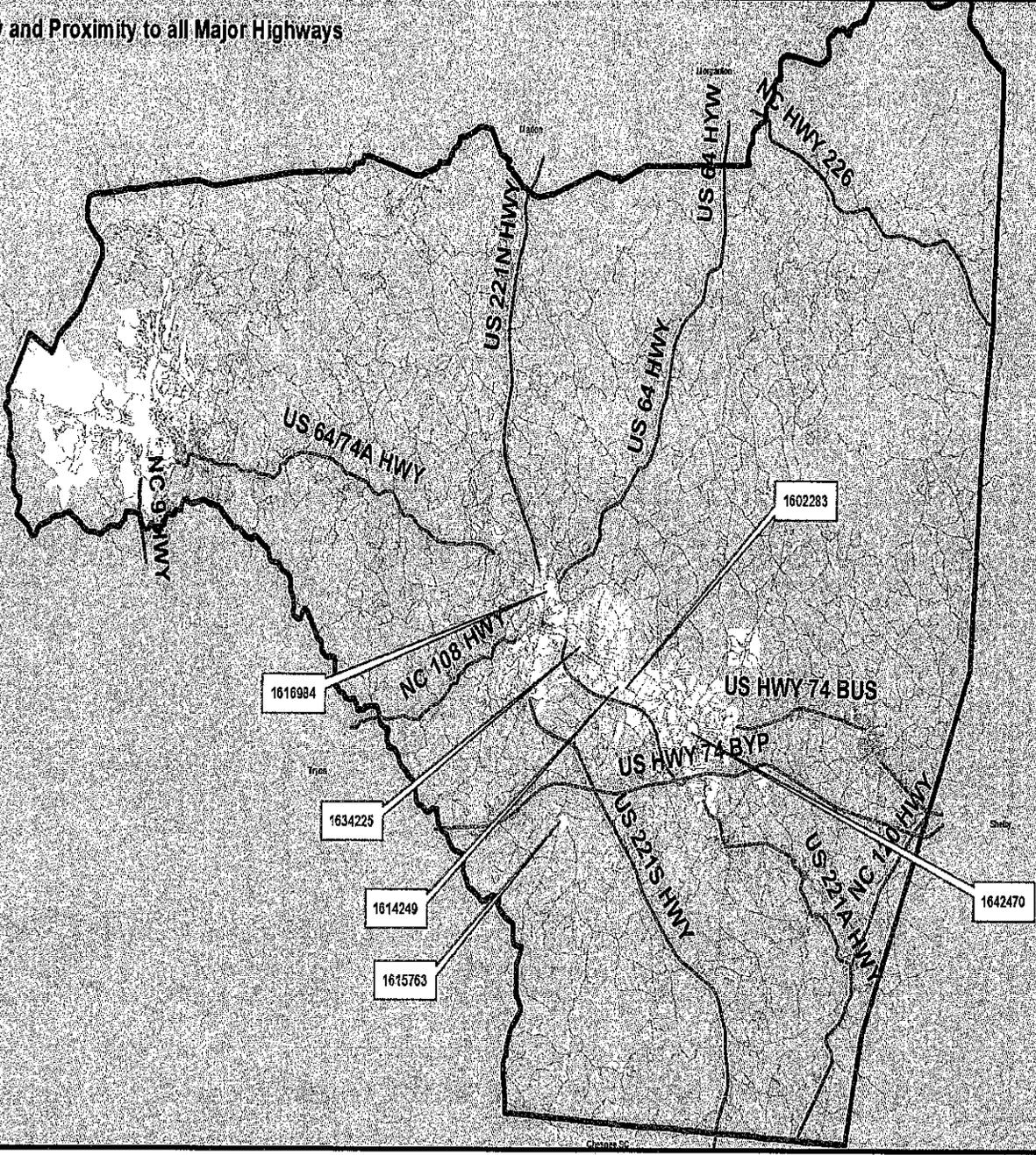
**1634225
 Dallas Street**





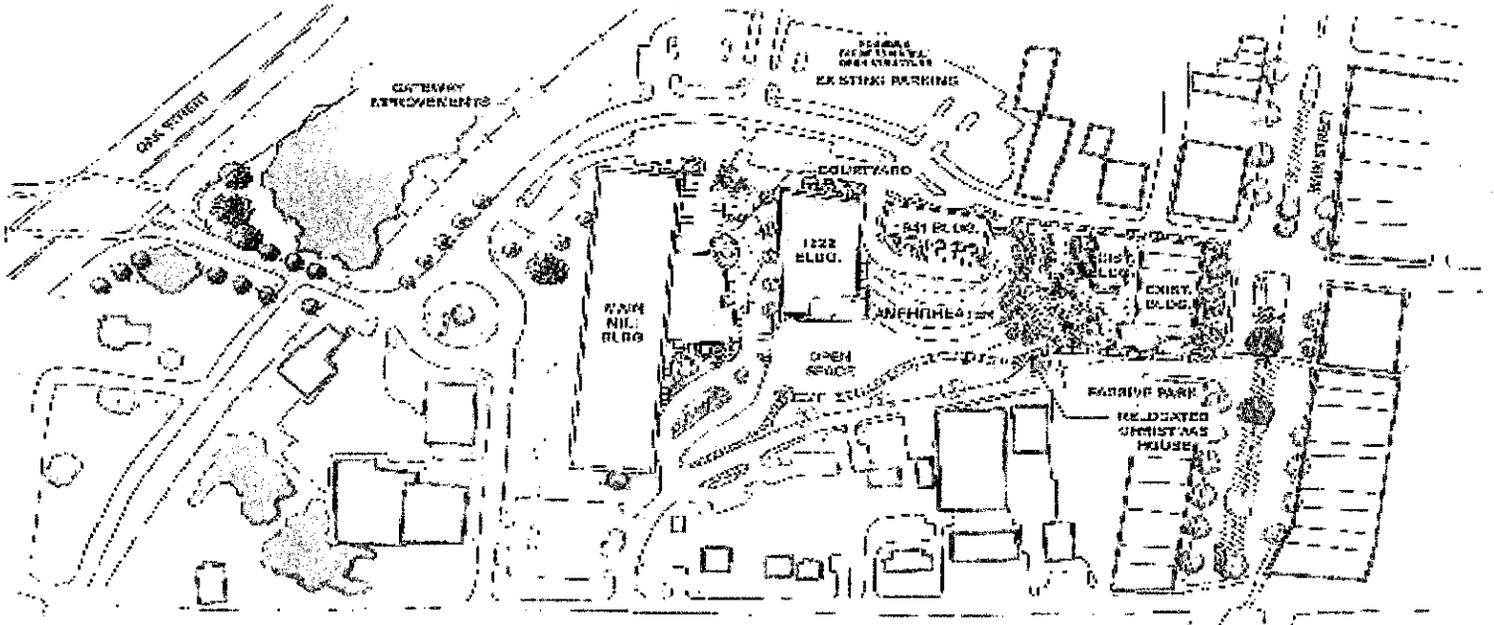
Farmer's Market - Possible Locations

Vicinity and Proximity to all Major Highways



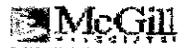
D. Florence Mill Site Plan

Cooperative Venture between Forest City, Rutherford County, and the Cooperative Extension Service to study the feasibility of moving the current Farmers Market outdoor structure to the Florence Mill site and develop the 1922 warehouse building (15,000 SF) into a multi-purpose agricultural center, including year-round indoor market, value-added product center, commercial kitchen, and educational, technology and agricultural innovation center.



FLORENCE MILL REDEVELOPMENT MASTER PLAN

TOWN OF GIBBS, RUTHERFORD COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA



E. Agriculture Innovation and Solutions Center - Diagram

Agriculture Innovation and Solutions Center

Bay 1 (5000 SF)	Bay 2 (5000 SF)	Bay 3 (5000 SF)
Retail Area of Indoor Market Agriculture Exhibits	Educational Outreach Office, Conference Area Technology Center Agriculture Exhibits Restrooms	Commercial Value-Added Processing Retail, On-line Sales Food Preservation/Nutrition Classroom/ Demonstration Area

F. Steering Committee Membership

Jeff Bradley
Linda Bond
Jack Causby
Marie Chan
Steve Govis
Ruthie Hanson
Ricky Horne
Becky Koone

Anna Levitsky
Jan McGuinn
Bill Morgan
Gerry Roberts
Pat Scoggins
Danielle Withrow
Bob Young