

## NEW HARMONY ARTS & FOOD PROJECT

New Harmony, Indiana

**Observations / Overview:** New Harmony is a small historic town located along the Wabash River. During the early part of the 19th century, New Harmony was the site of two attempts to establish Utopian communities.

Today, residents and tourists alike enjoy the slower pace and the town's opportunities for dining, shopping for antiques, visiting art galleries, and admiring the quaint surroundings where even the architecture pays tribute to a blend of the past and future. Visitors from all over the world come to experience the town's legacy of creative endeavors, which has spanned nearly 200 years.

New Harmony is an important component of the Southwest Indiana region's artistic and cultural portfolio. As New Harmony's reputation as an arts and cultural destination continues to grow, the community will help to attract individuals and families to the Region. New Harmony provides a more unique living experience than traditional metropolitan suburbs or urbanized areas. New Harmony also provides a creative milieu that residents from the Midwest and beyond appreciate. The projects outlined below will help to enhance New Harmony's brand as a destination community for artistic and cultural pursuits.

New Harmony was the site of two early American utopian communities. The Harmonie Society, led by George Rapp, arrived in the United States in 1804, purchased 20,000 acres on the Wabash River where they created a self-sufficient and productive community.

In 1824, Robert Owen and Bill MacClure purchased New Harmony outright, hoping to establish a model community where education and social equality would flourish. Their efforts attracted many important many leading scholars of the day to New Harmony.

Today New Harmony is a vibrant community where educational workshops, festivals, concerts, and plays are held throughout the year.

**Recommendations / Implementation Strategy:** The New Harmony Arts and Food Project seeks to capitalize on the uniqueness of the New Harmony community and the experiences it provides. The project also seeks to leverage the growing preference for local food along with new market opportunities for producing agricultural products to enhance the community's reputation for support of art engagements and education.



The New Harmony Food to Table & Arts Project has the following four components:

1. Conversion of vacant high school and grounds into an Educational Center for the production/processing of local food and Arts
2. Renovation of the Odd Fellows Hall to serve as storefront and children's museum
3. Create a covered, extended season outdoor market
4. Repurpose the New Harmony Way Bridge into a bike/pedestrian trail and park

Following is an expanded narrative on the four components:

### 1. Conversion of vacant High School into an Educational Center for Arts and Local Foods

The project begins with the Town of Harmony conveying the former New Harmony High School to the Working Men's Institute (WMI), a local not-for-profit educational institution.

WMI intends to convert the space into a Conservatory. The Conservatory will offer instruction in many areas including, but not limited to, those supporting the arts and local agricultural pursuits. One of the concepts for the Conservatory is the Farm to Table Program.

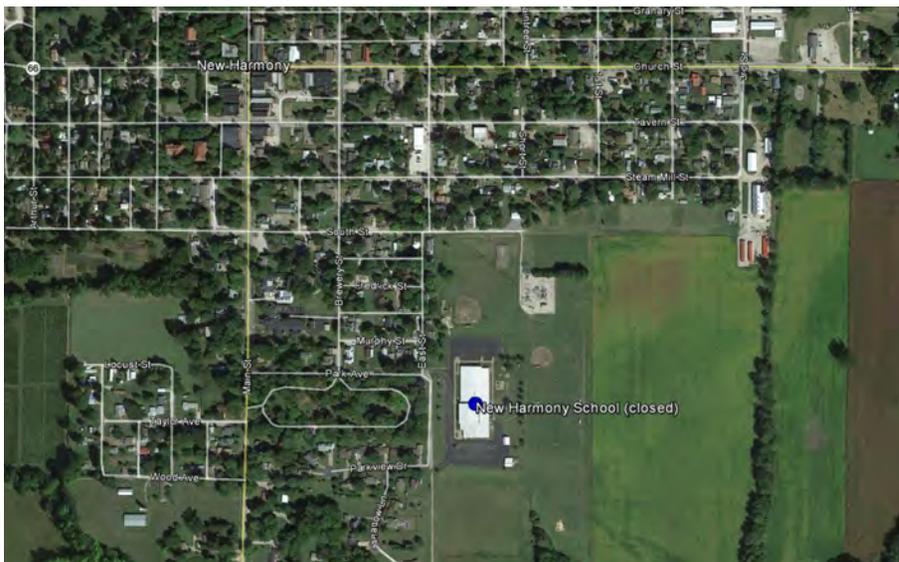
The Farm to Table Program will provide instruction on producing local agricultural products. Partnerships will be developed with the local Purdue Extension Office, Indiana State Department of Agriculture, and other institutions to assist participants to:

- 1) Learn agricultural skills;
- 2) Learn agricultural business methods;
- 3) Lease ground for raising products; and
- 4) Access clean kitchen space for experimentation and production of valued-added local food products.

Agricultural ground preparation, installation of green houses, and kitchen reconstruction are necessary to implement this program.

The ground preparation component of the program begins with dedicating nearly 30 acres of land for agricultural development and includes greenhouses so that year-round production can occur.

| New Harmony Arts and Food Project          | Public | Private           | Regional Cities   | Total               |
|--|--------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| "Farm to Table" Education Center           |        | \$ 150,000        | \$ 150,000        | \$ 300,000          |
| Renovation of Downtown Odd Fellows Hall    |        | \$ 107,500        | \$ 107,500        | \$ 215,000          |
| Main Street Extended Season Covered Market |        | \$ 147,500        | \$ 147,500        | \$ 295,000          |
| New Harmony Way Pedestrian Bridge          |        | \$ 95,000         | \$ 95,000         | \$ 190,000          |
| <b>Total</b>                               |        | <b>\$ 500,000</b> | <b>\$ 500,000</b> | <b>\$ 1,000,000</b> |



The efforts to provide training facilities to foster the production of local foods will create a considerable number of new employment opportunities. The continued automation of commodity farming will continue to require less employment. However, farming associated with raising local foods and specialty crops is labor intensive and can create a number of new employment opportunities. Pilot projects have already demonstrated that with careful planning and strong markets, a farmer can generate over \$50,000 from the sale of produce from a one acre parcel.

Southwest Indiana has a strong presence in specialty crops and the WMI Conservatory will help foster continued growth in this important sector.

The “Table” component involves creating a clean kitchen space suitable for licensure by the local Health Department. The possibilities are unlimited for the use of such a kitchen. Some include:

- 1) Instruction in preparing specialty food products from locally sourced ingredients for commercial sale or private use; and
- 2) Instruction in processing and preservation of fruits and vegetables.

Also, the local Head Start Program has expressed interest in using two or three rooms for its operations. Head Start would require approximately 120 meals per day, four days per week.

The arts components of the high school renovation will involve repurposing classrooms and offices to serve as art studio facilities. Some spaces will be private studios while other spaces will be shared. These studio facilities will allow New Harmony to expand the number of artists by offering residency programs, which historically have been very successful.

The studio space can help to foster employment opportunities for area artists and, more importantly, can help to attract prominent artists to the area.

|   |                  |
|---|------------------|
| Funding for the renovation of the New Harmony School is as follows: |                  |
| Regional Cities   | \$150,000        |
| Local philanthropic organizations                                   | \$150,000        |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>\$300,000</b> |



**2. Renovation of the Odd Fellows Hall to serve as storefront and children’s museum**

This project adds considerable value to the community and also helps to renovate one of the few unimproved structures along the Main Street corridor. The renovation is of a traditional restorative nature. Currently the building is gutted and vacant, with no known structural or environmental concerns.

Once the renovation is complete, the ground floor space will serve as storefront for local products created by areas artists, along with local foods and associated products. The upstairs space will be transformed into a children’s museum.

|  |                  |
|--|------------------|
| Funding for the renovation of the Oddfellows building is as follows: |                  |
| Regional Cities  | \$107,500        |
| Local philanthropic organizations                                    | \$107,500        |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>\$215,000</b> |

**3. Create a covered, extended-season outdoor market**

A vacant lot on the southwest corner of Main and Church Streets has been identified as an excellent location for an outdoor market. The project involves construction of a covered facility that can accommodate three seasons, including the installation of a durable floor structure and covered roof structure. The outdoor market will be the perfect complement to the existing mixture of unique shopping experiences in New Harmony.

|   |                  |
|---|------------------|
| Funding for the renovation of the extended season market is as follows: |                  |
| Regional Cities   | \$147,500        |
| Local philanthropic organizations                                       | \$147,500        |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>\$295,000</b> |

**4. Repurpose the New Harmony Way Bridge into a bike/pedestrian trail and park**

The New Harmony Way Bridge is a metal bridge crossing the Wabash River from Illinois into the center of New Harmony. The initial structure was erected in 1929 and today is owned by the White County (IL) Bridge Commission. The bridge was closed to vehicular traffic in May of 2012.

The Town of New Harmony desires to repurpose the bridge to serve as a unique bike/pedestrian trail and park setting. With the bridge spanning just short of ½ mile, it would provide an excellent recreation venue. In point of fact, it would be the second longest pedestrian bridge in the country. The bridge would also provide viewing of the Wabash River that otherwise would not be possible. The project will involve two complete engineering analyses to ensure that the bridge will support bike and pedestrian activity along with funding to make basic access and safety

improvements for pedestrian activity. With above assurances, the Town of New Harmony will accept the ownership of the bridge structure from the White County (IL) Bridge Commission.

|   |                  |
|---|------------------|
| Funding for the renovation of the New Harmony Way Bridge is as follows: |                  |
| Regional Cities   | \$95,000         |
| Local philanthropic organizations                                       | \$95,000         |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>\$190,000</b> |

It should be noted that New Harmony has developed a productive, working relationship with the University of Southern Indiana. Historic New Harmony is an integrated program of the University of Southern Indiana and the Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites.

In 1985, the University of Southern Indiana assumed management of Historic New Harmony, encouraging cultural and educational programs, while maintaining historic properties. Within the USI Foundation, the Historic New Harmony Advisory Board supports the mission of Historic New Harmony.

Opportunities for collaboration between USI faculty, staff, students and New Harmony are facilitated by Historic New Harmony, a department within the division of Outreach and Engagement. These opportunities include the development of research projects and service learning courses, internships, and experiential learning in the Town of New Harmony. Funding is available through the New Harmony Outreach and Engagement Fund and the Endowment for New Harmony Studies. Temporary office space and overnight accommodations are available to visiting scholars. Custom retreats for businesses and not-for-profit organizations are developed by USI’s Center for Human Resource Development in partnership with Historic New Harmony.

If Regional Cities resources are not available for this project, the projects will be pursued but will likely be delayed or be completed in phases. Lack of Regional Cities funding would dilute the momentum and positive dynamics associated with completing associated projects in an orchestrated manner.

