



Illinois—Rural Housing Service

Local & Regional Food Systems

Cultivating the Seed for the Garden of Eden

Outline of Need:

Palestine, Ill., lost its grocery store in March 2011, and the gas station was the only place left to buy the basics like milk and eggs. Village leaders realized the community would benefit from having a place where local vendors could sell garden plants, seasonal produce, and homemade breads, pies, noodles and cakes during cold and inclement weather, as well as the summer. Their solution lay with the shell of a building that the village had built in a great downtown location two years earlier. If they could make some improvements to it, they could use the sheltered location to extend the period of time the farmers market could operate.

How Rural Development Helped:

The Village applied to USDA Rural Development for a Community Facilities Grant and received \$30,750 to finish the interior of the building and add accessible public bathrooms, heating and air-conditioning.

The End Result:

Now the farmers market will be able to open in the early spring when the first asparagus and morels poke from the



The Village of Palestine, Ill., is using a Rural Development Community Facilities grant to turn a new, but unused public building into a sheltered location for a farmers market.

ground until late fall when the last of the pumpkins, apples and cider are sold. Local farmers, gardeners, and bakers will have a reliable place to sell their produce and wares every Saturday morning, come rain or shine. As the farmers market continues to grow and supplement incomes, it may inspire others to grab a hoe and rake and sell their surplus on Saturdays.

At other times, the Village plans to use the building to host classes on everything from growing a garden and canning the surplus to classes on organic agriculture, horticulture and landscaping. Palestine will also use the building for recreational events, like concerts, art shows, wine festivals, antique shows, talent shows, square dancing and flea markets.

Buoyed by the opportunities the new community building will provide, the Village applied to the agency for a Rural Business Enterprise Grant and received \$115,960 to improve the downtown streetscape with planters, benches and green areas. With local efforts supported by Rural Development financing, Palestine is on its way to becoming the Garden of Eden in Eastern Illinois.

Fast Facts

Program: Community Facilities Grant Program

Investment: \$130,750 grant

Congressional District:

Demographics:

- Population of Palestine is 1,344
- Median Household Income is \$28,911

Village Motto: The little town with a lot to offer

Impact: • Leveraged \$10,313 in other funds

- Fresh food source for the village and surrounding rural area
- Added income for farmers, local gardeners, bakers and artisans

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