

**THE GRAYLING AGRICULTURAL
AND
EDUCATION CENTER/NORTHERN MARKET
BUSINESS PLAN**

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Business Overview:

Northern Market will be a new economic engine creating an experiential agricultural shopping destination. The Market resolves the marketing needs of Northern Michigan farmers and Cottage Foods Industry while creating a tourism destination at the confluence of travel ways to the North. Our model is based on the need to stop and the want to stop. Providing everything at one location with a family based experience while housing the educational and growth needs of a rapidly growing farm to table agricultural movement in Northern Michigan. This market is in the right place at the right time with the right plan.

Company

Northern Market is part of a much larger food hub project driven by the City of Grayling. The City of Grayling holds the title to the building and property. Grayling Agricultural and Education Center was formed as a municipal directed 501C3 to develop and manage the Northern Market and the regional food hub. Doug Paulus has been hired by the city to be the Project Director. Doug is a retired small farmer who also has forty years of experience as a project developer and manager in the Northern Michigan medical field. Direction is retained by the Grayling Agricultural and Education Center board of directors. The current board is comprised of:

***Doug Baum-Chair, Grayling City Manager.**

***Sheryl Coyne-Vice Chair, Owner/Operator of local and regional radio stations.**

***Lisa Johnson-Secretary/Treasurer, City of Grayling Clerk/Treasurer.**

***Doug Paulus-Member, Project Director**

***Jeremy Bowers-Member, Local Restaurant Owner**

***Beth Hubbard-Member, Director of Nursing Kirtland College.**

Market Problem/Opportunity

Northern Michigan has been plagued by a slow economy for many years. Our area has low household income, lower education levels, and poor health based in poor nutrition. Agriculturally our short growing season and isolation from major market resources has driven traditional commodity farming out of the region. The traditional large farms have been divided into much smaller farms with a new generation exploring the farm to table movement. This concept has rapidly changed the downtowns of much of Northern Michigan. It is now in need of the next growth phase. The ability to move larger volumes of goods produced into larger markets. The growers and producers of the region are working in small groups ready to form a regional concept.

Solution/Value Proposition

Northern Market as the beginning of a major food project will help solve the logistical problem created by the size of the land mass of Northern Michigan. In the current explosive growth of small farming and the Farm to Table movement getting products to larger markets has slowed growth. Small regional pockets have developed but large movement to larger markets has been difficult. Northern Market will be a year around, seven day a week market place with a logistical web driven by cooperative marketing. It will house the educational needs to build a stronger small farm economy. Northern Market will also house a nutritional center to tie current nutritional programs more strongly to our schools and families of Northern Michigan. The expertise housed within the market will become an accelerator to the small farmers of Northern Michigan in the process.

Marketplace/Collaboration

Our Market will quickly become a destination for the 16,000 plus tourist who pass daily. These tourists travel between downstate residences and vacation spots and homes. We will provide the safe rest spot at the half way point of their journey. They will be able to purchase their food needs and learn to rely on the products produced by Northern Michigan. The current demand for these products is extreme and there is no year around competition in Northern Michigan. We will maintain our competitive advantage as growth occurs because of our location at the confluence of major highways.

Marketing/Sales Strategy

Northern Market will be the lease holder to as many as fifty independent businesses within the building and more farm market stalls outside. These businesses will be monitored to provide the safest, freshest products available. Having several vendors of each product type available will provide buyers with value and choice. Our building is designed to create a safe, clean experience with a new product around each corner. Unique to the Market will be the Grayling City Market, where a producer can lease shelf space only and our personnel will do the sales. No other farm markets in our area are open seven days a week year around.