

cooperation for creating strong central markets is also a possible partnership opportunity (Project for Public Spaces, 2003).

In the diagram below, the Project for Public Spaces has outlined a four piece collaborative model for sustainable markets and stronger communities that puts partnerships for successful markets into context. The need for clear technical assistance, larger funding sources, community group representation and proper communication of the market mission is outlined in this model.

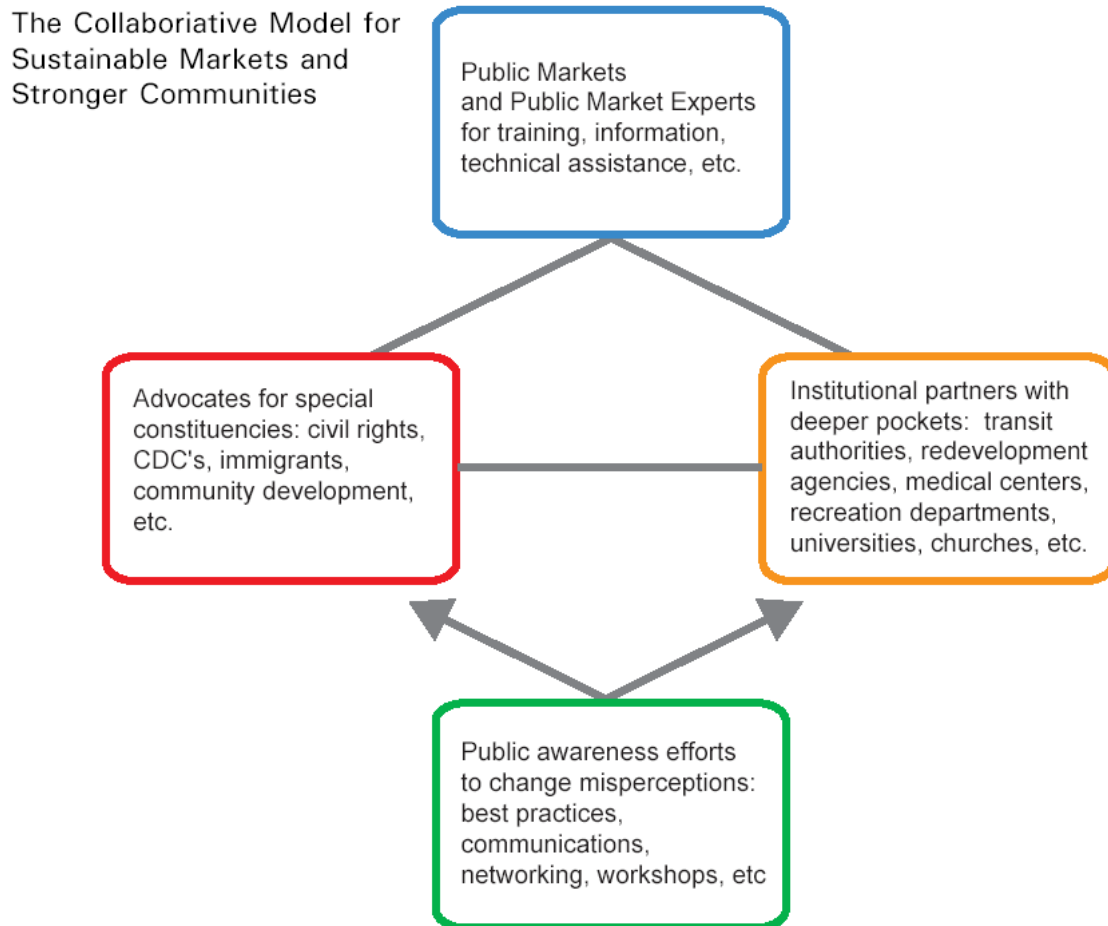


Figure 7: Graphic by Project for Public Spaces and the Ford Foundation, 2003

The previous diagram can be applied to Fulton Street Farmers Market in many ways. Breaking down each category, these same elements can be addressed in the context of partnership building in the Grand Rapids area. For instance:

- Advocates for special constituencies can be found in local volunteer agencies, such as ACCESS, Meals on Wheels and Second Harvest Gleaners Food Bank of West Michigan.
- More collaboration, such as the Kent County extension office efforts, could be seen in working with Local Initiative Support Coalition and Americorp for technical assistance.
- Public awareness campaigns can be utilized through non-profit and sustainability focused groups such as the Grand Rapids Food Council (educating about local food and urban agriculture) and GrandNet (specializing in communication and website design support for non-profits).
- Finally, partnerships with local institutions like the Rapid bus line (for shuttles to nearby parking ramps, for example), Grand Valley University (in money for more extensive research of the market), business/retail associations (improving the commercial corridor on Fulton Street) and area hospitals (for health programs) could prove fruitful.

Low-Income Community Organization Challenges and Solutions:

Major challenges for low-income markets include the possibility of economic failure and an unsustainable market due to unreliable funding and unreliable volunteers. Another challenge is the market's failure as a "public" market, which occurs when economic success is provided, but no neighborhood development plan exists. Another obstacle faced by these markets is the failure to produce wider effects in the neighborhood, such as social integration and creating an institutional "magnet" as a community gathering place. These barriers can be overcome with sound technical and financial support that does not over subsidize but relies on "product, price, good marketing, scale fitting its trade area and location" (Kellogg Foundation, 2003).

The next section will evaluate the market of agricultural producers, consumers, and vendors to seek market opportunities that the Fulton Street Farmers Market is currently offering or may expand upon.

3. Economic Trends

Economic Market Study:

Approximately 82 percent of the surveyed customers lived within a 10-mile radius of the Fulton Street Farmers Market, according to an analysis of the zip codes reported by the 284 respondents in a 2005 Calvin College customer survey. Also, 17 percent of the 2005 surveyed customers reported their zip code to be 49503, the zip code encompassing the Brikyaat neighborhood.

This customer base is reflected in the goals communicated by the client: “to make the Fulton Street Farmers Market a retail attraction for all of Grand Rapids, while still serving the particular retail market needs of the Brikyaat neighborhood” (Otto, Jan. 11, 2006). Additionally, the management expressed a concern for lost retail market potential due to physical limitations, such as stall space, parking inadequacies, an unpredictable product mix, and inconsistent vendor attendance.

This retail market study focuses on the Grand Rapids locality. This study is intended to explore the potential for the Fulton Street Farmers Market to expand and accommodate more of the vendors that are currently turned away due to physical and organizational limitations. **The overall goal of this retail market study is to find retail market potential in areas that can strengthen the Fulton Street Farmers Market** as the primary farmers market servicing the Grand Rapids area, as well as meeting the particular retail demands of the Brikyaat neighborhood.

The following diagram shows the basic principal of this economic market study; to determine the consumer *demand*, and the feasibility of product *supply*, which are compared to find areas of unmet demand and supply strengths and weaknesses. This establishes the *market potential*, where growth and expansion can most likely succeed.

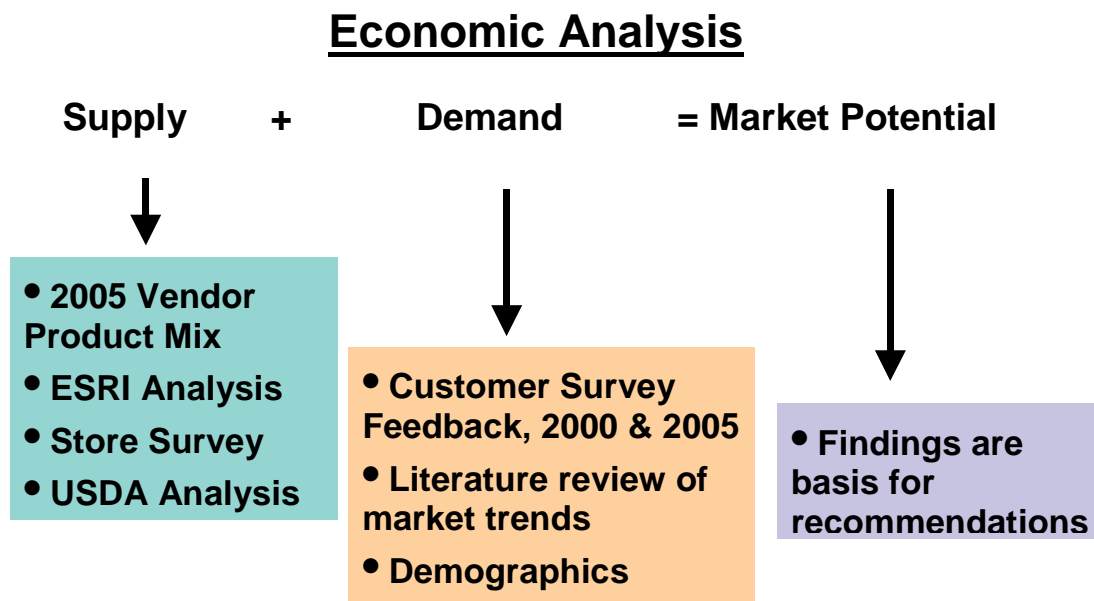


Figure 8: Principal equation for the economic market study

In this retail market analysis, the customer demand areas are defined by distances of ten, five and one mile/s from the Fulton Street Farmers Market at the crossroads of Fulton and Fuller (See Figure 9). The outermost ring marks the boundary of the ten-mile radius from the farmers market. This ring defines the “Grand Rapids retail market area”, encompassing the area that 82 percent of the 2005 surveyed farmers market customers came from. It includes all of Grand Rapids and some of its immediately adjacent municipalities, such as Comstock Park and Northview to the north of Grand Rapids, Forest Hills to the east, Kentwood to the southeast, Wyoming and Cutterville to the south, Grandville to the southwest, and Walker to the west.

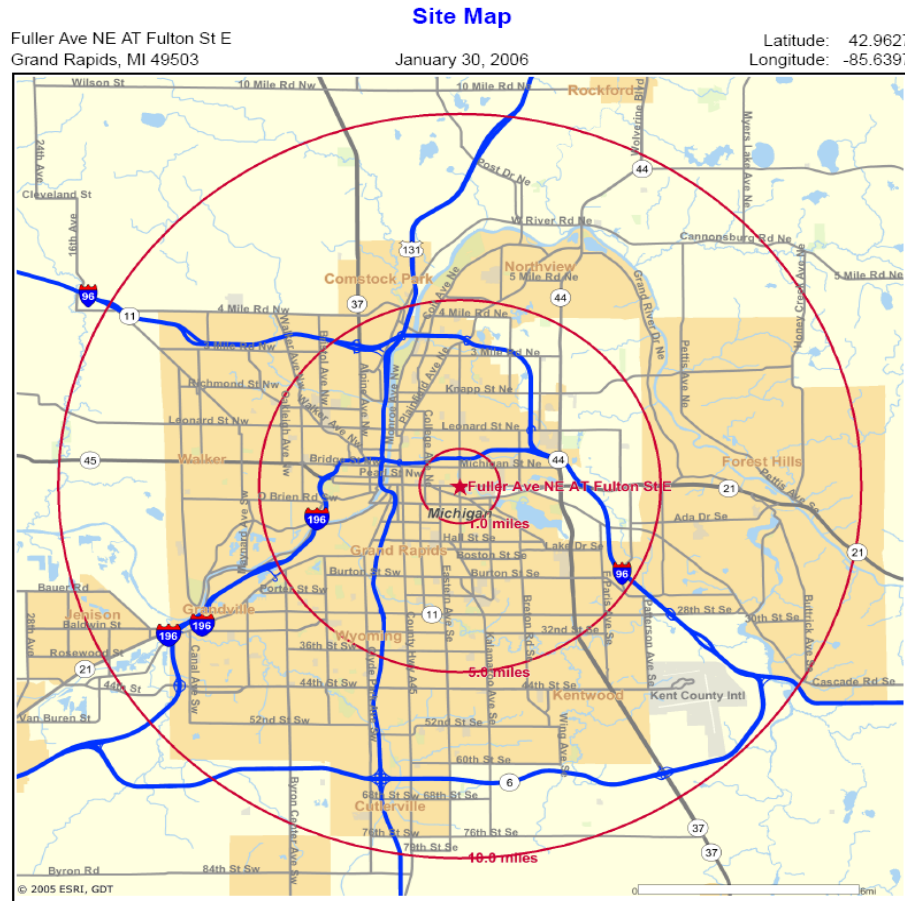


Figure 9: ESRI Data; The 10, 5, and 1 mile radii surrounding the Fulton Street Farmers Market

The middle ring defines the five-mile radius from the Fulton Street Farmers Market, encompassing all of the Midtown Neighborhood, the urban center of Grand Rapids, and the zip code area of the Fulton Street Farmers Market. The smallest ring marks the one-mile radius encompassing the farmers market and most of the Brikyaat neighborhood. The one-mile ring will be used to describe the immediate retail market area of the Fulton Street Farmers Market.

Local Demand Analysis:

$$\text{Supply} + \text{Demand} = \text{Market Potential}$$

The demand for farmer market produce is affected by a variety of factors, such as produce consumption rates; diversity, quality and price of produce available through other sources; and consumer preferences influenced by culture, income, and education. The inclusion of fresh produce in dietary practices depends on time availability, cooking knowledge, and cultural traditions (Fisher & CFSC, 1999).

The farmers market produce demand among local consumers may be measured by a combination of inputs including: local consumption patterns of fresh fruits and vegetables, the demographic profile of potential consumers, and examples of success in similar retail outlets. The unanswered demand in the local retail market for farmers markets products is the target demand. The target demand is the retail market void that Fulton Street Farmers Market could address to maximize its market potential.

Consumption Patterns:

Since farmers markets primarily feature fresh produce vendors, it is appropriate to measure the potential local consumer demands for farmers market products by examining the general consumption patterns of fresh fruits and vegetables in the area. To determine the consumption patterns of fresh fruits and vegetables (produce) in the Grand Rapids area, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) data was used to find the dollars per capita spent by the average Grand Rapids consumer on fresh produce. This data was compared to the state of Michigan. Dollars spent serve as the indicator of the quantity of fresh produce consumed.

The USDA reports that Grand Rapids spent \$220,146,600 on produce for home consumption in 2003. This expenditure is expected to increase by 15.48 percent by 2008, while the state of Michigan is only projected to increase consumption by 12.49 percent. Of money spent by Grand Rapids households on produce at home, the expenditure is overwhelmingly spent on fresh produce (See Chart 9), more than twice as much than is spent on canned, frozen, or otherwise preserved fruits and vegetables combined. Grand Rapids spent slightly less on produce per household than the state average in 2003 (\$534 versus \$539); however, the per capita income of Grand Rapids was also slightly less than the state's in 2003 (\$23,657 versus \$25,149). Only meats, processed foods, and breads exceed fresh produce expenditures for Grand Rapids households (USDA MSB, 2004). This information shows a trend of increased produce consumption by Grand Rapids consumers.

Estimated Grand Rapids Household Expenditures on Produce in 2003

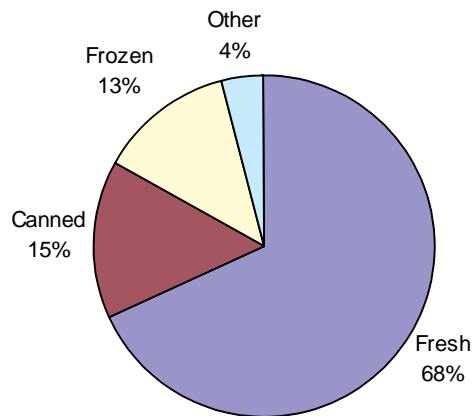


Chart 9: SOURCES: USDA AND CLARITAS INC. © 2004; Estimated Grand Rapids Household Expenditures on Produce in 2003

A second consumption pattern, particularly relevant to farmers market retail and unaccounted for in the USDA data on produce consumption trends, is the demand for high quality and local produce. To determine the local demand for quality and local produce for the Fulton Street Farmers Market, the responses collected during two separate customer surveys have been analyzed. One survey was conducted by the Grand Rapids Parks & Recreation Department in 2000 and Calvin College students conducted the second survey during the summer of 2005.

According to the survey results, the freshness and the quality of food sold at the Fulton Street Farmers Market were the primary reasons customers came to the market and returned repeatedly (See Chart 10). In addition, consumers also cited the atmosphere, support of local farmers and organics as reasons they return to the market. See Appendix E for open-ended responses. Organic food is generally more “accessible, low-cost, and flexible” through farmers markets, which helps to expand selling capacity for producers where infrastructure for their products does not exist. Also, consumers interested in organic, high quality products appreciate the trust and rapport they can directly form with food producers at farmers markets. (Kremen, Greene and Hanson, 2003).

Other non-food items such as crafts and value added products like baked goods or other prepared foods, accounted for less than 2 percent of the customers’ primary reasons for returning to the Fulton Street Farmers Market. These survey responses reveal that the customer demand is primarily for fresh, local, and organic produce, in addition to the experience of shopping at the market.

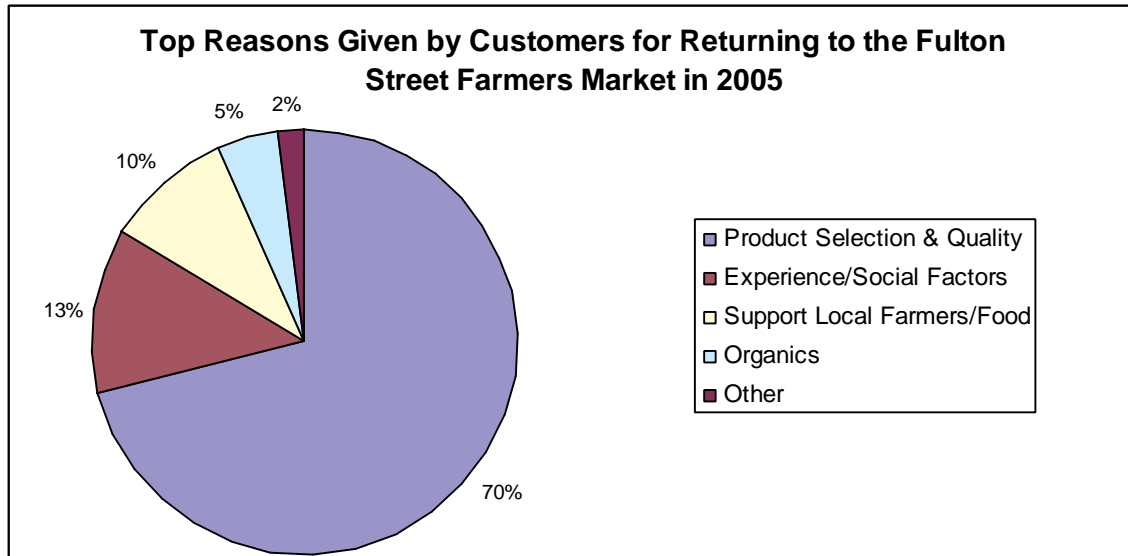


Chart 10: Data from 2005 Calvin College Survey. See Appendix (E) for response categorization.

Demographic Associations:

Success of a farmers market is dependent on the accessibility, location within a larger community, and how the market relates to various socioeconomic groups. A diverse product mix has been found to be the most effective way to promote growth at a farmers market in a high-income community (Corum, Rosenwieg, Gibson; 2001). A successful farmers market in a low income community is based on these five factors: 1) utilizing subsidized operation and management, 2) involving community organizations 3) providing a basic, affordable product mix, 4) hiring sales staff from the neighborhood and 5) providing transportation options. When these factors are accounted for in low-income communities, a market can grow to successfully fill a need for food security (USDA, 2002).

Based on the demographics of Grand Rapids, Midtown, and Brikyaat, there may exist a diverse demand for the Fulton Street Farmers Market. As the U.S. Census data showed the Midtown Neighborhood had a high percentage of children below the poverty level (32%), a high unemployment rate (8.2%), and a significantly lower median and per capita income per family when compared to Grand Rapids, Kent County and the state of Michigan. These indicators show that the immediate neighborhood of the Fulton Street Farmers Market has a customer base that likely faces a lack of access to nutritional food as found in other low income communities nationwide, and likely utilizes nutritional assistance programs, such as Project Fresh (Fisher & CFSC, 1999).

For low-income consumers in the Midtown and Brikyaat areas that are reliant on public transportation or cannot access transportation, the Fulton Street Farmers Market has the potential to fulfill the demand for a proximal outlet of healthy food. However, in addition to the transportation barrier, such consumers also face a price barrier. Without the presence of grocery stores or other fresh produce retail outlets in the immediate area, auto-less and low-income consumers likely spend their resources for food at corner

convenience stores that offer higher prices for nutritionally low quality food. By participating in nutritional access programs like Project Fresh and accepting Bridge Cards with an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) system, the Fulton Street Farmers Market can meet the demand of low-income consumers for proximal access to fresh produce (Fisher & CFSC, 1999).

According to a 1999 report by Andy Fisher and the Community Food Security Coalition, *Hot Peppers and Parking Lot Peaches: Evaluating Farmers Markets in Low Income Communities*, the income and cultural background of consumers can affect the demand for farmers market products. The report observed from surveys and previous studies that farmers market shoppers of middle and upper income prioritized organics and product quality over factors such as price and proximity. However, low-income farmer market shoppers demand a variety of basic fresh produce items and a better price than what is available at other proximal produce retail outlets. Because of the price barrier, low-income shoppers create a demand for conventional as opposed to organic produce, along with a demand for EBT and Project Fresh coupon acceptance.

All income ranges of working people, especially the working poor (those that work at least full time yet still have incomes at or below the poverty line), create a demand for weekend and evening hours. The report also noted that ethnic and cultural traditions' influence consumer food choice and dietary practices. Farmers markets should take this variable into account when targeting the local demand (Fisher & CFSC 1999). The ethnic and racial diversity in the Brikyaat neighborhood would indicate that this would be a demand factor for the Fulton Street Farmers Market to consider.

Success among Similar Outlets:

An indicator that the Fulton Street Farmers Market has the potential to be successful as a retail market can be found by comparing it to the successful growth of other farmers markets. Fulton Street Farmers Market has demonstrated its own success through its longevity and large customer turnouts in spite of inconveniences to shopping there, such as lack of parking and an unpredictable product mix. Since the Fulton Street Farmers Market is the only farmers market in the City of Grand Rapids, measuring its comparative success in the Grand Rapids produce market is limited.

A comparison for success in other farmers market outlets can be found in alternate ways. First, the USDA "U.S. Farmers Markets -2000" study indicates that farmers markets are growing as a marketing tool used by farmers to reach customers directly (Payne & USDA, 2002). As many case studies in other cities and states have shown, farmers markets have been an effective tool for meeting the demand for high quality, fresh, and local food (Payne & USDA, 2002).

Target Demand:

The target demand is the consumer demand that is inadequately met by any other proximal retail outlet, other than the Fulton Street Farmers Market. This unmet product demand could be capitalized upon by the farmers market. About 10 percent of respondents in the 2005 Calvin College customer survey indicated that they returned to

the market to purchase and support local food. Another 71 percent returned for the freshness and quality. See Appendix E for survey responses.

Produce retailing has increasingly globalized, putting greater distance between the point of production and the point of consumption. In the Midwest, food often travels more than 1500 miles before it is sold and consumed (Hamm & Heller, 2004). Consumers are increasingly aware of the decrease in freshness and quality associated with extended time spent in transit.

According to a 2003 report by the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, of consumers surveyed for preferences in “eco-labeled” products, consumers consistently preferred products labeled as *locally grown* (food grown within 100 miles of purchase location) above products labeled as *organics*. This reflects the connection consumers make between locally produced food and its perceived high quality of freshness and taste (LCSA, 2003). Local products are perceived to have a fresher quality and a cheaper cost over non-local food due to the reduced travel distance from field to plate. Based on these perceptions, the consumer demand for freshness and quality is associated with the demand for localness.

Farmers markets are a unique outlet to meet the demand for locally produced food. The USDA U.S. Farmers Market 2000 study showed that 67 percent of farmers live within twenty miles of the farmers markets they sell at. Only 12 percent lived more than fifty miles away (USDA, 2000). The Fulton Street Farmers Market reflects this national trend, as 42 percent of vendors in 2005 came from Kent County.

Demand Summary:

Continuing to meet the demands of a range of customers is an important goal for Fulton Street Farmers Market, since its desire is to continue to grow as the sole farmers market serving all of the Grand Rapids, as well as its immediate neighborhoods. The market offers fresh produce that is increasing in demand, as observed in consumption patterns for the Grand Rapids area. Due to the market’s ability to draw a variety of consumers from the entire Grand Rapids area, there is a diverse demand for products at the Fulton Street Farmers Market.

High quality and organic products serve the demand of middle and upper income consumers, while conventional products and participation in nutrition access programs are demands of lower income shoppers. The Fulton Street Farmers Market has demonstrated longevity and financial viability due to its loyal and wide reaching consumer base. In addition, they are the only farmers market in Grand Rapids, giving it a unique advantage on the local food product demand.

In conclusion, the demand for fresh produce sold at the Fulton Street Farmers Market is strong and trends show that this demand is growing. This indicates that the Fulton Street Farmers Market consumer base would support future expansion and increased capacity. The next section will explore the other variable of the market potential equation, market

supply, to determine the feasibility of expansion and the market potential of the Fulton Street Farmers Market.

Local Supply Analysis:

$$\text{Supply} + \text{Demand} = \text{Market Potential}$$

When discussing the difference between products available at farmers markets and other produce retail outlets, such as grocery stores, the term “local produce” is differentiated from “Michigan produce”. Nationally, farmers markets serve as outlets for local producers (usually from within 20 miles of the farmers market) to sell directly to customers (Payne & USDA, 2002). The difference between Michigan and local produce is that Michigan produce comes from anywhere in Michigan, while local produce is defined as produced closer to the farmers market it is sold at.

The produce supply element of the Fulton Street Farmers Market retail market analysis is measured by the following factors:

- Availability of local produce
- Uniqueness of products the farmers market supplies
- Growing season patterns and sustainability of production
- Product mix compared to the target demand
- Farmers market ambience/culture.

Availability of Local Produce:

The viability of expanding the Fulton Street Farmers Market depends on the availability of supply to meet the consumer demand for fresh produce and local products. Information from the Michigan Department of Agriculture indicates an adequate potential produce supply in the Grand Rapids/Kent County area. Fulton Street Farmers Market is located in Kent County, which is ranked 5th in cash receipts for the state’s agriculture commodities. Kent County is also located adjacent to the 1st (Ottawa) and 2nd (Allegan) ranked counties, and within a hundred miles of the 4th ranked county (Kalamazoo) for sales receipts for the State (Michigan 2004-2005 Highlight report). The position of the farmers market in the rich southwest Michigan growing region gives it access to a potentially large supply of fruits and vegetables grown locally. The majority of vendors from the 2005 growing season come from Kent and Ottawa counties alone.

With abundant produce potentially available to the Grand Rapids area, the question becomes what other outlets service the Grand Rapids area, particularly the Brikyaat neighborhood, with fresh Michigan Produce. Using ESRI data services, a retail market analysis of businesses categorized as Grocery Stores according to the North American Industry Code System (NAICS code 4451 *comprises establishments primarily engaged in retailing a general line of food products*) was generated. This analysis examined the excess or lack of grocery store retailers at the ten, five and one mile radii of the Fulton Street Farmers Market (See Table 6).

According to the ESRI Retail Market Place Profile used in this analysis:

“Supply (retail sales) estimates sales to consumers by establishments. Sales to Businesses are excluded. Demand (retail potential) represents the expected amount spent by consumers at retail establishments...The Leakage/Surplus Factor is a measure of consumer demand relative to supply, ranging from 100 (total leakage) to -100 (total surplus). ESRI uses the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) to classify businesses by their primary type of economic activity.”

Surplus of Grocery Stores in Brikyaat Neighborhood and Grand Rapids		
Distance from Fulton Street Farmers Market	Surplus	Number of Grocery Stores (NAICS CODE: 4451)
One mile radius	-13.4	9
Five mile radius	-5.8	107
Ten mile radius	-6.4	183
Data: ESRI Retail Marketplace Profile		

Table 6: Surplus of Grocery Stores in Brikyaat Neighborhood and Grand Rapids, Michigan; ESRI Data

The results indicate an excess (surplus) of grocery retailers throughout the Grand Rapids area. The surplus shows that there are more grocery stores servicing the Grand Rapids area than are necessary to meet the market demand. This is especially observed within one mile of the farmers market.

This implies that all of the groceries included in this surplus provide the same products that the consumers demand, such as fresh produce and other nutritional staples. However, other studies have found that these assumptions may be inaccurate. For instance, a 2000 study of seventy five stores close to the Eastern Market in Detroit found that fewer than a fifth carried a minimal amount of products that could assemble a healthy meal containing either fresh or preserved vegetables or fruit (Pothukuchi & Thomas, 2004).

Furthermore, a traditional NAICS code retail market analysis cannot account for Michigan or local produce retail outlets, which would be comparable retail outlets to the Fulton Street Farmers Market. The gaps in the available data were misleading for assessing the potential market demand of the Fulton Street Farmers Market. Therefore, a survey was created for this report to assess the supply of local or Michigan produce available within the one-mile radius of the farmers market. The one-mile radius was used to demonstrate what is available to a consumer who might be inclined to patron the farmers market based on its location. This was used to determine why a consumer would choose the farmers market over a local grocery to shop for fresh local produce.

Produce Retail Outlet Survey:

On March 29, 2006 a “snapshot” survey was performed of the grocery retailers identified by ESRI retail market data within the one-mile radius of the Fulton Street Farmers Market. By narrowing the definition of the Grocery Store category to “445110: Grocery Stores-Not Convenience Stores” (eliminating liquor stores or stores not selling produce) only two retailers were excluded. Of the remaining seven, two were excluded due to data inaccuracies*. The remaining retailers included in the survey are identified below.

Grocery (non-convenience stores) identified within one mile of the Fulton Street Farmers Market	Location in Grand Rapids, MI
Wealthy Market	1012 Wealthy St SE
Sami’s Party Store	1499 Wealthy Street
Sam’s Supermarket (Jabbar Inc)	601 East Ave
Family Fare (Formerly Fulton Heights D&W)	1415 Fulton St
Duthler’s	425 Fuller Ave
Meijer	2425 Alpine Ave NW

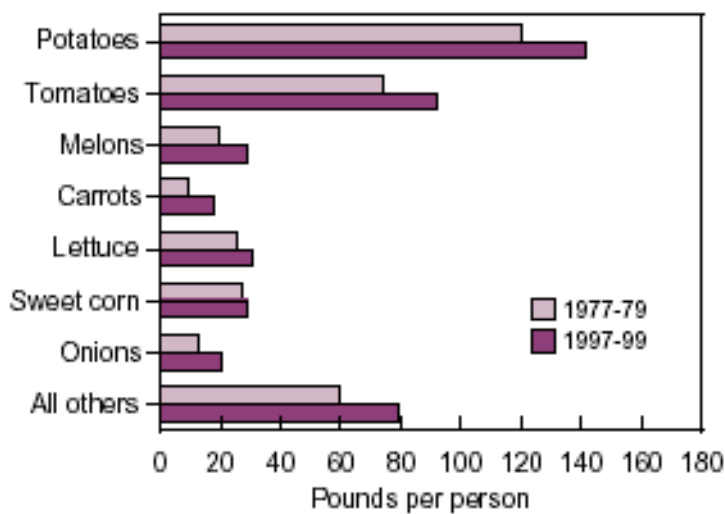
Table 7: Retail outlets identified through ESRI Retail Market report from March 2006

Although it is outside of the one-mile radius, Meijer was included to give a comparison between small local groceries and large regional corporate grocery outlets. It was also included to show what is available to Brikyaat and Grand Rapids shoppers if they have access to transportation and do not shop in local outlets.

The surveyed items were a compilation from a list of the top consumed produce products nationally, and the top Michigan Produce commodities. The top nine Michigan commodities cited in the USDA Michigan 2004-2005 Highlight report were apples, tart cherries, peaches, blueberries, carrots, cucumbers, onions, pumpkins and squash. A USDA report ranking the top vegetables consumed nation wide includes potatoes, tomatoes, melons, carrots, lettuce, sweet corn, and onions (See Graph 6) (Pollack & ERS USDA).

* McCain Foods at 55 Lowell Ave NE was verified by a site visit to be a residence in a residential area, not in fact a retail outlet. Dairy Mart at 1610 Alpine Ave was incorrectly included in the one-mile range, when in fact, it was over 2.5 miles from the Fulton Street Farmer’s Market.

Major vegetables and melon consumed in the United States



Source: Economic Research Service, USDA.

Graph 6: USDA, Major vegetables and melons consumed in the United States, 1977 - 1999

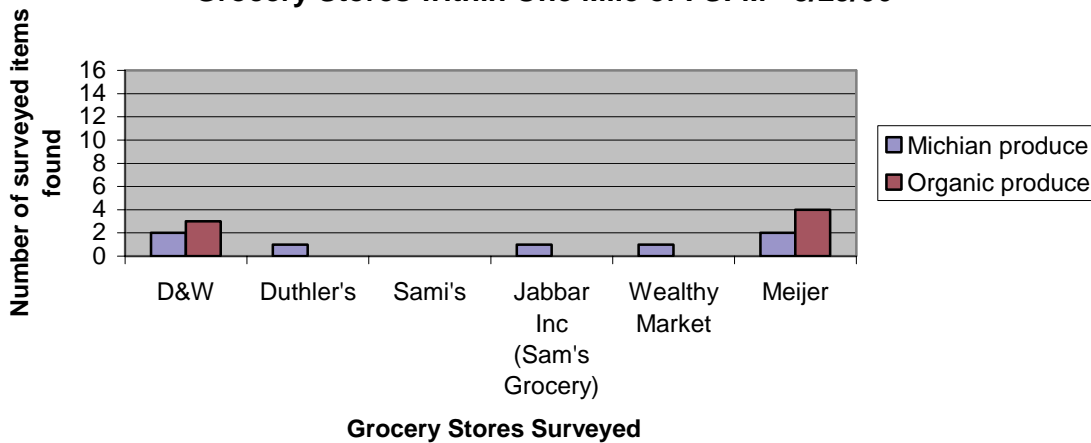
With an overlap of several products, sixteen produce products in total were surveyed (see survey in appendix F). The survey involved visiting the six grocery stores listed in table 7. By looking at package labels, stickers on the items, and the shipping boxes the products were displayed in, the origin of the product was recorded. If products were not found, nothing was recorded. If a product was found, but it lacked any reference to its origin, a question mark was recorded. Some stores offered a variety in one product and all of the places of origin were recorded. Only the location of growth and harvest is recorded, not the location from which the product was distributed from.

The survey also included the following open-ended questions to produce department managers:

- “Do you order or offer local (Michigan or region) produce when it is in season?”
- “Can you control the localness of the produce you order or does your distributor?”

These questions were meant to gain insight into the current or potential availability of local Michigan produce in these competing outlets. Information was also collected for organic products, because organic products are also unaccounted for in the ESRI data and are a significant consumer demand both nationally and amongst the Fulton Street Farmers Market customers.

Number of Michigan and Organic Produce Items Found in Grocery Stores within One Mile of FSFM - 3/29/06



Graph 7: Michigan and Organic Produce Items within 1 mile of Fulton Street Farmers Market

The produce supply survey found that three of the six grocery stores surveyed (Sami's, Jabbar Inc, Wealthy Market) were “party stores”, offering mostly beverages and processed foods, with few or no produce items (see Graph 7). This may indicate that the demand for produce, a fresh variety of fruits and vegetables, may not be met by all grocery retail outlets included in the surplus.

Of the other two stores in the one-mile retail market area, both were small grocery stores that offered a varied selection of fruits and vegetables. Meijer, however, had the most abundant and diverse varieties of produce available, yet scored similarly as far as the number of surveyed Michigan or organic produce items. See Appendix G for store survey results.

The open-ended responses to the survey found that Michigan produce is more prominent during the summer for several reasons. Michigan produce is cheaper to order for resale than “long distance,” out of state food. Secondly, Michigan is a prominent producer in the region for products such as apples, asparagus, cherries, and blueberries, when they are in season. Thirdly, managers stated that the local produce was simply “better quality”. The assistant produce manager at the Family Fare (D & W) grocery noted that in the summer months, they contract directly with a few local farmers for produce, especially corn, and order fresh herbs from a local producer through their distributor. However, as the store transitions to its new management, that policy could change.

It is important to note that the time of year that this snapshot survey took place plays an important role. March is not the best time to find Michigan produce on store shelves, because it is too cold and not the growing season. A repeat of this survey would be most effective if performed several times throughout the growing season or at least once during the summer growing months. This would create a more useful documentation of the competitive supply of Michigan produce in the retail market area of the Fulton Street Farmers Market.

In addition to the survey results, the produce distribution company that supplied D&W and Duthler’s, Heeren Brothers Produce of Grand Rapids, was contacted to gather information about the supply and availability of Michigan or locally grown produce in local retail outlets. In a phone interview with the president of Heeren Bros. (Jim Heeren), he said that the company buys Michigan produce primarily from larger commercial farm operations all over the state, but they sometimes do buy from smaller farmers as well, depending on the produce item. They order Michigan produce for three main reasons. First, Heeren Bros. buys Michigan produce because it is “homegrown”. Secondly, and related to the first reason, there is less freight cost for local grown produce. Thirdly, many produce items are available exclusively in Michigan because the growing season for that product in other areas is over. It is simply “Michigan’s season” for that product, and Michigan is supplying the entire region or nation.

Uniqueness of Farmer Market Products:

The local produce in grocery outlets during the growing season may be local to Michigan, but the localness of farmers market produce is much closer, often by less than 10 or 20 miles. Farmers markets like the Fulton Street Farmers Market uniquely meet the demand for high quality, fresh, and locally grown produce. An inventory of the product mix available during the 2005 growing season revealed that 12 of the 16 products surveyed in the grocery stores were among the 15 products most commonly offered by Fulton Street vendors (about 38 specific product categories were identified). All of the surveyed items were shown to be available by at least five Fulton Street Farmers Market vendors through the growing season. See Appendix H for inventory.

Product Surveyed in Area Grocery Stores	Approximate # of Fulton Street Farmers Market vendors offering product in 2005
Beans	17
Tomatoes	15
Cucumbers	12
Squash	12
Pumpkins	11
Onions	11
Apples	11
Cabbage	10
Corn	10
Potatoes	10
Carrots	9
Celery	8
Cherries	7
Lettuce	7
Peaches	7
Blueberries	5

Table 8: Data from 2005 vendor product mix inventory provided by FSFM management

In other words, the Fulton Street Farmers Market provides the top Michigan and popular produce items available in stores, but with the unique added value of being locally produced.

Growing Season Patterns/Sustainability of Production:

As already mentioned, Michigan is a seasonal agriculture state and little is produced during the cold months unless growers use greenhouses or other alternative growing practices. Even Michigan apples are not grown and harvested through winter, but are sold from storage. As the managers of the local grocery stores stated, Michigan produce can easily be found on their shelves when in season. During out of season months the stores must bring in produce from places such as California, Mexico, and Chile. Customers continue to buy out of season food at retail outlets during the winter, reinforcing the demand for produce year round.

At the Fulton Street Farmers Market farmer forum held on March 6, 2006, a small survey was distributed amongst the attendees. The survey was voluntary, and ten were returned out of about 45 attendees. All attendees at the forum were not vendors. Of the respondents, five stated that they were capable of or do produce their product year round. Of the respondents that did not grow all year, all said they would *not* consider producing through the winter even if the farmers market were open year round. However, of those who already are producing beyond the market season, all said they would or could work toward selling year round at the farmers market. See Appendices I and J for Farmer Forum Survey and Responses.

While the summer months offer a substantial supply of products, natural constraints of the growing seasons limit the capabilities of growers to provide a sustainable supply of local produce year round.

Matching Product Mix to Target Demand:

The demographics of the Fulton Street Farmers Market local customer base can help determine how the product/vendor mix can be expanded to encourage market growth. As the produce availability survey and interview with Heeren Bros revealed, the Fulton Street Farmers Market target demand includes consumers seeking locally grown high quality fresh produce and consumers who desire interaction with their food producers. Farmers markets also can serve as outlets for traditional ethnic and cultural niche products to be bought and sold (Smalley, 2004).

Another demographic demand is low-income consumers. Customers surveyed in 2005 cited price as a top reason for shopping at the Fulton Street Farmers Market. Direct marketing allows produce to be sold without the middleman cost and the localness of the food eliminates costs associated with transportation in the price of food. Therefore, the consumer can purchase higher quality produce at a cheaper price than at a conventional grocery store.

As previously mentioned, not all grocery outlets in the one-mile area of the Fulton Street Farmers Market are supplying the fresh nutritious food demanded by the community. It is important to note that all stores included in the survey advertised that they accept Bridge Cards or WIC coupons, even in cases where they had little selection of nutritious foods on their shelves. Fulton Street Farmers Market has the potential to be an

alternative for people in the Brikyaat neighborhood who want to purchase fresh and nutritious foods at affordable prices with WIC coupons or Bridge Cards.

Ambience, Culture:

Many customers surveyed expressed that the atmosphere or experience of the farmers market is what drew them back again. The experience of interacting directly with growers and farmers and participating actively with the focal food system are experiences not found in grocery stores. This is a feature unique to farmers markets and may be a top reason one would choose to shop at the farmers market for a fresh local tomato instead of a traditional grocery store. Freshness, quality, pricing, local food and social atmosphere are all factors in customer use of farmers markets, along with appeal of specialty, value added and crafts not available at other venues.

Supply Summary:

The Fulton Street Farmers Market is situated in the rich southwest agricultural region of Michigan, giving it access to many growers who could potentially vend at the market. Although surrounded by several other retail outlets that supposedly carry produce, the survey conducted as part of this report found that many of these grocery stores are limited in their selection of fresh and truly local produce (with consideration of the season they were studied). Not only does the Fulton Street Farmers Market offer all of the same items included in the survey, the farmers market also has a unique advantage of providing local produce.

The ability to offer local produce year round is naturally limited by Michigan's climate changes and seasonality. Only produce farmers with green houses or other alternative methods could offer a year round supply of fresh fruit and vegetables. Other vendors who produce products like meat, cheese, eggs, or crafts are not limited.

The acceptance of Project Fresh coupons enables the farmers market to supply nutritious and affordable fresh food to low-income consumers. The Fulton Street Farmers Market offers an *experience* unavailable in other surrounding retail outlets for produce. Shopping in the open air and interacting directly with the producers of the product being purchased is simply unavailable in stores, even in stores that might have that very producer's product sitting on the shelf. The target demand of consumers for local and high quality foods can be met through the Fulton Street Farmers Market.

Retail Market Study Summary:

Supply + Demand = Market Potential

The following are observations and conclusions from the retail market analysis:

- The grocery stores in the Fulton Street Farmers Market retail area are not all meeting the consumer demands for fresh produce
- Fulton Street Farmers Market primarily vends local fresh produce
- The farmers market also has a diverse customer base across the Grand Rapids area
- Fresh produce consumption in Grand Rapids is increasing
- High quality and organic products are a demand of middle and upper income farmers market customers
- Conventional low priced produce is a demand of lower income farmers market customers
- Participation in Food Assistance programs like Project Fresh and EBT access accommodates lower income customers
- Fulton Street Farmers Market is the only farmers market in Grand Rapids and has an advantage on the local produce market
- Local grocery retail outlets can offer Michigan produce, but not necessarily a wide “local” produce selection
- Local produce is a valued commodity by consumers because of its perceived high quality and freshness
- Fulton Street Farmers Market offers a large selection of a wide variety of local produce
- Michigan is a seasonal growing state, limiting the viability of a local food based farmers market year round
- Certain products, like cheeses, meats, honey, apples or breads, are available year round, while fresh produce is not available without greenhouse capabilities
- Only Fulton Street Farmers Market offers direct marketing for producers and consumers
- Experience of an open air farmers market is unique from other retail vendors in the area
- Fulton Street Farmers Market is located in a rich agricultural region, allowing it the potential to expand.

D. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Analysis

A strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis is a strategic planning tool that allows planners and communities to evaluate the current conditions within the boundaries of a project or plan. Such an evaluation occurs by assessing the existing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (constraints) of the project area. This method identifies the assets that have the highest potential for growth and enhancement, as well as the areas that could benefit the most from the implementation of the recommendations set forth in the next section.

The in depth information regarding the status of physical, organizational, and market trends now allows us to summarize the current condition of the Fulton Street Farmers Market through a S.W.O.T. analysis.

Strengths:

- *Surplus of vendors*
- *Well attended by customers*
- *Located in a diverse, walkable neighborhood*
- *Close proximity to downtown Grand Rapids*
- *Supportive Neighborhood Association*
- *Draws from a large, profitable agricultural region*

Weaknesses:

- *Functional design of market and parking areas*
- *Visibility and attractiveness to potential new customers*
- *Lack of strong organizational policies*

Opportunities:

- *Diversification of products available*
- *Increase in size of market and number of vendors*
- *Facilitation of Federal and State assistance programs*
- *Increase in marketing and exposure*
- *Role as neighborhood gathering place*

Threats:

- *Seasonality of agricultural industry*
- *Traffic endangers pedestrian safety*
- *Redevelopment may occur during market season*

IV. Recommendations

The S.W.O.T. analysis provides information on the current status of the Fulton Street Farmers Market and the areas for improvement identified in this analysis will be addressed in the following recommendations. These recommendations encompass strategies to reach the goals of the Fulton Street Farmers Market by improving function of the market and incorporating plans for future expansion. The following recommendations combine the analysis of the market's physical, economic, and organizational status with examples of national and local farmers markets as best practice models.

The strengths of the Fulton Street Farmers Market identified in the S.W.O.T. analysis include the surplus of vendors, attendance at the market, walkable location, proximity to downtown Grand Rapids, support of the neighborhood association, strength of the agricultural region, and the historic setting of the market. It is our intent that these strengths will be maintained and enhanced through the following recommendations.

Issue: Functional design of market and parking areas.

The Midtown Neighborhood Association is currently working with a consulting firm to develop a plan for future land uses in the Brikyaat neighborhood that will encompass future expansion of the farmers market. Throughout this planning process, parties involved have alluded to a number of problems with the current site design that range from a lack of trash receptacles, to the overall function and form of the market. While the consultants will develop long range planning goals for the market and neighborhood, our recommendations will focus on improvements to the function of this site in the short term and issues that should be considered in the long term redevelopment of the market.

Recommended Solutions:

- ***Increase auxiliary off site parking partnerships.***

The current partnerships between the farmers market and the Salvation Army and the Alpha Women's Center demonstrate that shared parking relationships can be beneficial to all parties involved. Providing additional off site parking options may alleviate congestion at the market until significant changes can be made to increase parking on site.

 - Customers should continue to be encouraged to park off site at the Salvation Army and the Alpha Women's Center.
 - Additional partnerships could be developed to utilize parking at Houseman Field and in cooperation with the local business corridor along East Fulton Street (See Figure 10). *For example, exchange free advertising at the market to local businesses that allow market customers to use their parking lots.*
- ❖ **Relevant Case Study: Muskegon Heights Farmers Market, MI**

In order to prevent on site parking congestion, this market utilizes several off site parking locations. See appendix C, Case 9 for more information.

Parking Options for Market Customers

- Current on site parking
- Current off site parking
- Potential off site parking

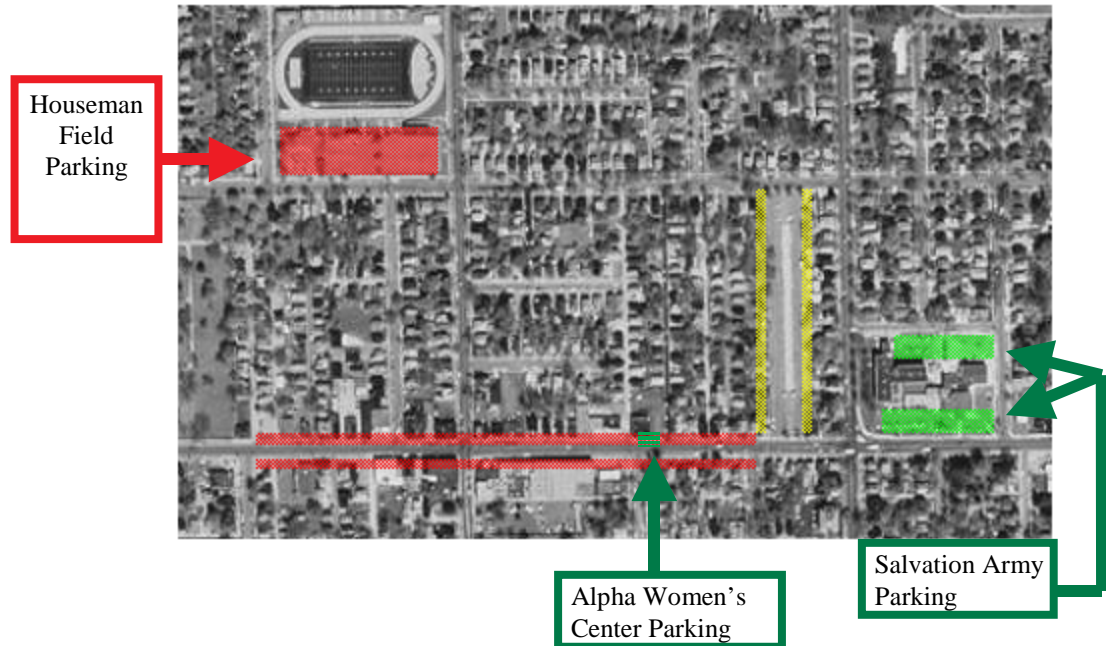


Figure 10: Current on site, current off site, and potential off site parking

- ***Provide transportation options for market customers.***
By providing customers of the Fulton Street Farmers Market with viable alternatives for accessing the market, the demand for on site parking at the market may decrease.
 - Promote use of the RAPID bus system. Provide market customers with bus route information in a visible and accessible format. Encourage the City of Grand Rapids to increase visibility and attractiveness of the bus stop at Fulton and Fuller by adding seating and greenery.
 - Provide bike racks at the market in a safe and accessible location to avoid interference with automobile traffic.
 - Increase pedestrian connectivity to the surrounding neighborhoods to increase walkability to and from the market.
 - ❖ **Relevant Case Study:** Fondy Farmers Market, Milwaukee, WI
This market embodies a variety of transportation options. See Appendix A, Case 4 for more information.

- ***Increase on site parking in future redevelopment plans.***
It is our hope that the previous recommendations will alleviate some of the demand for on site parking; however, it is evident that a demand for convenient on site parking may still exist.
 - According to the Michigan State University Cooperative Extension Service, an equation to calculate an estimate for needed parking follows (CES, 1983):

Number of vendors * 3 customers – vendor parking = Number of customer parking spots

For the Fulton Street Farmers Market: $(122 * 3) - 122 = 244$ spaces

Currently, the Fulton Street Farmers Market provides only 159 customer spaces. Therefore, we would recommend that the future site allow for 85 additional customer parking spaces.

- It is our recommendation that onsite parking in future redevelopment be utilized for a variety of different functions and not just service the market in order to maintain the urban feel and character of the Fulton Street Farmers Market.
 - ❖ **Relevant Case Study:** Eighth Street Market Place, Holland, MI
This market serves as an example for a market with plenty of on site parking, as it shares parking with the Civic Center and the downtown business district. See Appendix C, Case 3 for more information.
- ***Require or provide uniform canvasses for shelter.***
These canvasses could be a permanent fixture while the market is in season, adding to the identity and visibility of the market, and could be removed in the off-season and preserved by the market manger. Providing canvasses to the vendors will result in a more uniform look to the site.
 - Canvas awnings can serve as a bright and attractive facelift for the structure, while allowing for increased protection from the elements. *Consider using sailboat sails. They are a unique alternative to canvas, and could provide a durable, lightweight, entertaining roofing option.*
 - ❖ **Relevant Case Study:** Eighth Street Market Place, Holland, MI
This market has a recently redeveloped multipurpose, stretched-canvas structure that is attractive and provides for market identity. See Appendix C, Case 3 for more information.

- ***Improve walkability and traffic flow on site.***
 Considerable foot and vehicular traffic characterize farmers markets. It will be essential for the market to separate these uses in future redevelopment in order to increase safety and decrease congestion on site.
 - Encourage the City of Grand Rapids to mark parking spaces with new lines in order to utilize the space effectively and add pedestrian walkway striping.
 - Exits and entrances should be well marked with larger signs directing one-way aisles.
 - It is important to make a clear separation between pedestrian walkways and traffic routes. *Landscaping can serve as an aesthetically pleasing way to separate pedestrian and automobile space on the site.*

- ***Introduce additional public space into the market to increase its role as a neighborhood gathering place.***
 A clean, public or “green” space promotes an image of comfort. Enhancing the landscape of the market is a low-cost, short term solution that will not only improve the overall character, but will also address the communities expressed interest in establishing a neighborhood center abundant with “green” or public space.
 - Future design of the Fulton Street Farmers Market should be flexible to allow other uses on non-market days that can connect the market to neighborhood activities and encourage people to use the space provided by the market. *Other uses could include a multicultural heritage festival or the Midtown Neighborhood Association’s meetings and events.*
 - ❖ **Relevant Case Study:** Eighth Street Market Place, Holland, MI
 This market connects to the downtown area and encompasses a multi-purpose structure that functions for a variety of public uses. See Appendix C, Case 3 for more information.

- **Increase market frontage on major thoroughfares to increase visibility.**
It is our recommendation that the properties located to the east of the market along Fuller Street be given close consideration as sites for potential expansion of the Fulton Street Farmers Market, as the increased frontage on this major thoroughfare will increase the visibility of the market and long term success.
 - In future redevelopment plans it will be necessary to consider the condition of all properties that abut the market.
 - For evaluation of abutting properties, see the Spring 2006 MSU Practicum Project: *Brikyaat Neighborhood Revitalization Project: Grand Rapids, Michigan*, which assessed housing throughout the Brikyaat neighborhood.
- ❖ **Relevant Case Study: Fondy Farmers Market in Milwaukee, WI**
This market provides an example of a farmer's market that has expanded to include frontage on a redeveloping business corridor. See Appendix A, Case 4 for more information.

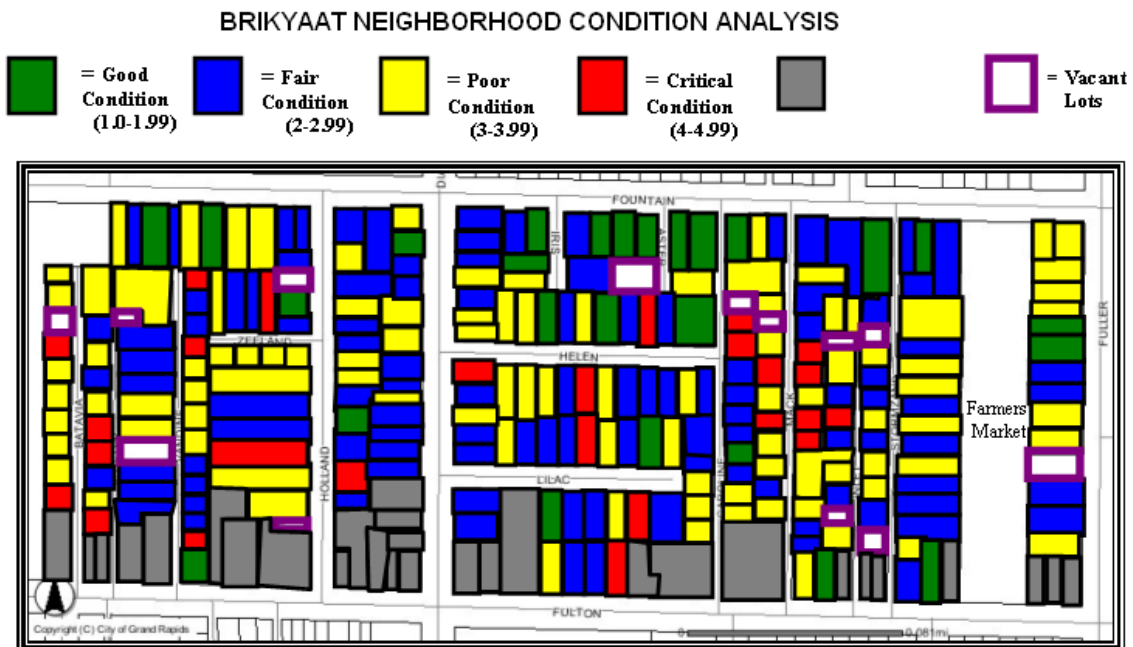


Figure 11: Housing Analysis - *Brikyaat Neighborhood Revitalization Project: Grand Rapids, Michigan*

- ***Include necessary infrastructure to sustain market expansion.***
 Feasibility and consumer demand trends are integral to the design of any future investments in the structure of the Fulton Street Farmers Market. Year round markets in Michigan must rely on distributor sales (resellers) of non-local produce, growers with greenhouses, or producers of non-seasonal products, such as breads, cheese or meats.
 - A future structure should have an enclosed area for the winter months that includes coolers and display cases to enable expansion of meat, cheese, and eggs or other products that are produced year round.
 - A future structure should maximize outdoor space and minimize indoor space, following the seasonality of the volume of products available, and decreased patronage in the winter. *One suggestion would be for the structure to have large overhangs that will shelter outdoor sellers when in season, but would utilize a smaller enclosed area for a central aisle.*
 - Include a licensed kitchen in the new facility to bring new vendors, give space for sampling in accordance with health codes on the spot, and give space for community nutrition programs.
 - ❖ **Relevant Case Study:** Fondy Farmers Market in Milwaukee, WI
 This market has an on site kitchen incubator for business and demonstration purposes as part of their programs. See Appendix A, Case 4 for more information.

- ***Explore funding options for market expansion.***
 Since the Midtown Neighborhood Association has taken over management of the market, the needs for additional funding in order to increase market size, improve design, update facilities and increase advertising have all become goals for the farmers market.
 Local Sources:
 - Sell promotional items and fundraise among loyal customers to advertise the market and raise money for needed improvements. *T-shirts and shopping bags with the market logo could be sold at the market to raise money. A Fulton Street Farmers Market Cookbook that includes recipes for fresh produce could also be sold. Hold a raffle or auction.*
 - Work collectively with the East Fulton Business District and the Grand Rapids Downtown Development Authority.
 - Seek grants provided by the Grand Rapids Community Foundation for support of vibrant neighborhoods.
 - ❖ **Relevant Case Studies:** Adams and Vermont Farmers Market, Anacostia Farmers Market, Eastern Market, Allen Street Neighborhood Farmers Market. For more information on these examples, see Appendix A, Case 3.

National Sources:

- The USDA has multiple grants for farmers market projects. Examples include the USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program grant and the Farmers Market Promotion Program, which help improve and expand farmers markets. For specific information, opportunities and applications, visit <http://www.farmersmarketsusa.org>
- Contact the Michigan Department of Agriculture to inquire about future funding programs the Fulton Street Farmers Market can utilize.

Private Funding:

- Project for Public Spaces grants have been used to fund planning, program implementation, and advancement initiatives for farmers markets nationwide. These grants are awarded to markets with sustainable operation goals, vibrant public spaces, job growth opportunities, accessibility (Electronic Benefits Transfer) hard costs and soft costs associated with market projects.

❖ **Relevant Case Studies:** Allen Street Farmers Market of Lansing, MI, and the Eastern Market of Detroit, MI, have both received grants from the Project for Public Spaces. For more information, see Appendix C, Case 1 for Allen Street and Appendix C, Case 4 for Eastern Market.

- ***Seek a temporary offsite location during market redevelopment.***

A temporary spot would ideally be near the current location, to not disrupt the connection of the market with the East Fuller business area and Midtown Neighborhood Association.

- Post directions to the temporary location at the market construction site so uninformed customers know where to find the temporary location.
- Work with the City of Grand Rapids for use of another city owned space, such as Fuller Park on Fuller Street. .
- ❖ **Relevant Case Study:** Fondy Farmers Market of Milwaukee is an example of phased growth that may be applicable to Fulton Street Farmers Markets future growth. See Appendix A, Case 4 for more information.

Issue: Visibility and Attractiveness to Potential New Customers

Currently, the Fulton Street Farmers Market is situated on a site with limited physical visibility to market customers. Some advertising and promotion is done for the market, but the funds available for this limit the marketing options available. The following recommendations will address ways that the Fulton Street Farmers Market can fulfill its role as the premier farmers market in Grand Rapids and attract additional customers to the market.

Recommended Solutions:

- ***Increase identifying and informational market signage.***

By increasing signage on site, the market will increase its exposure to passersby who may return as market customers. In addition, clear presentation of the market's hours, products, and amenities would be beneficial to vendors and customers. Off site signage located in the downtown and on nearby highways could direct potential customers to the market; however, current MDOT and City of Grand Rapids regulations restrict the type and size of signage allowed.

 - Create large, attractive signage at both ends of the market to encourage use of the different entry points and to advertise days and hours of operation.
 - Use signage to identify vendors within the market that are accepting Project Fresh Coupons (WIC), using EBT machines, selling organics, or who are growers and producers.
 - Although permanent off site signage is difficult to obtain, small temporary signs could be posted at intersections on market days, advertising and directing potential customers to the market.
- ❖ ***Relevant Case Study: Eastern Market, Detroit, MI***

This market provides several great examples of attractive, prominent onsite signage to identify the market. For more information, see Appendix C, Case 4.
- ❖ ***Relevant Case Study: Flint Farmers Market, MI***

This market has uniform signage at each vendor stall to identify products and capabilities for EBT acceptance. For more information, see Appendix C, Case 5.
- ***Expand marketing and exposure to the larger Grand Rapids area.***

In order to efficiently advertise the market, a publicity budget and marketing plan should be evaluated before each season. If a farmers market committee exists, the budget and advertising outlets could be determined among the committee.

 - A common and aesthetically pleasing logo should be created. This logo should be used on merchandise, signage, and other forms of advertisements to create a cohesive theme and increase the market identity. A slogan can accompany the logo on signage and/or other forms of advertisements.
 - Advertising in the Midtown Neighborhood, especially the Brikyaat area, could attract a new consumer base from the neighborhood.

- There are several advertising mediums in which the farmers market could gain exposure. Careful analysis of the costs and benefits of all marketing expenses should be considered by the market.
 - Collaborate with area business associations within Uptown. This will allow for the sharing of customers and increased sales over all.
 - Integration of community partnerships and promotion of community events can build relationships while benefiting the market through advertising and promotional materials for events. This could also expand the use of the market for rental purposes on non-market days.
 - ❖ **Relevant Case Study:** Davis Farmers Market of Davis, CA, includes the local chambers of commerce on their committee and has included area businesses in past market events. See Appendix A, Case 1 for more information.
- ***Develop an accessible, attractive website.***
 Today's society relies heavily on information technology, especially the Internet, to obtain and share knowledge. Many of the farmers markets studied in this report offered very informative websites. The establishment of a website specifically for the Fulton Street Farmers Market could serve as both a source of information and a form of advertisement. The website can include relevant information about the market including:
 - Introduction that illustrates the market as both a great place to obtain fresh produce and socialize with the community
 - The address, a map, and local driving directions of the farmers market
 - Days, hours, and months of operation
 - Contact Information: Address, Email Address, and a telephone number
 - Picture/s of the market in operation
 - Calendar of Events
 - Seasonal Produce listing
 - Vendor rules and regulations
 - Potential vendor information: How to become a vendor and/or ways to be added to the waiting list
 - A link to Project Fresh information
 - Parking information: location and free parking
 - Farmers Market Committee meeting schedule and meeting minutes (if applicable)
 - On line newsletter
 - Volunteers/ Friends of the Market page: listing volunteer opportunities or where to send contributions.
 - Nutrition information regarding fresh produce, perhaps with recipes
 - Links to information on the importance of supporting local agriculture
 - ❖ **Relevant Case Study:** Royal Oak Farmers Market, MI
 This market has a good example of an effective market webpage that can be found online at: <http://www.ci.royal-oak.mi.us/farmersmkt>. See Appendix C, Case 10 for more information.

- ***Expand hours of operation to attract additional customers.***
 Afternoon and evening hours may attract a new customer base that is currently not able to take advantage of morning weekday hours. If successful, evening hours could alleviate some of the congestion on Saturdays by spreading sales throughout the week, without decreasing sales as a whole. Additionally, the consumer base might increase to include new shoppers, resulting in an increase in sales overall.
 - Farmers identified Wednesday evening as a potential time for expanded market hours.
 - Vendors can volunteer to be part of the trial, and should track their sales over the trial period, to see if consumers are catching on, and if sales are increasing in numbers.
 - The trial should last no less than four weeks, but could continue as long as vendors can commit too. If successful, Wednesday evening hours could be a formal part of the 2007 season.
 - Identify security and lighting issues inherent in a nighttime market and address these with the help of planning and police departments.

- ***Develop a separate artisan market.***
 This will phase crafters out of the farmers market over time and add an additional attracting event that utilizes the market structure.
 - Gathering activities, such as music and community activities, could be shifted to the artisan market. These activities encourage people to hang around and use the market space as a gathering place. However, for produce and food vendors, activities like this increase congestion and slow customer turn over. Crafters have less consumer attraction than food sellers, therefore, their sales could benefit from the additional foot traffic brought in by gathering activities.
 - Ideally, music and activities could begin as the farmer market winds down (the traditional closing time), and a transition of farmer market vendors to art vendors can take place as food vendors sell out and leave. If moving toward a separate artisan market is not feasible consider a limited number of crafter spaces, and cycle crafters through the limited spaces.
 - The artisan market could occur after farmers market hours or on non-farmers market days. Possible time for an artisan market might include Saturday afternoons.

- ***Encourage a new sector of ethnic vendors and customers***
Demographics show that there is potential to increase the demand for ethnic food products. By including these niche products, the market could attract this local consumer market.
 - Encourage the sale of specialty ingredients and prepared foods. Existing ethnic food grocers may be encouraged to create a “satellite” extension at the market to vend their top selling product.
 - Advertise in community cultural newspapers or Spanish language newspapers. Feature ethnic vendors and products in these ads.
 - ❖ **Relevant Case Study:** Adams and Vermont Farmers Market in California is an example of a market that attracts a strong local Hispanic customer base. See Appendix A, Case 3 for more information.

- ***Expand market operations to meet the needs of low-income consumers.***
The market analysis showed a demand for inexpensive fresh produce, which is not available to consumers through all the grocery outlets in the area. The Fulton Street Farmers Market creates an opportunity for shoppers to purchase affordable, healthy food, right in their own neighborhood.
 - The mix of traditional and organic products is an asset that should be preserved in future product mix. Traditional produce is often more affordable while organic produce caters to middle and upper middle-income shoppers who will spend more.
 - Implement a system for efficient acceptance of Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT). *One system could utilize volunteers to run transactions to and from the EBT machine located in the Midtown Neighborhood Office. These volunteers would fill out the necessary paper work and take a receipt for this purchase back to the vendor so the customer can collect their produce. This system would increase privacy for customers utilizing EBT and decrease the amount of work required by the vendor.*
 - ❖ **Relevant Case Study:** Allen Street Farmers Market in Lansing, MI, has managed to merge the market for local organic produce with a demand for affordability and access in a low-income community. For more information, see Appendix C, Case 1.

Issue: Lack of strong organizational policies

The Fulton Street Farmers Market manager is the only staff member at the market and is responsible for managing all aspects of the market's operation. The recent change in market management and the lack of staff at the market has resulted in a lack of communication of market policies to vendors. Improvement in this area could increase the overall function and organization of the market.

Recommended Solutions:

- ***Form a Farmers Market Advisory Committee.***

It is highly recommended that a farmers market advisory committee be formed to increase community and vendor input in market operations.

 - The market manager could serve as the moderator of the committee, while members could represent market interests. *One possible committee member distribution has a total of seven members including: 2 seasonal vendors, 2 daily vendors, 1 craft vendor, 1 member of the Midtown Neighborhood Association, and 1 representative from East Fulton Business Association*
 - Rules should be recommended to determine the process for the terms and rotations of members. Members of the committee, excluding the market manager, could serve for 2-year terms. Not all committee members' terms should begin or end at the same time, to avoid for complete turnover in committee input. In order for this to occur, the members chosen for the first committee should be assigned to both one and two year terms.
 - Prior to the formation of the committee, the Midtown Neighborhood Association should be responsible for formulating the rules that dictate member selection, member term limits, and membership responsibilities.
 - ❖ **Relevant Case Study:** Royal Oak Farmers Market, MI
This market utilizes a committee structure to maintain a successful market. For more information, see Appendix C, Case 10.

- ***Implement a cancellation policy for seasonal vendors.***

A cancellation policy should be put in place for seasonal vendors in order to allow daily vendors to utilize unused space at the market efficiently and fairly. The farmers market committee should determine the cancellation policy. Such a policy could require that a seasonal vendor notify the farmers market manager in advance if they are not going to sell at the market on a particular day.

 - The farmers market committee should determine the appropriate number of days prior to a market day that a vendor can cancel without penalty and the policy to assign available stalls.
 - ❖ **Relevant Case Study:** Royal Oak Farmers Market, MI
This market requires vendors to notify the market seven days prior to any market day that they do not plan to attend. For more information, see Appendix C, Case 10.

- ***Implementation of an ideal fee structure.***

The 2005 growing season was the first year that the Fulton Street Farmers Market operated under the management of the Midtown Neighborhood Association and the new market manager. This change brings about a significant opportunity for the new management to improve record keeping and collection of information on vendor sales at the market. Information on the success of vendor sales is necessary to determine if the current fee structure is appropriate, and if an adjustment could increase market revenue without adversely impacting vendors.

 - The market needs to implement rules that will eliminate these obstacles to assessing the financial status of the Fulton Street Farmers Market.
 - Implement a system to collect vendor sales information. *One suggested method allows for vendors to anonymously report sales through the use of a ballot box, which protects the privacy of individual incomes.*
 - Inform vendors of the findings of the sales data collected. Vendors, as well as management, can benefit from sharing reports of overall revenue or average stall revenue.
 - ❖ **Relevant Case Study:** Flint Farmers Market, MI
This market uses the anonymous reporting system with their vendors. The market manager walks vendor to vendor with a container to collect nameless sales reports in. For more information, see Appendix C, Case 5.

- ***Develop a product mix policy for the market.***

Crafts were shown to be of low demand by existing market customers, but will serve as the livelihood of the market in year-round operation due to the limitations of the growing season. Further expansion of the farmers market should meet the demand for more locally produced food products. A policy for the Fulton Street Farmers Market about food and nonfood product vendors should take these points into account.

 - Perform a Rapid Market Assessment to analyze the available product mix for the market during the growing season.
 - Prioritize the consumer demanded items in the product mix. Find a policy that will create a product mix that mirrors the consumer demand gradient (from most demanded to least demanded): Fresh local produce, organic produce, flowers, baked goods/breads, prepared foods, and crafts. (See 2005 customer survey response in appendix for details)
 - Other Michigan markets have policies that limit crafters to hand made crafts, which promotes local artisans. Avoid bringing in new craft vendors that do not make their items, as successful farmers markets increase direct marketing between producer and consumer.
 - ❖ **Relevant Case Studies:** Eighth Street Market Place, Holland, MI, limits craft vendors to gardening and landscape themed products. Allen Street Farmers Market of Lansing, MI, further limits vendors to local and organic vendors. See Appendix C, Case 3 for Eighth Street and Appendix C, Case 1 for Allen Street Market.

- ***Increase in community collaboration.***

- Advocates for special constituencies can be found in local volunteer agencies, such as MSU Extension, ACCESS, Meals on Wheels and Second Harvest Gleaners Food Bank of West Michigan and local churches.
- Public awareness campaigns can be utilized through non-profit and sustainability focused groups such as the Grand Rapids Food Council (educating about local food and urban agriculture) and GrandNet (specializing in communication and website design support for non-profits), and local 4-H, grade schools and churches for collaborative health education programs.
- ❖ **Relevant Case Study:** Look to Eastern Market in Detroit, MI, for good organizational relationship structures. See Appendix C, Case 4.

- ***Strengthen volunteer base.***

A strong volunteer base could aid in maintaining and fostering the growth of the farmers market. Allen Street Farmers Market of Lansing, MI, has utilized volunteers to assist in food assistance program implementation and general market operations.

Volunteers can be useful for many aspects of the farmers market:

- Volunteers can assist vendors in processing EBT transactions and Project Fresh paper work.
- Volunteers can implement Rapid Market Assessments, or perform customer counts and produce inventories.
- Volunteers can staff festivals and special events at the market.
- Volunteers can assist the market manager with basic office work.
- Volunteer recruitment can take place in person during market hours, through a market website, or through free volunteer placement websites such as volunteermatch.com and idealist.org.

V. Conclusion

The Fulton Street Farmers Market has developed a strong customer and vendor base over generations. This longevity and historical significance has made it very successful, despite site design limitations and management transitions. This study found the Fulton Street Farmers Market to be a unique outlet of local food for the Grand Rapids community and future success of the market can built upon this strength. Although the physical constraints on parking, vendor space, and congestion may ultimately be resolved by redeveloping the site for better efficiency in the future, short term and interim solutions can mitigate present challenges so that the Fulton Street Farmers Market can maintain its current success and grow in the future through community communication, collaboration, and creativity.

The recommendations set forth in this report are best implemented as phases in a time continuum. Beginning with short-term strategies, the 2006 season can serve as the time to form a Fulton Street Farmers Market Advisory Committee. The interim period between the end of the 2006 market season and the beginning of the 2008 season is the time for increasing internal organization, with the active FSFM advisory board and increasing marketing and exposure throughout Grand Rapids. Long-term goals focus on redevelopment, and finding funding for the physical expansions. The recommendations are summarized within their intended time frame for implementation below.

<p><u>Phase 1:</u> <u>Short Term</u> 0-6 months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase auxiliary parking options • Provide uniform canvases • Increase identifying and informational market signage • Develop a website • Form a Farmers Market Advisory Committee
<p><u>Phase 2:</u> <u>Interim</u> 6-24 months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide transportation alternatives • Update infrastructure • Increase community collaboration and volunteers • Implement a cancellation policy for seasonal vendors • Implement an ideal fee structure • Collect vendor sales data and monitor overall market revenue • Develop a product mix policy for the market • Increase marketing and exposure in Grand Rapids area
<p><u>Phase 3:</u> <u>Long Term</u> Over 24 months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase onsite parking in redevelopment • Increase the market's street frontage • Explore funding options for future expansion • Expand market operations to meet needs of low income consumers • Encourage ethnic vendors and product mix • Develop a separate Arts Market • Explore funding options for physical expansion

VI. Appendices

Appendix A: National Case Studies

Notable examples or best practices of the various trends were chosen on the basis of Project for Public Spaces criteria for case study selection in two farmers market reports titled *Public Markets and Community Based Food Systems* and *Public Markets as a Vehicle for Social Integration and Upward Mobility*. To summarize these reports, the criteria for successful markets are:

- Fulfillment of a public purpose in conjunction with community development plans and spin-off success of area
- Creation of a sustainable food system for vendors and customers
- Provision of a neutral public space
- Establishment of economic sustainability in the long term

These factors and the lessons learned through best practices of the national case studies provide the models from which our recommendations for the Fulton Street Farmers Market were formed.

National Case Study 1: Davis Farmers Market, Davis, CA

Started in 1975 by local organic farmers, the market first used a fee scale based on a percentage of gross sales. The market today averages 85 vendors every Saturday, coming from Northern California as far north as Oxnard and Southern California as far as Santa Monica, creating one of the largest and most successful markets in the state (University of California, 2000).

In this community of 56,000 citizens, of which 25,000 are students, the support of institutions and an active community atmosphere create market connections to locals and visitors alike. A main goal of the market is to connect the community to farmers, and the market achieves this by involving the Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Business Association, and 500 non-profit organizations in outreach efforts. These organizations have contributed \$1 million back to the community through their participation at the market. The market is managed with the leadership of an 11-member board of directors, including eight farmers, one non-agricultural vendor and two community representatives. Vendor fees cover the costs of electricity, cleaning, maintenance, and park renovations (University of California, 2000).

Location and Physical:

The market operates year-round in a central park location and takes advantage of the mild yearlong growing season. Local high school groups and 4-H programs utilize the market for educational activities, while the local Downtown Business Association uses the market to showcase the annual “chamber days” business fairs. The location within the