



Fulton Street Farmers Market Study

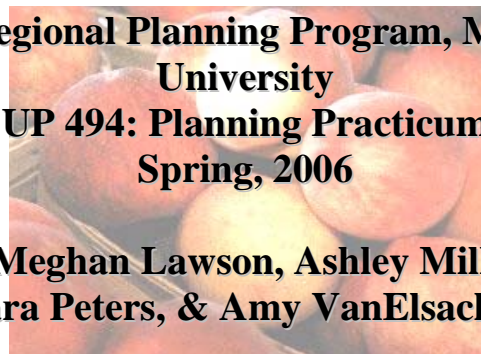
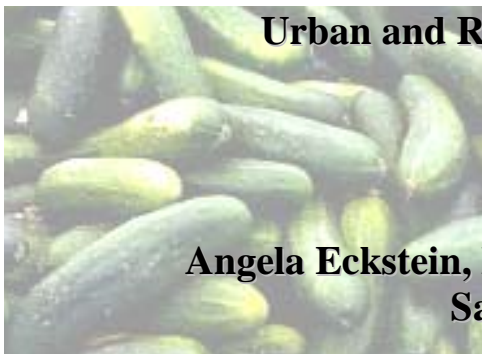
**Brikyaat Planning Project
Midtown Neighborhood Association**

Grand Rapids, Michigan



**Urban and Regional Planning Program, Michigan State
University
UP 494: Planning Practicum
Spring, 2006**

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Farmers market managers throughout Michigan.

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I. Executive Summary

Urban and Regional Planning students from Michigan State University have compiled this report to aid the Midtown Neighborhood Association of Grand Rapids, Michigan, by formulating strategies for the redevelopment of the Fulton Street Farmers Market. The farmers market, located within the Brikyaat area of the Midtown Neighborhood, has been identified as an asset to the neighborhood that must be preserved and enhanced in future redevelopment initiatives.

The purpose of this report is to formulate recommendations on ways that the Fulton Street Farmers Market can grow physically, organizationally, and in consideration of economic trends. To provide a relevant context for the current status of the Fulton Street Farmers Market, national and local farmers markets were studied to provide case studies and applicable trends. These trends and case studies are distributed among all sections of the report and serve as comparative models for current status of the Fulton Street Farmers Market.

First, physical market space was assessed according to existing site plans and input from citizens, vendors, and management. Currently, major concerns of structure design, parking, and pedestrian safety were identified at the market. National trends were used to portray models for successful farmers markets that demonstrate proper access, visibility, and site utilization, in addition to the role of the market in building social capital.

Secondly, the organizational status of the Fulton Street Farmers Market was assessed by analyzing existing contracts and collecting vendor input. Ownership and management arrangements at the market were outlined, as well as funding and fee structure for the operational budget.

Finally, the economic market study determined the retail potential for local farmers market products. The local supply of fresh produce was identified through a retail market analysis of proximal competitors and an analysis of the existing agricultural climate. Following consumption trends and demographic associations, the target demand within the Brikyaat and Grand Rapids area was identified.

The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis evaluates the current condition of the Fulton Street Farmers Market. In this assessment, we drew upon information from all previously mentioned resources, as well as neighborhood meetings, vendor charrettes, management interviews, and the practicum team's urban planning perspective.

Final recommendations for expansion of the Fulton Street Farmers Market primarily address the weaknesses identified in the SWOT analysis. National and local case studies were used as best practice examples for each recommendation. The following outline presents our summarized recommendations:

Addressed Weakness – Functional design of market and parking areas:

- Increase off site parking
- Provide transportation alternatives for market customers
- Increase on-site parking in future redevelopment
- Provide uniform canvasses for market structure
- Improve walkability and traffic flow on site
- Increase market frontage on major thoroughfares
- Include necessary infrastructure to sustain market expansion
- Explore funding options for market expansion
- Introduce green space/recreation space
- Seek a temporary off-site location during renovation

Addressed Weakness – Visibility and attractiveness to potential new customers:

- Increase identifying and informational market signage
- Expand marketing and exposure to the greater Grand Rapids area
- Develop an accessible and attractive website
- Expand hours of operation to attract additional customers
- Develop a separate artisan market
- Encourage a new sector of ethnic vendors and customers
- Expand market operations to meet needs of low-income consumers

Addressed Weakness – Lack of strong organizational policies:

- Form a Farmers Market Advisory Committee
- Implement a cancellation policy for seasonal vendors
- Implement an ideal fee structure
- Develop a product mix policy to meet consumer demand
- Increase community collaboration
- Strengthen the volunteer base

This report combines quantitative and qualitative research to formulate effective strategies for the redevelopment of the Fulton Street Farmers Market. The recommendations set forth in this report are best implemented as phases in a time continuum. It is our goal that the Fulton Street Farmers Market will continue to build on its success to become a premier Michigan farmers market and community asset.

II. Introduction

The Midtown Neighborhood Association (MNA) sought the assistance of Michigan State University practicum students in January 2006 to assist in the redevelopment process of the Brikyaat neighborhood. The Fulton Street Farmers Market is located on the eastern boundary of the Brikyaat neighborhood and the market's incorporation in the overall redevelopment plan for the area will be the specific focus of this practicum project.

A. Purpose of Project

The purpose of this project is to formulate recommendations regarding ways the Fulton Street Farmers Market in Grand Rapids, Michigan, can grow physically, organizationally, and in consideration of economic trends.

This report will establish the status of the Fulton Street Farmers Market relative to current trends, establish the market's potential for growth, and formulate potential strategies for redevelopment. The recommendations in this report will propose methods for the Fulton Street Farmers Market to use in order to meet the seasonal produce market needs of the local Midtown and Brikyaat residents as well as the greater Grand Rapids community.

This project will advise the client on ways to accommodate more vendors and efficiently operate in context with the overall redevelopment vision for the Brikyaat neighborhood and in accordance with case studies and national trends.

Strategies for improving upon the following three areas will be provided:

- *Physical Condition:* This section will provide suggestions for physical design, configuration, spatial utilization, and its relation to the surrounding neighborhood from examples of comparable farmers markets. This information will review case study examples and possible strategies of action.
- *Organization:* This section will review the current organizational structure of the Fulton Street Farmers Market and make recommendations regarding potential rules/regulations, contracts, policies, ownership arrangements, and management. Ways to manage Project Fresh will be addressed. The report will also take into account the neighborhood's transition toward future goals. Funding methods and appropriate fee schedules will also be reviewed.
- *Economic Trends:* This 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. Recommendations will be made regarding the vendor product diversity that would be optimal according to economic market factors in the area.

The purpose of this report is to serve as a product to be utilized by the client to better understand the status of the Fulton Street Farmers Market, to help visualize the farmers market potential, and provide strategies that facilitate future growth.

B. Overview of Project Boundaries: Grand Rapids-Midtown-Brikyaat

This section will clarify the geographic location of this report's project boundaries including the city of Grand Rapids, the Midtown Neighborhood, the Brikyaat neighborhood, and the Fulton Street Farmers Market.

The city of Grand Rapids is located in west central Michigan, within Kent County. It is the second largest city in the state and is approximately thirty miles east of Lake Michigan (See Figure 1).

State of Michigan



Figure 1: Location of Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The Midtown Neighborhood is located within Grand Rapids and bound by I-196 on the north, Fuller Street on the east, College Avenue and Union on the west, and Fulton on the south (See Figure 2).

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Midtown Neighborhood (in red)

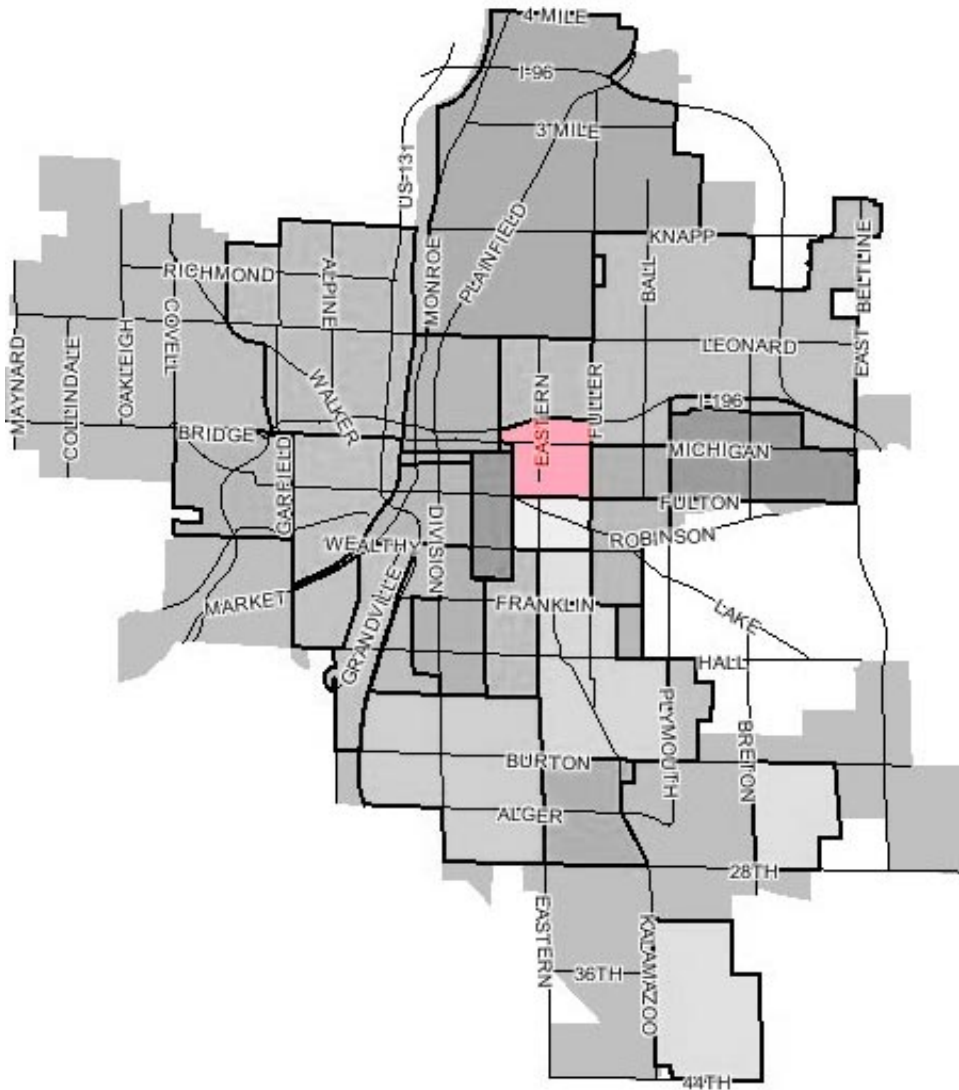


Figure 2: Location of the Midtown Neighborhood (in red) within Grand Rapids, Michigan

The Brikyaat neighborhood, approximately ten square blocks, lies within the Midtown Neighborhood and is bound by Fountain to the north, Fulton to the south, Batavia to the west, and Fuller to the east. The Fulton Street Farmers Market can be found on the eastern boundary of the Brikyaat neighborhood. The following streets bound the market: Fountain on the north, Stormzand on the west, Fuller on the east, and Fulton on the south (See Figure 3).

Map of Midtown, Brikyaat, and the Fulton Street Farmers Market

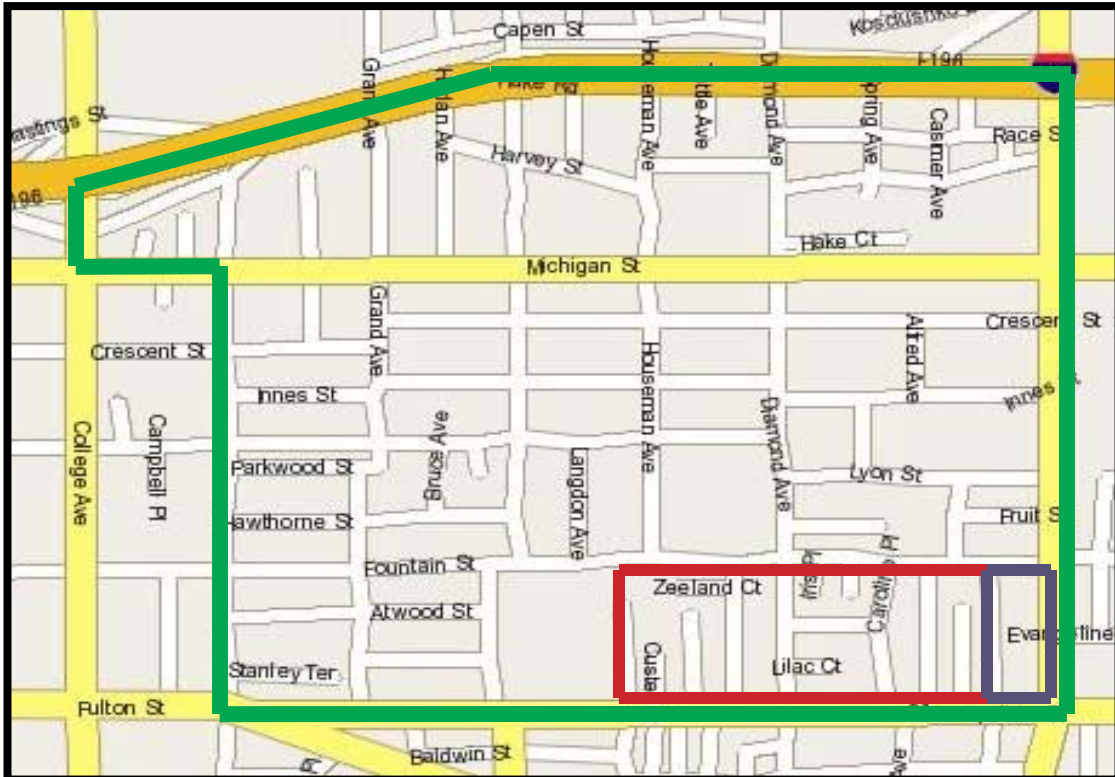


Figure 3: Location of the Fulton Street Farmers Market, the Brikyaat Neighborhood, and the Midtown Neighborhood

- * Green: Midtown Neighborhood
- * Red: Brikyaat Neighborhood
- * Blue: Fulton Street Farmers Market

III. Fulton Street Farmers Market

Prior to planning for the future of any neighborhood or farmers market, it is essential to understand the history and culture of the community.

A. Background/ Client Information

The Fulton Street Farmers Market has been an institution in the City of Grand Rapids since 1922 and the Midtown Neighborhood Association (MNA) only recently gained control of the farmers market in 2005. The MNA manages the farmers market, on a 3-year bid awarded by the owner of the market, the City of Grand Rapids. The MNA has recognized the potential for the market to increase its role as a significant asset to the neighborhood and has sought further study of the market in order to provide relevant, accurate strategies for redevelopment.

Historical Background:

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the industrial revolution taking place in the United States and the civil unrest occurring world wide drove the forces of immigration to bring millions of settlers to the United States in search of a new life. The City of Grand Rapids has a rich history of ethnic enclaves within the neighborhoods of the central city that formed during this period. The Brikyaat is a part of this history.

At the turn of the century, Dutch immigrants that were employed in the nearby brickyards as tile manufacturers historically settled the Brikyaat area. While the abundant need for unskilled labor in the brickyards pulled Dutch immigrants to Grand Rapids, a period of civil unrest in Holland served to force these immigrants to choose a new way of life in America. In 1834 the secessionist movement in the Dutch Reformed Church drove many of the secessionists to immigrate to the United States to avoid persecution. By 1900, Dutch households equaled three-quarters of the population of the Brikyaat neighborhood, and 75 percent of those households had immigrated to the United States since 1880 (Samuelson, 2003).

In addition to the labor supply that these Dutch immigrants brought to the Grand Rapids area, they also brought the rich culture and traditions from their native country. These secessionists formed several Christian Reformed Churches throughout the Dutch neighborhoods of Grand Rapids, and many Dutch children also attended school at these churches. In addition to the religious and educational seclusion that these immigrants experienced at this time, commerce was also a parochial experience.

The loyalties of the brickyard Dutch were focused on those Dutch with whom they worshiped at church; what loyalty that remained was directed at other Dutch within the area. If an item could not be purchased, a business transaction made, or a spouse found within these two realms of loyalty, it is surprisingly possible that the item would be done without, the business transaction never completed, and the son or daughter never married (Samuelson, 2003).

The secluded lifestyle of the Dutch immigrants of the Brikyaat neighborhood during the early 20th century may indeed be the reason that the Fulton Street Farmers Market came to be established in 1922.

While the Brikyaat neighborhood was named for its proximity to the brickyards that employed the majority of the Dutch immigrants living there, it was also within close proximity to the fertile agricultural lands of western Michigan. The location of the Brikyaat and other Dutch neighborhoods within Grand Rapids allowed residents to live “close to the manufacturing district, yet they could still farm outlying areas” (Samuelson, 2003). This dual lifestyle, and the secluded nature of the Dutch population, explains in part the need for Dutch farmers to establish the Fulton Street Farmers Market as a means to sell their produce to Dutch neighbors.

Current Situation:

Many of the houses constructed in the Brikyaat during this time were intended to accommodate this population influx as “temporary structures” to house the labor force. Today, the structures built for temporary use still house the residents of the Brikyaat neighborhood. The narrow streets, condition of the housing stock, small lot sizes, and high density of the Brikyaat area are all characteristics of this turn of the century neighborhood that have been preserved.

The Midtown Neighborhood Association has recognized that redevelopment is necessary for this area, which will be sought after by private development interests in the near future. Therefore, they have sought the assistance of a consulting firm to create a plan for any future redevelopment of this site. The neighborhood has been involved in the creation of this plan from its inception and will continue to work with the consultants to create a vision for the future of the Brikyaat that is suited to their interests.

The possible displacement of the current Brikyaat population is a major concern for the neighborhood association in any redevelopment efforts; therefore, the next section will set forth the current demographic profile of the local neighborhoods surrounding the Fulton Street Farmers Market.

B. Demographics

Sound planning practice suggests that an analysis of the demographics of a neighborhood and surrounding area is necessary to predict future trends. While the farmers market is open to everyone, the central goals of the market management focus on the needs of the local Midtown and Brikiyaat residents as well as the greater Grand Rapids community. For the purpose of this project, we have researched and analyzed demographic data from the following places: the Brikiyaat neighborhood, the Midtown Neighborhood, the city of Grand Rapids, Kent County, and the state of Michigan.

Unless noted otherwise, the following data is representative of the year 2000. All of the following demographic data was taken from U.S. Census Bureau. With both the Midtown and Brikiyaat neighborhoods located within the city of Grand Rapids, demographics for these places were taken from the U.S. Census Bureau's Summary File 1 and Summary File 3 data.

Population Profile:

The racial and ethnic diversity in the Brikiyaat neighborhood creates a very unique community. In 2000, with a population of 909, Brikiyaat's racial makeup was **53 percent White; 20 percent African American; 8 percent American Indian, Asian, or two or more races; and the remaining 19 percent being composed of some other race** (See Chart 1).

Brikiyaat Racial Composition, 2000 U.S. Census Bureau

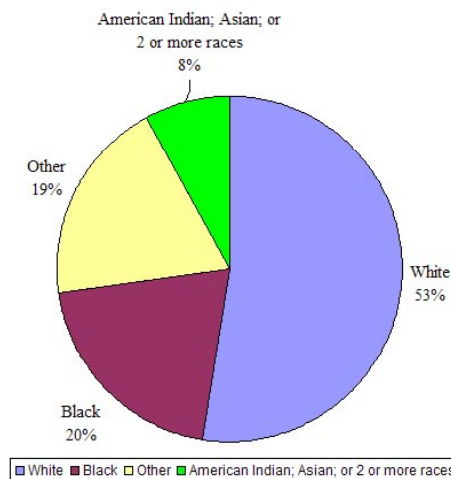


Chart 1: Brikiyaat Racial Composition, 2000 U.S. Census Bureau

While the diversity in both Midtown and Grand Rapids is less than Brikyaat, they are still significantly more diverse than both Kent County and the state of Michigan. In 2000, Midtown had a total population of 4,813 with a racial composition of **71 percent white, 13 percent black, and 16 percent** being composed of **all other races** (See Chart 2).

Midtown Racial Composition, 2000 U.S. Census

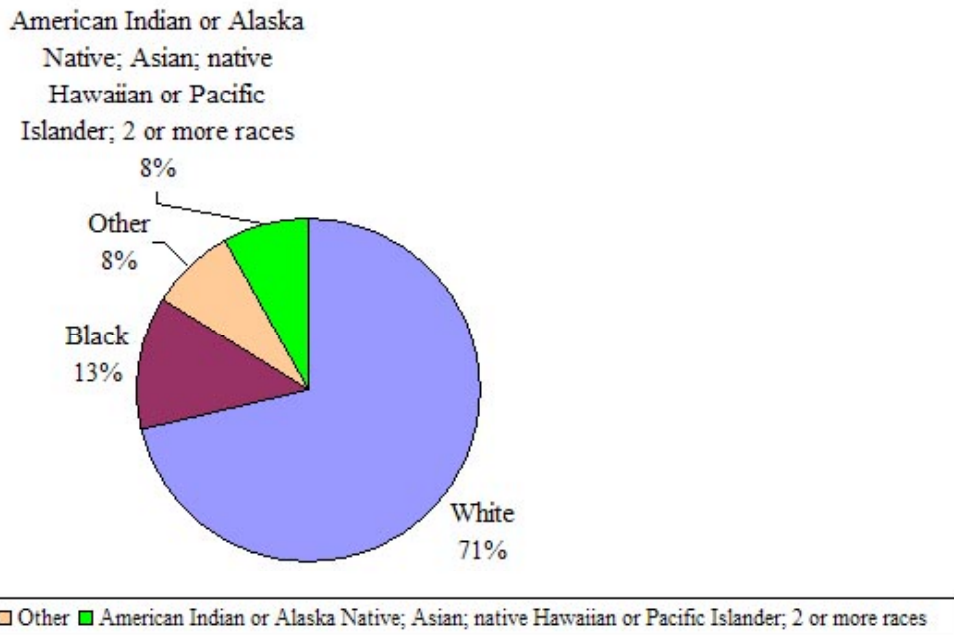


Chart 2: Midtown Racial Composition, 2000 U.S. Census Bureau

Grand Rapids, with a population of 197,800, had a racial makeup similar to Midtown with **67.3 percent** of the population being **white**; **20.4 percent black**; **5.6 percent** American Indian, Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, or 2 or more races; and the remaining **6.6 percent** being composed of **some other race** (See Chart 3).

Grand Rapids Racial Composition, 2000 U.S. Census

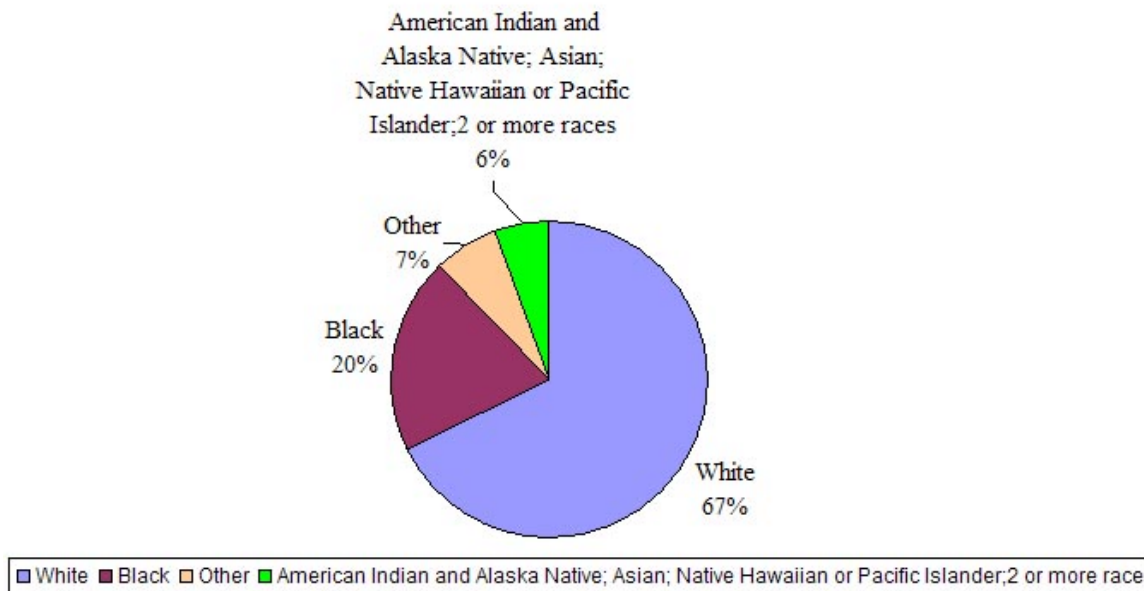


Chart 3: Grand Rapids, Michigan Racial Composition, 2000 U.S. Census Bureau

In order to realize the unique diversity present in Grand Rapids and its individual neighborhoods, it is important to compare the previous data to the racial composition of both Kent County and the state of Michigan. The breakdown for Kent County, which Grand Rapids resides in, is as follows: 83.1 percent white, 8.9 African American, and 8 percent being composed of all other races. The state of Michigan is relatively similar to Kent County in composition: 80.2 percent white, 14.2 percent black, and all other races composing 5.6 percent. The considerable difference between the Grand Rapids/local neighborhoods racial diversity and the county it resides in further supports the unique character of our study area (See Table 1).

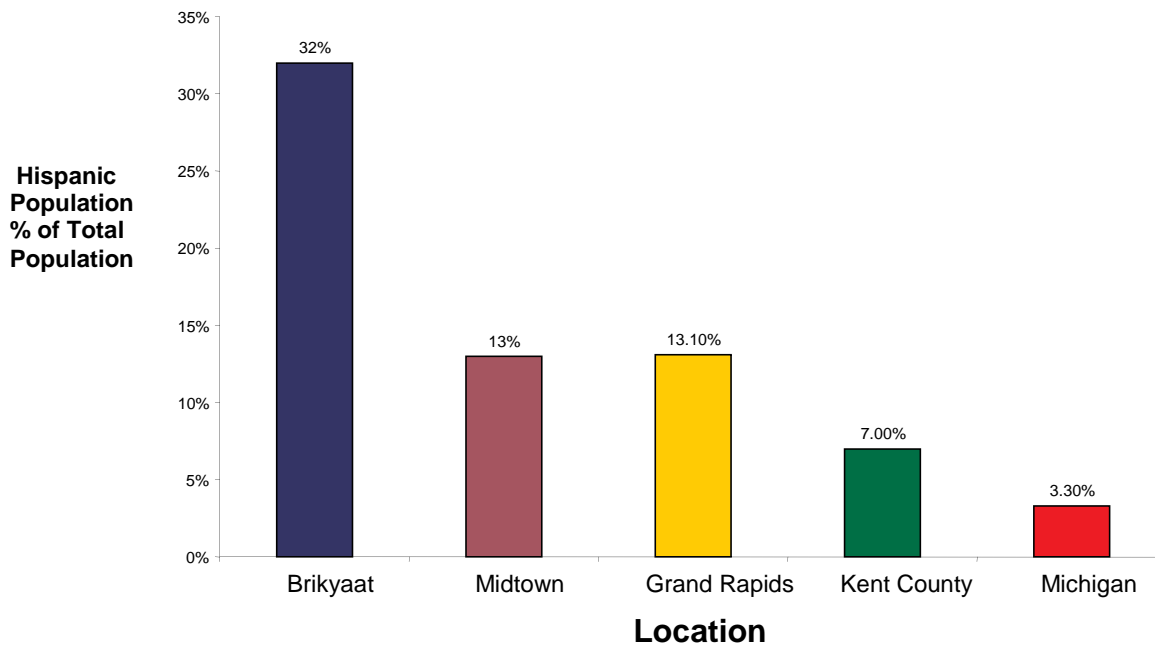
Racial Composition Comparison Table, 2000 U.S. Census

	White	African American	American Indian; Alaska Native; Asian; Native Hawaiian; Pacific Islander; or 2 or more races	Some Other Race	Total Population
Michigan	80.20%	14.20%	4.30%	1.30%	9,938,444
Kent County	83.10%	8.90%	4.70%	3.30%	574, 335
Grand Rapids	67.30%	20.40%	5.60%	6.60%	197, 800
Midtown	71%	13%	8%	8%	4183
Brikyaat	53%	20%	8%	19%	909

Table 1: Racial Composition Comparison, 2000 U.S. Census Bureau

The potential local customer base of the Fulton Street Farmers Market also has a very unique ethnic population. There is a significant Hispanic presence in Brikyaat, Midtown, and Grand Rapids. In Brikyaat, **32 percent** of the population is Hispanic, 13 percent in Midtown, and 13.1 percent in Grand Rapids. In comparison, the Hispanic populations in the state of Michigan and Kent County are only **3.3 percent and 7 percent**, respectively (See Graph 1). This cultural presence in the farmers market area is an important dynamic to keep in mind when planning for the Fulton Street Farmers Market.

Hispanic Population (% of Total Population), 2000 U.S. Census Bureau



Graph 1: Hispanic Population in Fulton Street Farmers Market customer base and comparative areas

The age of the potential local customer base also plays a part in the preferences and demands of a farmers market. The types of products (i.e. organic produce) or other farmers market activities (i.e. live music and health information tables) desired by customers can vary by age groups. Not only is the Brikyaat neighborhood unique through its racial composition, but also through its relatively low median age of **23.5 years old**.

As you move upwards through the location hierarchy, from Brikyaat to Michigan, the median age increases by twelve years. The median age of the Midtown neighborhood, Grand Rapids, Kent County, and Michigan are 26.3 years, 30.4 years, 32.5 years, and 35.5 years old, respectively (See Table 2).

Median Age, 2000 U.S. Census Bureau

Brikyaat	Midtown	Grand Rapids	Kent County	Michigan
23.5	26.3	30.4	32.5	35.5

Table 2: Median Age, 2000 U.S. Census

Economic Profile:

In order for a farmers market to effectively operate, it must be feasible for all invested parties to do business there. Vendors must have a profitable experience, customers must be able to afford the products, and the owner or management must have sufficient funds to operate the market. Without a customer base, a farmers market would cease to exist. For this very reason, it is crucial to fully understand the community’s income levels, poverty levels, and unemployment rates. Such data will reveal special conditions that are essential in creating a successful farmers market.

Due to the small area of the Brikyaat neighborhood and the required standards of privacy maintained by the U.S. Census Bureau, the following economic data was not available for just the neighborhood. Since the Midtown neighborhood encompasses both the Brikyaat neighborhood and the Fulton Street Farmers Market, the economic data for Midtown will be used to profile the local neighborhood of the farmers market.

As of 2000, the Midtown Neighborhood’s unemployment rate was **8.2 percent**, with Grand Rapids at **6.34 percent**. These figures may be viewed as relatively high considering Kent County has an unemployment rate of 3.1 percent and Michigan has a rate of 3.7 percent (See Table 3).

Unemployment Rate, 2000 U.S. Census

Midtown	Grand Rapids	Kent County	Michigan
8.20%	6.34%	3.10%	3.70%

Table 3: Unemployment Rates, 2000 U.S. Census Bureau

It is also very important to note is that **22.6 percent** of Midtown’s population and **15.7 percent** of Grand Rapids’ population were below the poverty level in 1999. This amount

of poverty may be considered high, considering the poverty levels in Michigan and Kent County are 10.5 and 8.9 percent (See Table 4). Also, **nearly 32 percent** of Midtown’s children (aged seventeen and younger) are in families below the poverty level.

With the customer base of the farmers market having such high poverty levels, providing nutritional information and access to healthy food options to the local residents is an important issue for the neighborhood. Possible low-income farmers market programs will be discussed later in the report to address this issue.

**Individuals below Poverty Level,
2000 U.S. Census**

Midtown	Grand Rapids	Kent County	Michigan
22.60%	15.70%	8.90%	10.50%

Table 4: Individuals Below Poverty Level, 2000 U.S. Census Bureau

The income level of the customer base is also an important element to consider when formulating recommendations to redevelop the operation of a farmers market. The 1999 median household income of the Midtown neighborhood was \$29,265 and the per capita income was \$15,841. The median household and per capita incomes in Grand Rapids were \$37,224 and \$17,661. This shows that Midtown’s income levels are lower than Grand Rapids, especially the median household income. The household income for the farmers market customer base (Midtown and Grand Rapids) is lower than in Kent County and Michigan, which are \$45,980 and \$44,667 respectively (see table 5).

**Median Income, 2000 U.S. Census
(reflects 1999)**

	Median Household Income (1999)	Median Per Capita Income (1999)
Midtown	\$29,265.00	\$15,841.00
Grand Rapids	\$37,224.00	\$17,661.00
Kent County	\$45,980.00	\$21,629.00
Michigan	\$44,667.00	\$22,168.00

Table 5: Median Household and Per Capita Income (1999), 2000 U.S. Census

Summary of Socioeconomic Profile:

The local customer base for Fulton Street Farmers Market encompasses a diverse range of races, a unique Hispanic population, and low to high-income households. These demographics need to be taken into consideration for any future development at the farmers market. Changes that take place should cater to all income levels in order to prevent increased produce prices that exceed the budgets of Grand Rapids households. With the profile of the local populace established, the next section will discuss national trends among farmers markets in relation to the Fulton Street Farmers Market’s current status.

C. Current Status and National Trends

According to a United States Department of Agriculture study published in 2002, the number of farmers markets in the United States increased from 1,755 in 1990 to 2,863 markets in 2000. A farmers market should “increase community support for local agriculture and local foods and retard the loss of agricultural space and renew our connection with the local agro-food system” (Andreatta, 2002). Farmers markets generate positive ripple effects for communities such as improved health, slowed urban sprawl, entrepreneurship, and low-income community reinvestment.

With many small farms not producing high enough yields for commercial sale and vast numbers of consumers living great distances from their food sources, the need for direct marketing of farm raised and grown goods is an urgent and worthy effort (Payne, 2000). This method of farmer to customer interaction improves the quality of healthy food available to the public and helps to preserve arable land. Farmers markets provide an affordable and exciting option to reconnect the urban and rural sectors once again.

Based on 2000 USDA information, market trends along national and Midwest scales were compared to put the Fulton Street Farmers Market into context. This data will be incorporated in physical, organizational, and economic market trends; best practice case studies nationally; and best practice case studies in Michigan. Comparisons will be made to specific characteristics of Fulton Street Farmers Market and its long-term feasibility for expansion.

1. Physical Trends

When planning for market design, one must consider permanence, size, seasonality, and location. It should also be determined if the market will be large, structured and competitive or small, flexible and low-growth. Circulation and accessibility, conveniences (i.e. drinking fountains, benches, bathrooms), and maintenance (i.e. repainting, landscaping, rubbish removal) also contribute to the appeal of a farmers market.

Design is an essential element for the setting of farmers markets for functionality and aesthetic appeal. The location, character of the neighborhood, and architecture of the market structure are design details that influence the framework for the entire market site. These features contribute to the overall essence of the farmers market and play a key role in the customer experience.

Market Form:

Farmers markets utilize an assortment of physical shapes and venues. Municipal farmers markets have traditionally employed one of three models. The first model, found most often in metropolitan cities, is the market that is a part of a **larger retail area**, embracing such interests as gourmet food shops, restaurants and boutiques in addition to fresh produce. The second market model occupies a **multi-functional structure**, which can be

used for multiple purposes such as office space, specialty stores or community centers. The Fulton Street Farmers Market currently demonstrates the third market model, in which the site and structures are **used exclusively for the farmers market**.

Farmers markets also vary in shapes and sizes. Markets have been designed in a variety of shapes including square, rectangular, circular, U-shape, H-shape, T-shape, and X-shape (CES, 1983). The Fulton Street Farmers Market is currently arranged in a rectangular fashion and situated on a 3.54-acre site (See Figure 4). Generally, if a rectangular shape is utilized, a proportion of 5x9 or 3x5 is preferred in order to accommodate for better orientation and narrower center aisles, which in turn, foster pedestrian flow. Overall, keeping space and functionality in mind, almost any shape can be applied successfully. It is, however, important that it generate ample customer and vendor circulation, sufficient and serviceable parking, and opportunities for growth. The Fulton Street Farmers Market site is very long, which could be regarded as undesirable or inconvenient for customers and farmers alike, “due to a lacking sense of containment” which may hinder pedestrian flow (CES, 1983).

Similar to variation in shape, the scope for market structures is also diverse. There are three standard structures including the roof or shed, the pavilion, and the enclosed building. Several less common structures have also been utilized by farmers markets including the tent, tension membrane structure, prefabricated structure, parking garage, pipe and canvas, and the aisle of an enclosed space such as a shopping mall (CES, 1983).

The Fulton Street Farmers Market currently utilizes the pipe and canvas system. The structure is permanent, while the farmer is responsible for providing his or her own canvas. The structure is framed with metal pipe to form a canopy that runs the length of the market site (See Figure 5). Canvas is fastened to the pipe frame to form a roof, which serves as protection for the goods and offers shelter for vendors and customers.

The existing structure at the farmers market contains 122 vendor stalls, which are each 8 feet long (Otto, 2006). The Fulton Street Farmers Market also utilizes an 11-foot wide central pedestrian walkway that splits the market in half, which is fixed in a north – south orientation. On both sides of the walkway, there are wooden tables/stalls facing one another, forcing this main walkway to be the sole place for shopping and mingling.

Fulton Street Farmers Market: Site Plan

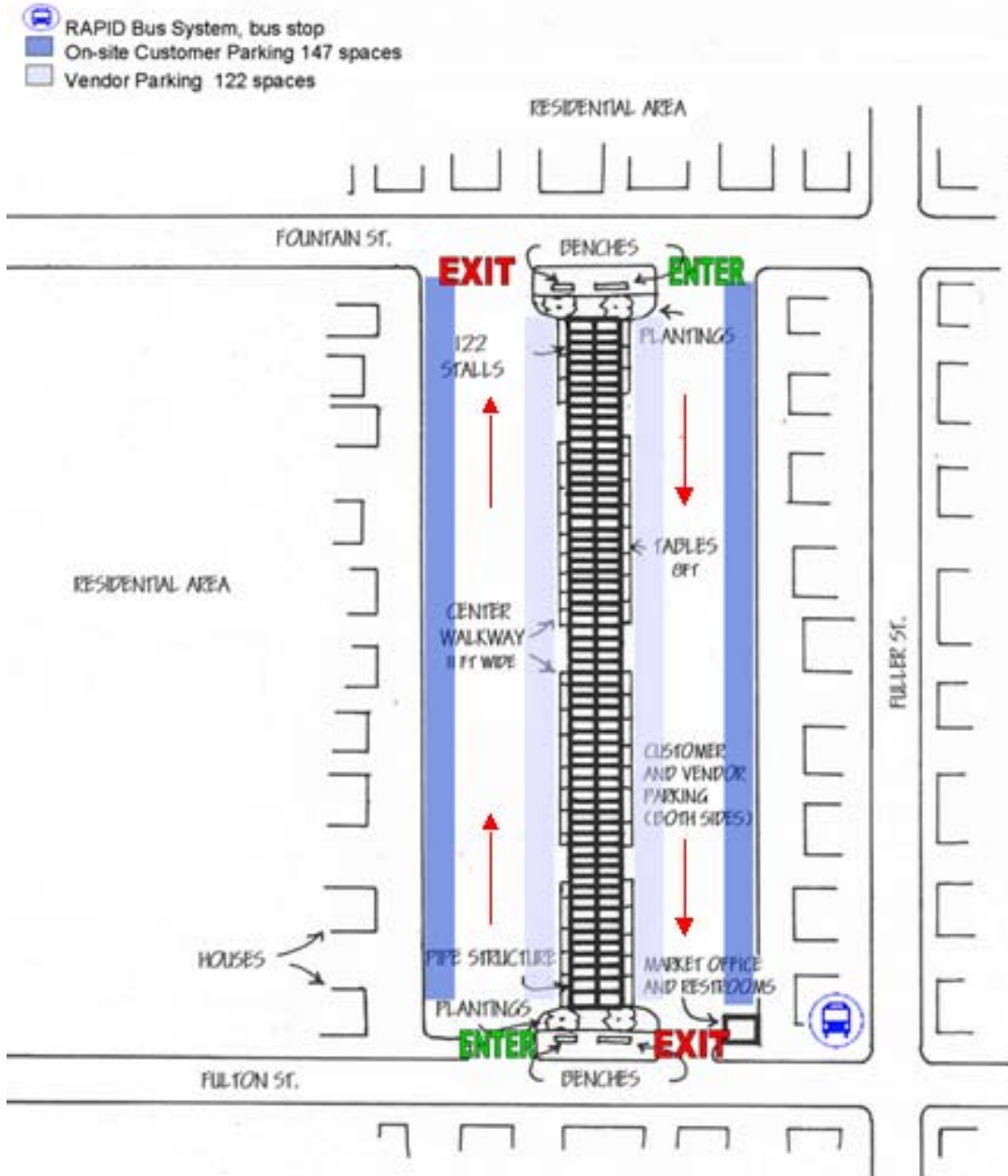


Figure 4: Site Plan for Fulton Street Farmers Market (CES, 1983)

Fulton Street Farmers Market: Grand Rapids, Michigan



Figure 5: Fulton Street Farmers Market not in operation on this date, taken 1-16-2006

Market components:

In the context of farmers markets, good design celebrates the balance of all market elements and sets the stage for a complete market adventure. These elements serve an organizational purpose and help to make the market unique and offbeat. They entail a certain regard to planning and design because they serve the common purpose to encourage customers to visit the market, provide for the sale of fresh produce and other goods, and leave customers satisfied with the good intention to return (CES, 1983). These organizational elements include physical and functional design elements such as entrances and exits, parking lots, as well as other aesthetic aspects that work together to create a sense of place for market visitors.

Entrance and exit areas are important because they offer a first impression to shoppers and passersby. The entrance should be considered an architectural element and project a distinct “welcome”. The current physical design of Fulton Street Farmers Market offers two entrance points and two exit points, each designated as one-way lanes. Customers can either enter the market from Fulton Street and exit parallel to that onto Fountain Street, or enter from Fountain Street and exit parallel to that onto Fulton Street.

Adequately designed parking is an obvious benefit to any farmers market. If customers can easily find a place to park and move about the area with comfort, they are more likely to return. On the other hand, if parking is an issue, the negative first impression could dissuade one from visiting before ever experiencing the market. Parking at the Fulton Street Farmers Market is currently a concern. With limited parking and narrow vehicle lanes, traffic flow has become confusing and inconvenient. The nearby Salvation Army

and Alpha Women’s Center parking lots offer some relief for this problem, but require customers to walk farther, which again, could be viewed as inconvenient (Otto, 2006). Figure 6 shows current on site and off site parking options. This information was gathered from the current market manager and site visit observations.

Another issue regarding transportation is the accessibility of the market to non-automobile owners. The market currently has close proximity to a bus stop at Fuller and Fulton, which runs every 30 minutes on weekdays and 45 minutes on weekends (Rapid, 2006).

Another issue of concern is pedestrian safety. Walkways should be separated from traffic and could be aesthetically enhanced with the introduction of green space and landscaping.

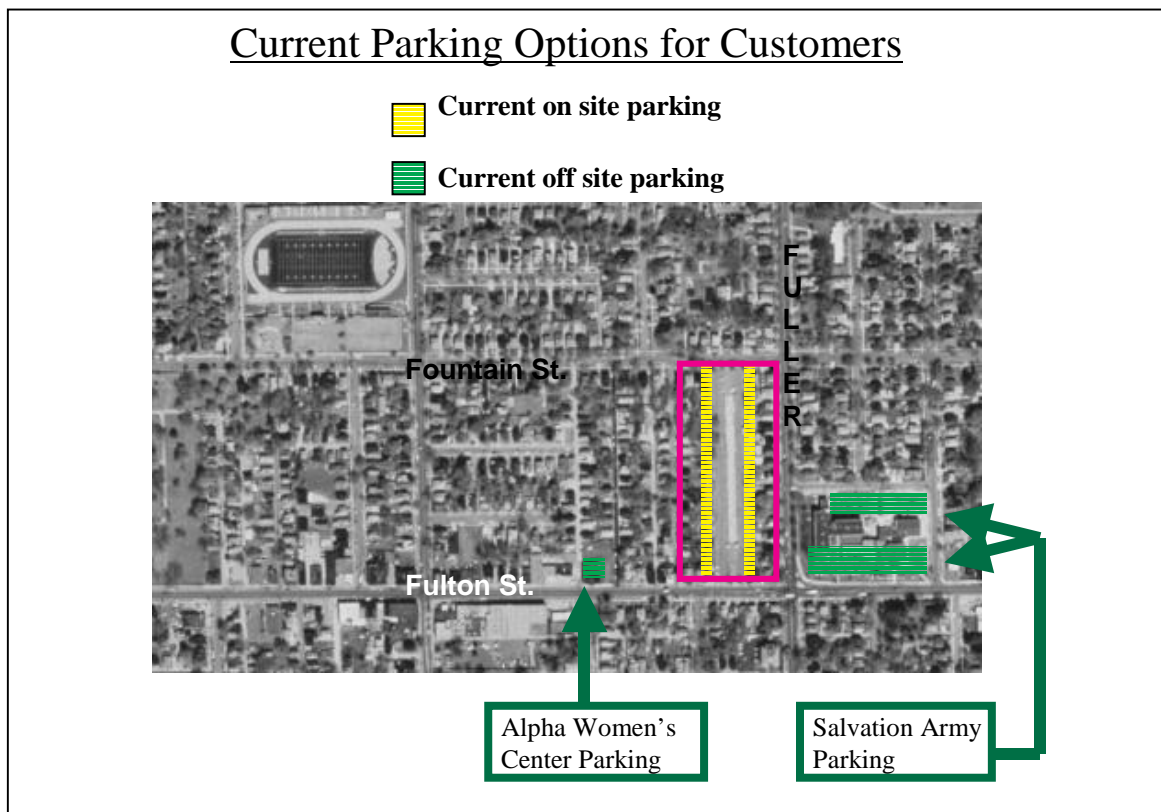


Figure 6: Current parking for Fulton Street Farmers Market Customers

National Physical Trends: Building Places through Public Spaces

Project for Public Spaces, a nonprofit urban planning and design organization, uses a four-element approach to creating a “sense of place” in farmers markets.

- Access and linkages – readable, walkable, convenient, accessible
- Comfort and image – safety, cleanliness, “green”, aesthetic, and historic
- Uses and activities – sustainable, indigenous, community and market relationship
- Sociability – welcoming, network fostering, diversity

These factors should be considered in both short and long term strategies for the future redevelopment of the Fulton Street Farmers Market. The application of these factors in smaller, phased in improvement can benefit both the success of the farmers market and the atmosphere of the community. In looking at national and regional case studies, these same elements can be assessed to determine the market’s physical success according to functional and aesthetic components.

In conclusion, aesthetics play an important role in creating a sense of place. Aesthetic elements that enhance the market experience include decorative lighting, landscaping, decorative architecture, and attractive seating. Areas for “activity” should also be included in the market. A diverse range of activity will generate character and keep patrons coming back. Indirect areas of green space for sitting are a comfortable escape from the energy of the market. These areas could also serve as food or refreshment vendor space, information centers, children play areas, or space for artist and musician entertainment.

2. Organizational Trends

National Organizational Trends:

Farmers markets take on multiple organizational forms to deal with rules and regulations, fee structure, site specific and operational costs, maintenance, technical assistance and publicity. These organizational forms can include non-profit corporations, with a Board of Directors and a market master, a farmer's cooperative, a municipal government or a community group. Furthermore, technical assistance is available through many different forms for farmers markets across the nation, such as state departments of agriculture, chambers of commerce, planning commissions and extension specialists.

Types of technical assistance that the Fulton Street Farmers Market could utilize include working with the following entities:

- Increased marketing training through cooperation with local business associations
- Expanding public transit available to the market by working with state and local departments of transportation
- Protection of farmland through work with Land Policy Programs (CES, 1983).

Most farmers markets are self-sustaining, defined as having “market income sufficient to pay for all costs associated with operating the market”, while some are funded by other methods. One or more of the following methods are used to support this group of markets: government, non-profit organizations, businesses, donations, and grants. In regard to market administration, markets may use one or a combination of the following operational structures: staffing a paid manager, using a vendor-operated board of directors, being government run, and/or being run by a non-profit organization. On average, market staff consists of 2.2 full-time workers and 1.9 part-time workers (Payne, 2002).

Ownership/Management Arrangement: Fulton Street Farmers Market

The Fulton Street Farmers Market property is currently owned by the city of Grand Rapids and monitored by the city's Parks and Recreation Department. The Midtown Neighborhood Association (MNA) leases the property for \$6,000 per year. The MNA is currently in a one-year contract with the city, which went into effect during the spring of 2005. They have the opportunity to renew their contract annually until spring 2008. This renewal process will continue to exist as long as the lessee abides by all market rules or any applicable ordinance or regulation.

While the Midtown Neighborhood Association leases the property, the market manager is appointed as the only staff person. The market manager is responsible for collecting vendor fees, enforcing the market rules, and managing the market in general. The market manager reports all relevant market issues at MNA meetings, while the association plays a generally passive role in the daily operation of the market.

As the owner of the property, the city of Grand Rapids is responsible for most large-scale maintenance at the farmers market. They are responsible for all real estate upkeep such as paving, lot striping, and structural repairs. Other responsibilities include maintaining

all exterior lights, providing material for vendor stall repair, handling all electrical repairs, turning on and off the water to the stalls, and maintaining all traffic regulation signs. All other aspects of the market are the responsibility of the lessee, currently the Midtown Neighborhood Association.

All of the national and local case studies that were researched existed on municipally or privately owned land, and were leased and managed by a non-profit organization, elected farmer, or city department. Throughout the literature review, there were no prevalent examples of ownership arrangements that differed from this example. Therefore, there were no best practice examples of differing ownership arrangements to model Fulton Street Farmers Market after because there were no non-profit organizations that actually owned the property on which the market stood.

Contracts/Policies: Fulton Street Farmers Market

The current lease contract sets forth the responsibilities of the city and the lessee, the rental rates, and all other regulations of the market. Several general market rules are significant. The contract states that the Fulton Street Farmers Market is year round, with supervision and building access only available from April 15 – December 15. While the market is allowed to operate year round, the market is only utilized during the supervised season. The ability to operate year round could prove to be a positive opportunity for the farmers market.

As of now, the market's days of operation are restricted to four days of the week: Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Customer and vendor questionnaires have shown that the current market days are convenient; however, people who were unable to attend the market on these days were not included in these surveys. Nationally, farmers markets are open an average of 1.8 days per week (Payne, 2002).

The general market rules restrict the items that may be sold at the farmers market. These items are currently all farm produce; flowers and bedding plants; baked goods with some restrictions; arts and crafts made by vendors; and fresh meat and poultry. Two types of vendors are allowed to sell produce at the market: those who grow the produce they sell and resellers who do not grow the produce they sell.

Fee Structure and Fundraising National Trends:

The breakdown of operational expenses for markets generally includes the cost of leasing, electricity, and maintenance for the site, which is paid mainly through stall fees and varies widely based on the size of the market, infrastructure, utilities and ownership arrangement. The remaining costs consist of personnel and advertisement, along with other office and insurance needs that require additional organizational, marketing and staffing costs. To account for these costs, many types of funding and fee structures have been used throughout the country. Popular models include: an annual fee proportional to the size of the market, an annual fee plus daily fees that include seasonal and daily charges, a daily fee based on the total amount of frontal footage, a percentage fee that is typically 4-8 percent of vendor sales, and an annual base fee combined with a percentage fee.

Beyond vendor fees, fundraising for logo development, office supplies, promotional materials, permits, signs, and other market needs can come from multiple sources. These include: business support through use of the name and logo on products, sale of drink and food items at the market, community development funds such as those distributed by the USDA, grants from local foundations, contributions from growers, and loans/grants from individuals and organizations (Corum, Rosenzweig, Gibson; 2001).

Fulton Street Farmers Market Fee Scales:

As previously mentioned, the Midtown Neighborhood Association leases the property for \$6,000 per year. Vendor fees are the main source of funding used to occupy and operate the market. Several terms used within the contract regarding vendor fees are defined below.

Fee Scale Terms:

- 1 market session = 1 day of operation (Tuesday or Wednesday or Friday or Saturday)
- 1 week = 4 market sessions (Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday)
- Dealer License Fee: A fee that must be paid by any vendor who does not raise the produce they sell (reseller)

According to the lease contract, the current vendor rental rates are as follows:

Seasonal Vendor Fees:

- All Stalls (4 market sessions) - \$225.00 per stall
- Dealer's License Fee - \$100.00 per year

Daily Vendor Fees:

- Daily Stall Rental Fee - \$10.00 per stall per day
- Saturday Rate - \$15.00 per stall per day
- Dealer's License Fee - \$100.00 per year

With the current ownership arrangement, these rental rates can only be changed with the approval from the Grand Rapids City Commission.

National Trends: Project Fresh Programs

As a direct marketing endeavor, farmers markets have the opportunity to provide food security for many low-income families. Nationally, fifty-eight percent of all markets participated in Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) programs in 2000, which provide food coupons for low-income women that are pregnant, breastfeeding, or have children below the age of five. Twenty-five percent of farmers markets practiced gleaning by donating excess produce to charity, resulting in 5,614,000 pounds of food donated annually (Corum, Rosenzweig, Gibson; 2001).

“Project Fresh is a program that makes fresh produce available to low-income, nutritionally-at-risk consumers, by using Michigan farmers markets” (State of Michigan). Senior citizens and Women enrolled in the WIC or Project Fresh program have the opportunity to receive voucher coupons that allow them to solely purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at participating farmers markets.

The Fulton Street Farmers Market contract mandates that “the market manager will work with Project Fresh to ensure availability of produce for their clients.” While the Fulton Street Farmers Market participates in Project Fresh, the current market manager stressed a need to improve the implementation and organization of the program.

Currently, the vendors accept the voucher coupons from customers in exchange for produce; however, many vendors do not always completely fill out Project Fresh related paperwork (i.e. the name of the vendor). Sometimes when vendors hand in Project Fresh paperwork to the market manager, he is forced to fill in the incomplete sections with inaccurate information (i.e. filling in vendor information when in fact the coupon may have not been used with that particular vendor). This issue results in records that may be inaccurate and thus make it difficult to accurately assess the progress of Project Fresh at the market.

National Vendor and Customer Trends:

As of 2000, there were 66,700 farmers vending at farmers markets, with a total of 915,774 customers per week. Fifty-three percent of markets experienced an increase in the number of farmer vendors over the last three years, with only eighteen percent showing a decrease. Thirty-eight percent of the farmers lived less than 10 miles away from the market, twenty-nine percent 11-20 miles away, twenty-one percent 21-50 miles away, and twelve percent lived greater than 50 miles away (See Chart 4). Thirty-five percent of farmers had weekly sales under \$1,000, while only one percent had sales greater than \$5,000. Annual sales per customer were \$306 and average sales per vendor per year were \$11,773 (Payne, 2002).

**Distance Farmers Travel to Farmers' Market:
National Average**

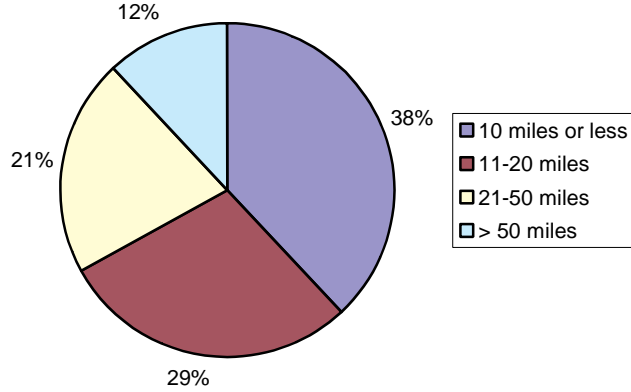


Chart 4: U.S. Farmers Markets 2000: A Study of Emerging Trends, Payne 2002

According to customer demographics, the national average weekly attendance rate at farmers markets was 1,055 patrons, compared with 787 patrons in 1996. Sixty-seven percent of customers lived less than 10 miles from the market, nineteen percent 11-20 miles away, eight percent 21-50 miles away, and five percent more than 50 miles away. (See Chart 5)

**Distance Customers Travel to Farmers Markets:
National Average**

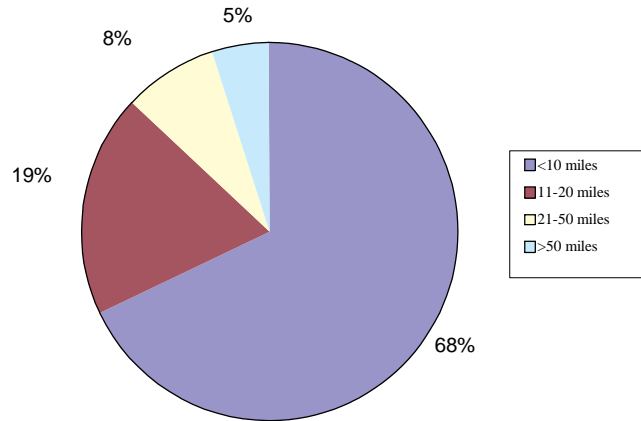


Chart 5: U.S. Farmers Markets 2000: A Study of Emerging Trends, Payne 2002

Nationally, racial characteristics of patrons show that White customers have the greatest market presence (74%), African Americans are the second highest (14%), Hispanics (6%), other (6%), Asian (5%), and both American Indian and Pacific Islander make up the remainder (1%) (See Chart 6).

This is consistent with the Fulton Street Farmers Market, where in a 2000 Parks and Recreation study, it was determined that 73.7 percent of surveyed customers were White. This data is consistent with the national trends, though it does not seem to be consistent with the Brikyaat neighborhood demographics, showing a mismatch between customers at the market and potential customers in the immediate community (City of Grand Rapids, 2000).

**Racial and Ethnic Backgrounds of Farmers Market Customers:
National Average**

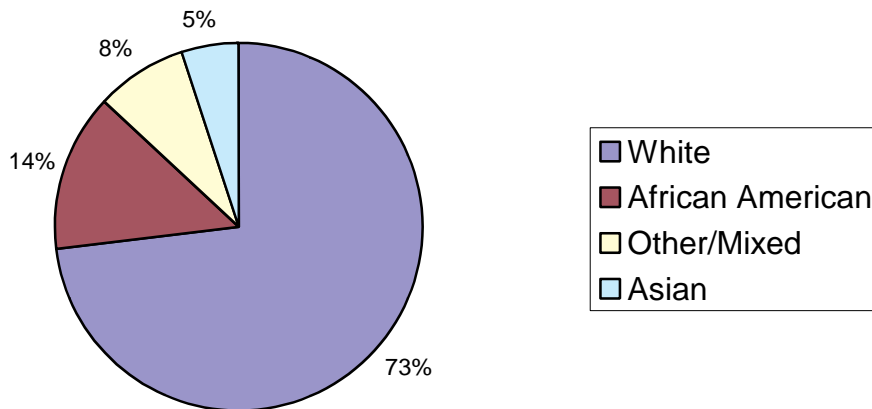
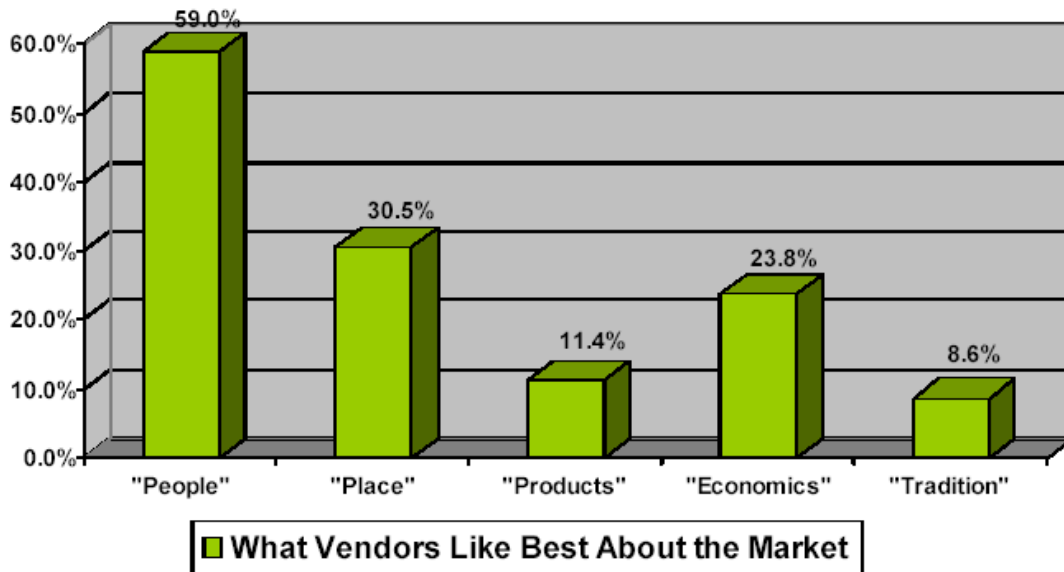


Chart 6: U.S. Farmers Markets 2000: A Study of Emerging Trends, (Payne, 2002)

Three fourths of all farmers markets have deemed themselves “producer only” venues. Producer only markets require that vendors grow the produce they sell, as opposed to vendors who buy wholesale produce and resell it at the market. Other products allowed at the studied markets nation-wide include: baked goods (75% of markets); processed foods, such as value added foods like jellies and jams, (63%); prepared foods, meant to be eaten at the market (52%); other growers crops (51%); crafts (48%); meat and poultry products (37%); and milk and dairy products (19%). An analysis of the product variation at the Fulton Street Farmers Market can be found in the Economic Trends section.

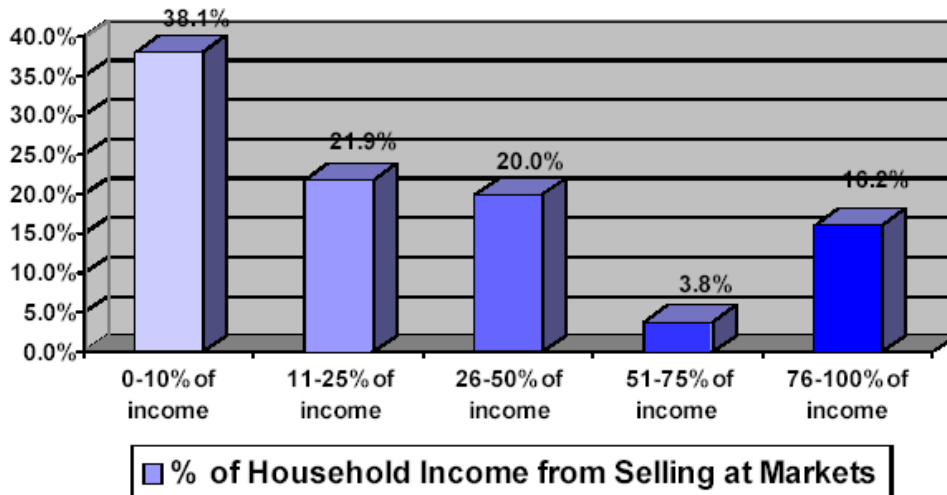
Anyone who sells produce, crafts, prepared or other products, also known as a “vendor”, is an integral part of the success of a farmers market. An overall increase of vendors in national and regional reports is an encouraging sign of growth for farmers markets. Most vendors travel from local production areas (10 miles or less), showing a demand and response for producer based, local food markets. Earning patterns also reflect the farmers subsidized income earned through market sales, and perhaps a social benefit for using farmers market venues instead of simply resale markets.



Graph 2: Created by the Project for Public Spaces and the Ford Foundation, 2003

The Project for Public Spaces report, *Public Market as a Vehicle for Social Integration and Upward Mobility*, gives an overview of vendor earning and opinions at low-income area markets in Berkley, San Francisco, Brooklyn, Los Angeles (two markets), Philadelphia, Cincinnati, and Washington, D.C. These results conclude that “people”, “place” and “economics” are the three greatest benefits that farmers markets offer vendors (See Graph 2).

Furthermore, in a study of eight low-income markets conducted by the Project for Public Spaces, it was discovered that a large proportion of full time vendors are not reaping large financial benefits (See Graph 3), with 38 percent earning 10% of their household income this way, and only 16.2 percent earning 76% to 100% of their household income through direct marketing. This reinforces what is reflected from the survey of vendor opinions shown below: that the social and community atmosphere draw vendors, not simply economic gain.



Graph 3: Created by the Project for Public Spaces and the Ford Foundation, 2003

With a large number of vendors (38%) earning only 0-10% of their income from markets, 20 percent of vendors earning 11-25 % of their income, 20 percent earning 26-50 % of their income, and approximately 20 percent still earning 51-100% of their income from markets, one can see that other occupations or multiple farmers market venues are needed by farmers to supplement their full income, though the people and places of farmers markets are major draws nonetheless.

Vendors at the Fulton Street Farmers Market:

According to the Fulton Street Farmers Market’s 2005 season vendor list provided by the market manager, there are 33 seasonal vendors and 54 daily vendors for a total of 87 vendors. Seasonal vendors pay an annual fee to reserve an assigned stall at the market for every day the market is open: Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. Daily vendors only sell on the days that there is available space. There are almost twice as many daily vendors as seasonal vendors selling at the farmers market (62% daily and 38% seasonal); however, there are only 20 stalls available (out of 122) for daily vendors. These stalls are distributed among daily vendors on a first-come-first-serve basis. The other 102 stalls are reserved for the seasonal vendors, which is based on seniority.

The vendors are traveling to the market from fifteen counties in central west and southwest Michigan (See Chart 7). Almost half of the vendors, 41 percent, are from Kent County. Another 40 percent of the vendors are traveling from adjacent counties including Barry, Allegan, Ottawa, Muskegon, Newaygo, and Montcalm. The nearby counties with the three highest percentages of vendors traveling to the market are as follows: Ottawa County (25%), Allegan County (6%), and Van Buren County (6%). See Appendix D for a county map of Michigan.

**Counties Vendors Travel from to Sell at
Fulton Street Farmers Market
(seasonal and daily vendors)**

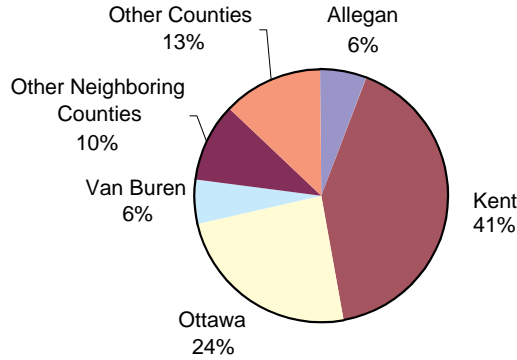
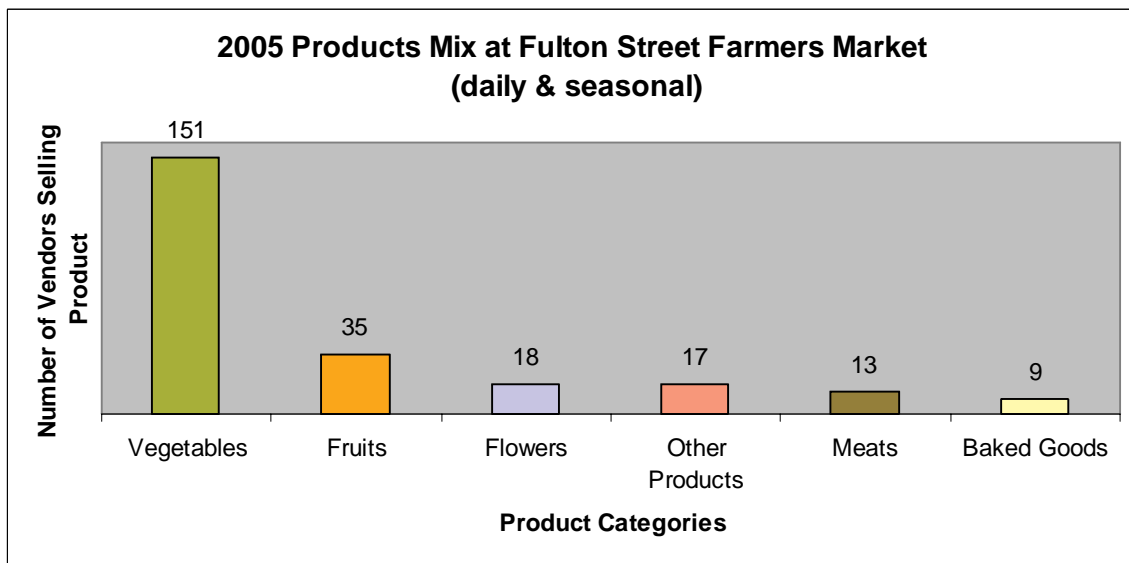


Chart 7: Location of all vendors at the Fulton Street Farmers Market

Product Mix at the Fulton Street Farmers Market:

During the 2005 market season, daily and seasonal vendors offered vegetables, fruits, flowers, meats, baked goods, and several other products. Vegetables were the most commonly sold item last year (151 vendors), followed by fruit (35 vendors), flowers (18 vendors), meats (13 vendors), baked goods (9 vendors), and other goods (17 vendors) (See Graph 4). Many vendors sell a combination of different goods; therefore, some vendors are included in more than one of the above product frequency counts. Since many daily vendors are only able to sell at the market on a first-come-first-serve basis, the above product vendor counts are not representative of an average market day.



Graph 4: 2005 Product Mix according to the current Fulton Street Farmers Market manager

Customers at the Fulton Street Farmers Market:

According to a September 2005 customer survey conducted by Calvin College students, the majority of the farmers market customers were from Kent County (See Chart 9). Of the 284 people surveyed, 49 (17%) were from the same zip code as the Fulton Street Farmers Market and 228 (79%) were from outside this zip code, but still resided within Kent County. The survey results estimate that nearly 67 percent of the market customers live in Grand Rapids. This shows that the majority of customers do not live in the Brikyaat or Midtown Neighborhood, but do live in Grand Rapids and Kent County. Six percent of customers are coming from the adjacent counties of Ionia County (0.4%), Berry County (1.8%), Newaygo County (0.4%), and Ottawa County (3.2%).

**Counties Customers Travel from to get to
Fulton Street Farmers Market**

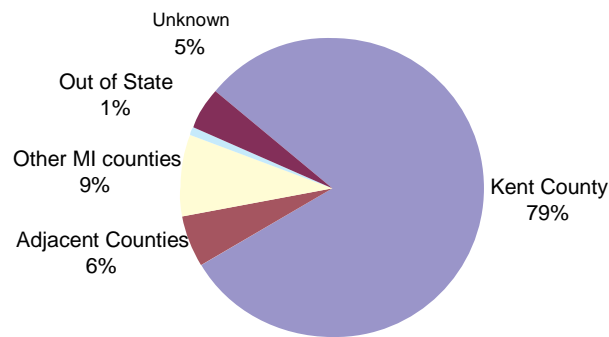
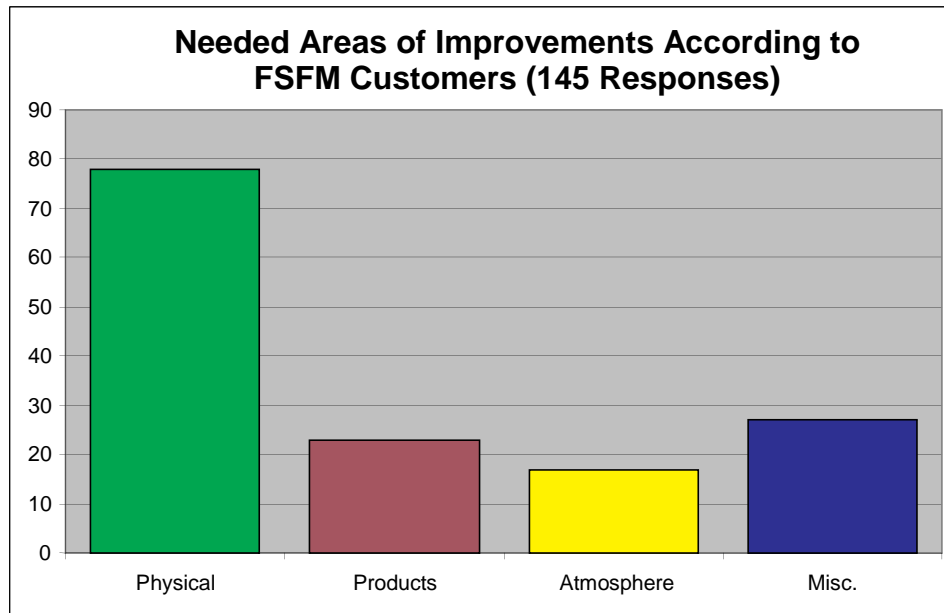


Chart 8: Counties customers are traveling from, according to a 2005 Customer Survey

Customers were asked, in a 2005 survey conducted by Calvin College students, if there was anything they thought the market needed to improve upon. Only 145 of the 284 individuals surveyed responded to this question. Their comments were broken down into the following four categories presented in the graph below: physical, products, atmosphere, and miscellaneous (See Graph 5).



Graph 5: Needed areas of improvement according to a 2005 customer survey

The physical category includes any comments that dealt with the layout of the market. A few examples of these comments are requests for improved parking, more shaded areas, and wider walkways. The product category includes comments on products that are currently available, along with requests for those that are not. For example, several comments requested more organic products, more variety and less resale produce at the market. The atmosphere category contains comments that related to the overall experience at the market, such as requests for no pets, no smoking, and more music. Included in the miscellaneous category were requests for longer hours, more locations, and selling customer market bags. The customers were able to give up to three improvement comments on the survey; however, the graph above represents only the first comment that the customer gave. It is clear from this graph that most customer comments regarded the physical aspects of the market.

Customers were also able to give general comments about the market. There were 121 responses and 131 comments, due to the fact that several individuals wrote more than one comment. **A majority of the comments (86) stated that they loved the market and did not want to see anything change.**

National Trends for Local, Community Based Farmers Market Organizational Structures:

The interdependent relationship between a farmers market and its surrounding environment can influence the success for both the vendors and the neighborhood where the market is located. “Farmers typically are great producers and all too often poor marketers,” says Bob Chorney, executive director for Farmers Markets Ontario (Corum, Rosenzweig, Gibson; 2001). This is the area that community groups or leaders can take the initiative, known as “community champions” for their influential, active and dedicated service in support of the market. These can include business improvement associations, chambers of commerce, or service organizations.

The right vendor mix, about five to six fresh producers for every craft vendor, can create a positive, consistent market that will not compete with local businesses that offer excessive retail products, both food and non-food. Crafts must be of high quality, homemade and reflect the market area “theme” – not creating a flea market atmosphere where haggling is encouraged. By creating a community and small-farmer friendly environment, consumers and producers alike can see the benefits that farmers markets add to the success of neighborhoods and regions (Corum, Rosenzweig, Gibson; 2001).

Special Note: Reselling fruits and vegetable grown by non-local farmers can be beneficial only when small farmers can sell in-state products to supplement their “producer only” income (Kellogg Foundation, 2003).

According to the *Public Markets and Community Based Food Systems* report, prepared for the W.K. Kellogg Foundation in conjunction with the Project for Public Spaces, successful local food systems within a farmers market context include the following characteristics:

- Access to fresh and affordable produce in socio-economically and ethnically diverse neighborhoods
- A profitable direct marketing system for small farmers
- A source of nutrition and health education for customers
- A seasonal source of emergency food to food pantries and soup kitchens
- A catalyst for sustainable growing practices
- A catalyst for preserving farmland
- A catalyst for expanding urban agricultural capabilities

Building Partnerships:

Health care agency partnerships with farmers markets to deal with issues pertaining to nutrition and obesity have been a rising trend. Other neighborhood organizations, oftentimes religious or community centers can be compatible with the missions of the farmers market, along with Farm-to-School cafeteria programs. Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), universities and other financially strong organizations can become the core support system for markets in need of funding. Creating planning partnerships concerning vending ordinances, developing civic squares around markets, and coordinating mass transit with markets are all positive partnership gains. Regional