



**Battle Creek Farmers Market  
Rapid Market Assessment**

**August 15, 2007**

**Patricia Alameda    Dru Montri  
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**Michigan Farmers Market Association  
&  
Michigan State University  
East Lansing, Michigan**



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Wednesday, August 15, 2007**

**Market Hours:** May - October  
Wednesday and Saturday 9 am - 1pm

**Location:** Festival Market Square  
Corner of Jackson and McCamly Streets  
Battle Creek

**Websites:** [www.battlecreekfarmersmarket.com](http://www.battlecreekfarmersmarket.com)

**Market Staff:** Jan Lawson, Market Master  
Brigette Leach, Secretary-Treasurer, Battle  
Creek Farmers Market Assoc.

**Market Day Comments:** Morning threatened rain; a few sprinkles,  
overcast, cloudy

**Age of Market:** Open since 1980

**Fees:** Wednesday- \$10/day, Saturday- \$15/day,  
\$20/wk,  
May- \$55/mo, Jun-Oct- \$65/mo  
\$200/yr

**Vendors:** 14

**Market Sales Estimate:** \$2,559

**Market Attendance Estimate:** 426

**RMA Team:** Patricia Alameda, Michigan State  
University; Dru Montri, Michigan Farmers  
Market Association; Susan Smalley, C.S.  
Mott Group for Sustainable Food Systems  
at MSU

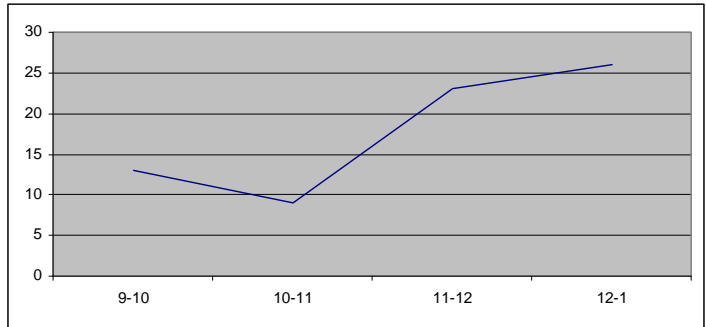
**Introduction:** Battle Creek Farmers Market is located in downtown Battle Creek, just outside the Festival Market Square. Sponsored by the Battle Creek Farmers Market Association, the market is limited to Michigan products and provides a wide variety including fruits, vegetables, meat, milk, annual and perennial plants and locally-processed foods. On Wednesdays in July and August musical entertainment is scheduled near the market. Special events are held at the market throughout the season.

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**I. Total Attendance: 426 Adults**

1st Hour (9-10) count =	13
2nd Hour (10-11) count =	9
3rd Hour (11-12) count =	23
4th Hour (12-1) count =	26
Total	71

Estimated total market customers= 426



*Comments: Assessment team members counted adults entering the market for ten minutes of each hour the market was open. The total customer count was multiplied by six to generate the estimate of attendance. Morning attendance was low. This may have been because of the rainy weather at the start of the market day. Weekday markets have different attendance patterns than weekend markets, and there may not be a large market until late morning. Attendance peaked during the last hour of the market day.*

*If this is a common trend, organizers might consider shifting market hours to later in the day to potentially increase profits. To the extent that the Wednesday market depends on people who work downtown, the busiest time is likely to be during lunch. A marketing strategy to consider is to print handbills promoting market products and market days/hours. Hire teens to deliver the hand bills to each office, business, and home within five or six blocks of the market.*

*Developing an email list of customers would let you remind people on Tuesday afternoon about the Wednesday market. Also, providing food products that can be eaten back at the office may attract area workers. And giving customers information about storing items safely through the afternoon may be helpful.*

**Attendance by entrance and hour**

<u>Time</u>	<u>Restaurant side</u>	<u>Parking Ramp side</u>	<u>Total/ Percentage</u>
9-10	9 19%	4 17%	13 18%
10-11	5 10%	4 17%	9 13%
11-12	16 33%	7 30%	23 32%
12-1	18 38%	8 35%	26 37%
Total	48	23	71

*Comments: Although the market is located adjacent to a parking ramp, only about one third of the customers entered the market from the ramp area. About two thirds of the customers either walked to the market from nearby offices and*

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*stores or parked in nearby lots. People not familiar with the market may think that parking would be a problem since it is downtown. It may be worthwhile to mention convenient parking options in market advertising and publicity.*

**II. Dot Survey Questions**

**Question 1: Compared to food I buy at the supermarket I consider food from the farmers market to be:**

	<u>9:00-1:00</u>
Safer overall	81 74%
Less safe overall	6 5%
No more or less safe	0 0%
Safety depends on the vendor	23 21%
Total	110

*Comments: Nearly three-quarters of the respondents said that they believed the food at the market to be safer overall than the food they purchased at the supermarket, which is a great unique selling point for the market. 21 percent of the respondents believed the safety of the food depended on the vendor. It would be helpful to know what safety concerns the market consumers had in order for individual vendors to address these, and ultimately capitalize on the perceived increased safety of market products.*

**Question 2: My biggest food safety priority when I shop at this market is:**

	<u>9:00-1:00</u>
Clean, safe food samples	1 1%
Getting information about keeping food safe	4 4%
Washing food I buy before we eat it	41 39%
Food staying within safe temperature at the market	6 6%
Food staying within safe temperature after I buy it	4 4%
Vendors properly licensed & inspected	5 5%
Learning how & where food was produced	18 17%
Knowing person who produced the food	26 25%
Total	105

*Comments: The most common food safety concern among market consumers, with 39%, was washing the produce before they eat it. This may indicate good consumer awareness of how important this practice is. It could also be an indication that customers see food at the market which retains soil. Washing*

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*food carefully before bringing it to market AND reminding customers to wash it again when they take it home are both important practices for market vendors.*

*The second most common response, at 25%, was knowing the person who produced their food. This is one of the main motivations for many people to shop at farmers markets. The Battle Creek Farmers Market is already promoting its home grown products and the message seems to be resonating with many of its customers.*

*Third, at 17%, was learning how and where the food was produced. Some of that information is provided by vendors as they talk with customers and sell them food. Vendors could also provide more information by creating signs, posting farm photos, and the like.*

**Question 3: How much have you / will you spend at the farmers market today?**

<u>Amount spent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
\$0	0	0%
\$5	25	25%
\$10	34	33%
\$15	17	17%
\$20	10	10%
\$25	6	6%
\$30	5	5%
\$35	3	3%
\$40	1	1%
\$45	1	1%
\$50 or more	0	0%
Total	102	
Mean	\$13.82	
Median	\$10	
Mode	\$10	

*Comments: The average or mean customer expenditure at the market was \$13.82; the median and mode customer expenditure were each \$10. The meat vendor at the market probably helps to keep up the level of per-customer sales. Providing an option for customers to purchase using food stamps/EBT may be a strategy to increase overall sales.*

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**Question 4: How many people are you shopping for today including yourself?**

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
1	27	25%
2	48	44%
3	15	14%
4	11	10%
5	7	6%
6+	0	0%
Total	108	
Mean		2.3
Median		2
Mode		2

*Comments: Forty-four percent of the customers reported that they were shopping for two people. Additionally, 25 percent of customers reported that they were shopping for one person. The average number of people that market customers were shopping for was 2.3. This seems consistent with Question 3 -- the percentages shopping for one or two people are similar to the percentages spending \$5-\$10. Vendors may want to package products in quantities appropriate for small households and provide recipes for 1-2 people.*

**Question 5: If this market could add one more vendor what should it be?**

<u>Product</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Bakery	10	10%
Organic produce	29	28%
Meat/poultry	5	5%
Cheese	25	24%
Ethnic food	16	16%
Ready to eat	18	17%
Total	103	

*Comments: According to 28% of market customers, the vendor or product that is most needed at this market is an organic vendor, followed closely by a cheese vendor, desired by 24% of customers. Ready to eat products and ethnic foods were third (17%) and fourth (16%). With many customers visiting the market around mid-day, ready to eat foods and cheese could both serve as lunch for the customers. All these items would add even more variety to an already varied market, likely increasing customer interest and sales.*

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**Estimated Market Day Sales**

A very conservative estimate of total market sales for the day is developed by dividing the estimated total number of adult customers (426) by the mean number of people customers were shopping for (2.3) and multiplying by the mean customer expenditure (\$13.82). This method very conservatively estimates total market sales for the day at \$2,559.

**III. Constructive Comments/Observations**

**Physical Site**

**What team members appreciated about the physical site**

Access:

- ❖ Market is surrounded by a good number (at least two) of parking lots
- ❖ Close proximity to hotel and office buildings
- ❖ Easy for trucks to back in on one side

Flow of people and traffic:

- ❖ Aisle space is good enough
- ❖ Easy to walk through the market

Organization of market:

- ❖ Well aligned by the sides allowing space for vendors
- ❖ I understand that this arrangement is new, but it seems to be working

Access to electricity:

- ❖ Good access due to the location by stores
- ❖ Some electricity, offering EBT

Other:

- ❖ I like the Friends of the Market package and the cheering when a new "friend" joins
- ❖ Canvas canopy is a plus

**Improvements and Questions**

Access:

- ❖ Traffic in early morning by side road
- ❖ Farmers and vendors should consider moving their vehicles to help make the market more visible. The trucks really block the view of the market from festival market square and surrounding office buildings. If people in

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overlooking buildings and those driving past could see the food in the market rather than trucks, more may shop at the market.

- ❖ Parking may be a challenge; was an issue for at least one vendor

Flow of people and traffic:

- ❖ Fairly narrow aisles for customers with full arms
- ❖ Should think through how to draw shoppers from the concert goers
- ❖ Would local senior citizens centers make the farmers market a weekly outing trip for their residents, clients?

Organization of Market:

- ❖ Banner could be placed by the light intersection in the corner
- ❖ Vendors lined up on both sides of the walk

Access to electricity, phone line:

- ❖ Access to telephone line but have to run a long cord because of the new market location

### **Atmosphere**

#### **What team members appreciate about the market atmosphere**

Market feel:

- ❖ Start was slow today
- ❖ Nice market atmosphere
- ❖ Good location in the market square-nice space under awning
- ❖ Music at market
- ❖ Nice friends table
- ❖ Coffee
- ❖ Calm in the morning
- ❖ More alive, happy, talkative around 11 a.m.

Shopper Demographics:

- ❖ Pulling a decent number of women from nearby businesses on their breaks or lunch hours
- ❖ Market shoppers are predominantly women
- ❖ Mostly elderly, seem to be frequent shoppers
- ❖ Customers shopping on 10 min. breaks

Interactions, Conversations:

- ❖ Brigitte indicated that there is a nice social bond between vendors and time to interact
- ❖ Vendors keep an eye on each other's stalls and sell for each other
- ❖ Vendors are having good interactions with customers

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- ❖ Vendors talk to customers about their produce-how it looks and when it was picked

Educational or Entertainment Activities:

- ❖ Music from vendor's truck
- ❖ None observed, but according to the Web site, there are a good number of events planned
- ❖ At noon hour Wednesday Concert Series and Lakeview Sax Quartet
- ❖ Schedule shows many special activities

Other:

- ❖ At early morning times, people were wondering if the restaurant at the corner was open to buy coffee. Market may want to work with coffee shop management to coordinate efforts on market days.

**Improvements and Questions**

Market feel:

- ❖ Work to better integrate Festival Market Square and farmers market

Shopper Demographics:

- ❖ Because the market accepts Project FRESH and Bridge Cards, reaching out to low-income families via more active marketing could increase the total number of market shoppers

Interactions Conversations:

- ❖ Provide a space where customers can interact; tables and benches are available outside of the market, which might be just as well to prevent congestion in the market

Educational/Entertainment Activities:

- ❖ Could include Master Gardeners
- ❖ Children's activities may help draw families from the area. Is there potential for library to conduct story hours?

Other:

- ❖ WIC office distributes coupons at Springfield, but not BC. May wish to contact Health Department about an additional distribution site.
- ❖ Maybe sell breakfast -- local food including coffee?

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**Vendors and Products**

**What team members appreciate about vendors and products**

Product Mix:

- ❖ Overall a nice diversity at the market
- ❖ Good product variety -- fruits, vegetables, cut flowers, meat, poultry, bakery
- ❖ Peaches, tomatoes, lots of green peppers

Product Quality:

- ❖ High quality, fresh produce
- ❖ Looks good overall
- ❖ Mostly pretty fresh

Signage:

- ❖ Farmers market banner near one entrance
- ❖ Several vendors putting signs up high

Display:

- ❖ Some vendors do a nice job of displaying produce in a tiered manner, using height to help the sale
- ❖ One tilted counter/overhead sign stand
- ❖ One table using shelf to elevate
- ❖ Good meat display approach
- ❖ One vendor has a slightly slanted stand to hold produce, makes it easy for customers to view

Customer Service:

- ❖ Many vendors do a nice job of explaining their product and how to use it
- ❖ Observed a vendor helping a customer to their car with a purchase
- ❖ Some vendors wearing shirts to ID farm – great idea
- ❖ Vendors giving suggestions on how to take care of flowers

Food Safety:

- ❖ No samples observed at the market, so avoiding any related issues
- ❖ Meat vendor was careful to keep meat cool
- ❖ Cookies were placed in containers
- ❖ Coolers used for storing eggs
- ❖ Plastic containers used for storing food/cookies
- ❖ Meat items appeared to be properly labeled and are processed in USDA certified facility

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**Improvements and Questions**

Product Mix:

- ❖ One woman indicated she would like to see goat cheese and other goat dairy products
- ❖ Not clear whether all items are grown by the people selling them
- ❖ One customer looking for sugar-free cookies

Product Quality:

- ❖ Encourage vendors to provide fresh baked goods as opposed to thaw and bake items
- ❖ Fruit flies were in evident at some stalls, possibly indicating over-ripeness
- ❖ Some vegetables were bruised

Signage:

- ❖ Prices are not clearly indicated at all vendor stalls; clear pricing helps sales
- ❖ Signs should indicate where produce was grown to underscore home grown quality of market
- ❖ Encourage/require all vendors to have signs identifying farm/business
- ❖ Provide signs to show prices of all items
- ❖ Organic signs?

Display:

- ❖ All vendors could be encouraged to use table cloths and draping to enhance market appearance
- ❖ Vendors could take advantage of vertical space with more racks, stepped display, tilted trays or boxes

Customer Service:

- ❖ Melons on ground, not a good idea; put in a box, basket, wading pool, etc.

Food Safety:

- ❖ Provide covered trash receptacles in market area -- especially near entrances/exits
- ❖ No water source for produce
- ❖ Equipment washing observed
- ❖ Saw some vendors holding cookies with napkins; better to use gloves or tongs
- ❖ Ask vendors to use thermometers to monitor temperature in coolers. Meat vendor could use freezer chest and plug in because electricity is available
- ❖ Does meat displayed remain fairly frozen? Are eggs and meat at or below 41 degrees?

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Other:

- ❖ How does craft/jewelry vendor fit within scope of homegrown farm products?
- ❖ Can raw milk be sold as pet food at a farmers market? Is this a potential liability for the market?