



**Meridian Township Farmer's Market
Rapid Market Assessment
Saturday, September 8, 2007**

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**Michigan Farmers Market Association
&
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East Lansing, Michigan**



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Market Hours:	May-June, Saturday 8 am -2 pm July-October, Wednesday & Saturday 8 am – 2 pm
Location:	Corner of Marsh and Central Park Dr. behind Meridian Township Offices, 5151 Marsh Road
Website:	<u>N/A</u>
Market Staff:	LuAnn Maisner, Director of Parks and Recreation Sharon Pierce, Market Manager
Market Day Comments:	Sunny, beautiful day
Age of Market:	Open since 1974
Fees:	Annual: \$215/stall, Sat. & Wed. Spring (May- June): \$65/stall, Sat. Summer/ Fall (July- Oct.): \$150/stall, Sat & Wed. Daily: \$25 Sat.; \$10 Wed.
Vendors:	32 on 9/8/2007
Market Sales Estimate:	\$ 34,563
Market Attendance Estimate:	2,376
RMA Team:	Pati Alameda, John Dahl, Laura Kassenbrock, Bianca Segura, Susan Smalley

Introduction: The Meridian Township Farmers Market was started by the township as a way to bring people together and to build community. Started with just a few vendors, the market now attracts a wide diversity of vendors and customers. Product variety includes fresh, local fruits & vegetables, herbs, Asian produce, homemade baked goods, preserves, prepared foods, stone ground organic grains, honey & maple syrup, eggs, fresh fish, frozen lamb, homemade jerky, cut & dried flowers, potted plants & shrubs, garden planters, etc. There is a strong emphasis on local, farmer-grown produce and also organic and ecologically grown.

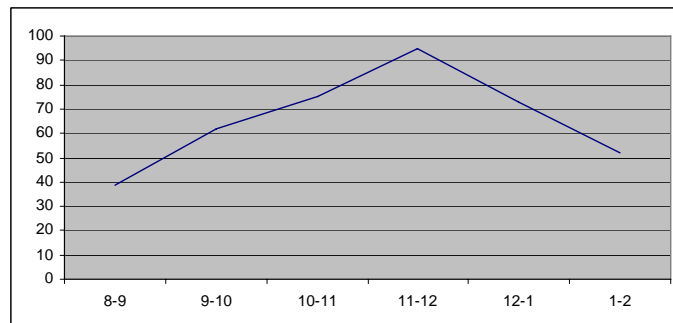
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I. Estimated Attendance: 2,376

1st Hour (8-9) count =	39
2nd Hour (9-10) count =	62
3rd Hour (10-11) count =	75
4th Hour (11-12) count =	95
5th Hour (12-1) count =	73
6th Hour (1-2) count =	52

Total 396

Estimated of total market customers = 2,376



Comments: Team members counted the numbers of adults entering the market for ten minutes of each hour. The total number of adult customers counted was multiplied by six to estimate total market attendance. Business built over the first three hours of the market day, two hours. Market customers are spread well through the entire market day.

Attendance by entrance and hour

Time	South		Middle		North		Total:	
8-9	22	13%	13	9%	4	6%	39	10%
9-10	30	17%	24	16%	8	12%	62	16%
10-11	33	19%	27	18%	15	22%	75	20%
11-12	35	20%	32	21%	28	41%	95	25%
12-1	32	18%	29	19%	12	17%	73	19%
1-2	24	14%	26	17%	2	3%	52	14%
Total	176		151		69		396	

Comments: The market does not have a main entrance. Most customers enter through the two entrances (south and middle) that directly face the parking lot, with many fewer entering from the north end, through the vendors located outside the pavilion.

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II. Dot Survey Questions

Question 1: Where do you live?

	<u>8:00-10:30</u>		<u>10:30-12:30</u>		<u>12:30-2:00</u>		<u>Total/ Percentage</u>	
Okemos	47	30%	26	25%	51	24%	124	26%
Haslett	28	18%	7	7%	29	14%	64	14%
East Lansing	44	28%	36	34%	65	31%	145	31%
Lansing	13	8%	12	11%	26	12%	51	11%
Other	23	15%	25	24%	40	19%	88	19%
Total	155		106		211		472	

Comments: Of the customers surveyed, 40% reported that they live in Okemos or Haslett, communities lying within Meridian Township, the entity that sponsors the market. 31% reported living in East Lansing. Some of these shoppers may also live in Meridian township since some township residents have East Lansing mailing addresses. 11% reported living in Lansing and 19% in other places.

One reason that the market was originally established was to provide a central place for township residents to meet and interact. This data indicates that quite a few township residents are patronizing the market and it is also bringing other people into the township.

Question 2: How important is it to you that foods in this market be marked to indicate whether they are homegrown, farmer direct or wholesale?

	<u>8:00-10:30</u>		<u>10:30-12:30</u>		<u>12:30-2:00</u>		<u>Total/ Percentage</u>	
Important	142	93%	100	98%	193	92%	435	94%
Not Important	9	6%	2	2%	5	2%	16	3%
Don't understand the terms	1	1%	0	0%	3	1%	4	1%
Have not noticed	1	1%	0	0%	8	4%	9	2%
Total	153		102		209		464	

Comments: Nearly all (94%) of the customers surveyed reported that it was important to them that foods in the market be marked to indicate whether they are homegrown, farmer direct or wholesale. Just 3% reported that this was not important to them, 2% reported that they had not noticed and 1% reported that they did not understand the terms.

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

	<u>8:00-10:30</u>		<u>10:30-12:30</u>		<u>12:30-2:00</u>		<u>Total/ Percentage</u>	
\$0	0	0%	1	1%	2	1%	3	1%
\$5	5	3%	12	11%	14	7%	31	7%
\$10	16	10%	28	27%	41	19%	85	18%
\$15	22	14%	19	18%	33	15%	74	16%
\$20	31	20%	15	14%	44	21%	90	19%
\$25	24	16%	10	10%	30	14%	64	14%
\$30	15	10%	15	14%	18	8%	48	10%
\$35	9	6%	1	1%	7	3%	17	4%
\$40	12	8%	0	0%	10	5%	22	5%
\$45	1	1%	2	2%	3	1%	6	1%
\$50 or more	18	12%	2	2%	12	6%	32	7%
Total	153		105		214		472	
Mean					\$21.82			
Median					\$20			
Mode					\$20			

Comments: The mean or average expenditure that shoppers reported was \$21.82. The median was \$20, meaning that half the shoppers spent less than \$20 and half spent more than \$20. More shoppers spent \$20 than any other single amount.

Question 4: How many adults are in your shopping party today?

	<u>8:00- 10:30</u>		<u>10:30- 12:30</u>		<u>12:30-2:00</u>		<u>Total/Percentage</u>	
1	88	57%	60	57%	113	56%	261	57%
2	61	40%	34	32%	66	33%	161	35%
3	5	3%	8	8%	17	8%	30	7%
4	0	0%	4	4%	3	1%	7	2%
5	0	0%	0	0%	2	1%	2	0%
6+	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Total	154		106		201		461	
Mean					1.5			
Median					1			
Mode					1			

Comments: The mean or average number of adults in each shopping party was 1.5, with the median or middle 1, and the mode or most common also 1.

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Estimated Market Day Sales

A conservative estimate of total market sales for the day is developed by dividing the estimated total number of adult customers (2,376) by the size of people customers were shopping for (1.5) and multiplying by the mean customer expenditure (\$21.82). This method very conservatively estimates total market sales for the day at \$34,563.

Question 5: What is the primary reason for your market visit today?

	<u>8-10:30</u>		<u>10:30-12:30</u>		<u>12:30-2</u>		<u>Total/Percentage</u>	
To buy food directly from the person who grew it	116	73%	85	79%	138	63%	339	70%
To buy food that was grown in Michigan	23	14%	11	10%	42	19%	76	16%
To stretch my food budget	1	1%	0	0%	3	1%	4	1%
To buy certified organic and/or ecologically grown food	20	13%	11	10%	36	16%	67	14%
Total	160		107		219		486	

Comments: Of the customers surveyed, 70% reported that their primary reason for visiting the market was to buy food directly from the person who grew it. The next reasons reported were to buy food grown in Michigan and to buy certified organic and/or ecologically grown food, at 16% and 14% respectively. Only 1% of the customers surveyed indicated that their primary reason for visiting the market was to stretch their food budget.

III. Constructive Comments/Observations

Physical Site

What team members appreciated about the physical site:

Access:

- ❖ Parking is organized in the morning (when less busy)
- ❖ Good, even pavement
- ❖ Wide enough sidewalks and aisles
- ❖ Handicapped parking available

Flow of people and traffic:

- ❖ Hectic at times, but mostly a good flow
- ❖ Very busy!

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- ❖ Very active
- ❖ Seem to be loyal shoppers
- ❖ Flows well given setting and market size
- ❖ Flow appears to be good, with everyone having an enjoyable time

Liability Issues:

- ❖ Dogs are prohibited from the market
- ❖ Parking enforcement strolled around parking lot

Organization of market:

- ❖ Everyone has an assigned place
- ❖ Well organized to accommodate many parking stalls
- ❖ Fish vendor is a big draw-brings customers out onto sidewalk
- ❖ Parking lot on side of market
- ❖ Mixture of stands
- ❖ Allows customers to walk around more, allowing them to see other stands
- ❖ Good, easy to see everything and move from display to display

Access to electricity:

- ❖ Lights inside pavilion

Other:

- ❖ Every vendor is very well organized with product
- ❖ On site visible market manager wearing identification

Improvements and Questions

Access:

- ❖ Roof over wing to help when very hot-Vendor indicated that only about 20 percent of the people visit the wing during hot weather
- ❖ Lots of people mentioned the parking problem
- ❖ Not enough handicapped spaces
- ❖ Difficult for cyclists
- ❖ Need someone to direct traffic/parking
- ❖ Location is a bit hidden
- ❖ Handicapped parking space is used a lot
- ❖ It would be nice if traffic could be directed first through north end before hitting main market
- ❖ Parking
- ❖ Hard to get through the crowd

Flow of people and traffic:

- ❖ Wider sidewalks on the wing section
- ❖ Market is small for amount of people, but crowding may enhance appeal of market for some

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- ❖ When market gets busy, pavilion, parking lot, sidewalk become very crowded
- ❖ Flow, especially inside pavilion, gets mixed, no clear flow
- ❖ Very disorderly
- ❖ No designated point of entry, though not sure if this could be improved without changing locations
- ❖ Hard to push a stroller or wheelchair through
- ❖ Bike racks would be a positive addition

Liability Issues:

- ❖ Crowding may tempt pick-pockets
- ❖ Saw one person trip on concrete parking strip
- ❖ Signs about no pets allowed: What happens if customers bring pets?
- ❖ Hopefully can provide helpers to guide cars pulling out of parking spaces (volunteers)
- ❖ High traffic, fire safety issues?
- ❖ Walking into parking lot from all different directions and between parked cars could be hazardous
- ❖ Emergency plan?

Organization of Market:

- ❖ Aisles are small, crowding customers
- ❖ Lots of vendors in too small a space
- ❖ Market could be larger
- ❖ May want to consider establishing a more visible site for central market information that could include a map of market vendors, information, recipes, demonstrations, etc. This could be in a tent but should be in an established location.

Access to electricity, phone line:

- ❖ Didn't see much access
- ❖ More access could accommodate refrigerator storage
- ❖ Maybe an ATM nearby in case some people are short on cash
- ❖ Is there any access?
- ❖ Debit/credit card token system possible?

Other:

- ❖ Some customers leaving pets tied up across the bridge

Atmosphere

What team members appreciate about the market atmosphere

Market feel:

- ❖ Welcome feeling

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- ❖ Very popular market!
- ❖ People stopping to talk in smaller groups
- ❖ Early morning pretty quiet, but active by 10 a.m.
- ❖ Vendors know and support each other
- ❖ Friendly, family feeling
- ❖ Friendly environment
- ❖ Most vendors have been coming a long time
- ❖ Nice mix of colors and variety of vegetables

Shopper Demographics:

- ❖ Middle-aged, varied but mostly Caucasian, middle income
- ❖ Mixed ages
- ❖ Many singles and couples
- ❖ Some children-especially in the early morning
- ❖ Most customers appear to be middle-upper income
- ❖ Mostly white but some Indian and Asian
- ❖ Mostly 50 and up
- ❖ Wide variety of income levels
- ❖ Lots of strollers, a few wheel chairs
- ❖ Mixed genders and ages
- ❖ Kid-friendly items like popcorn, treats, playground

Interactions, Conversations:

- ❖ Conversation on harvest between the vendors
- ❖ One customer said to her friends, "This is like the new town square!"
- ❖ Neighbors and friends come here to meet
- ❖ Customers comment on variability
- ❖ Great customer-vendor interaction
- ❖ More than half of the vendors are very nice, giving suggestions and helping pick produce
- ❖ Customer suggested to vendor how they could sell better
- ❖ Vendors very friendly and helpful with suggestions
- ❖ People saying they came from a town or a few towns away

Educational or Entertainment Activities:

- ❖ Playground for kids
- ❖ Information stand about funding the solar circle to support Tanzania
- ❖ Mutant vegetable of the week
- ❖ Take home recipes are a great idea

Other:

- ❖ Make water available because of heat and number of people
- ❖ Seating area for people to hang out
- ❖ Counted five cyclists, one with baby in baby seat

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Improvements and Questions

Shopper Demographics:

- ❖ Advertisement made to attract a younger crowd

Educational/Entertainment Activities:

- ❖ None today
- ❖ Music would be great, but where would they put it?
- ❖ With so many shoppers, music would be great/attractive
- ❖ Could have short, educational demonstrations (10 minutes each hour) on cooking vegetable dishes, etc.
- ❖ More clear education on where food came from -- maybe one central vendor map-“How far did your food travel?”

Vendors and Products

What team members appreciate about vendors and products

Product Mix:

- ❖ Fresh fish is a great seller and customers come back for it each week
- ❖ Variation of fresh fruit, vegetables, flowers, to ready made food and bakery goods
- ❖ Plants, coffee, cooked foods, vegetables
- ❖ Many tomatoes
- ❖ Coffee a popular recent addition
- ❖ Good product variety
- ❖ Great! Have jerkey, honey, herbs, root vegetables, nursery stock, even coffee and fresh popcorn

Product Quality:

- ❖ Bakery is good
- ❖ Fruits and vegetables seem fresh and healthy-other products also seem fresh
- ❖ Excellent quality overall
- ❖ Looks good
- ❖ Vegetables look good
- ❖ Vendors are conscientious about presenting top quality produce and fruits

Signs:

- ❖ Signs everywhere announcing if organic, homegrown, etc.
- ❖ Most vendors doing a good job with price signs
- ❖ Many good signs identifying farms, businesses
- ❖ Samia's Gourmet-great signs, two on the side and a big sign hanging on back
- ❖ Most have farm/business logo

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- ❖ Most have organic or locally grown signs
- ❖ Great price signs

Display:

- ❖ Flowers are attractive
- ❖ Recipe table
- ❖ Vendors using picnic tables well to display product
- ❖ Good to see more signs up high-visible
- ❖ Creative, colorful mix of products
- ❖ Many good table coverings
- ❖ Great! Many vendors are using their vertical space, baskets, table cloths, etc.
- ❖ Beautiful displays
- ❖ Farmers take pride in their display
- ❖ Colorful displays that attract attention, especially flowers
- ❖ Most do a nice job of displaying products

Customer Service:

- ❖ Vendors are ready to answer any questions
- ❖ Very generous, helpful
- ❖ Provided a lot of suggestions
- ❖ Vendors help customers bag items and even select produce
- ❖ Vendors are very accommodating
- ❖ Vendors are nice, but lines can form making customers grumpy

Food Safety:

- ❖ Areas are very clean
- ❖ No samples
- ❖ Good use of plastic bags, food covered
- ❖ Looks good

Other:

- ❖ Vendors said that an extended roof would work well
- ❖ Vendors sell more before noon, after this time, customer flow slows down
- ❖ "Even if flow slows after 12 p.m., the hours are fine. Some customers can't come early." -Vendor

Improvements and Questions

Product Mix:

- ❖ More herbs?

Product Quality:

- ❖ Bruised tomatoes

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Signs:

- ❖ Sign pointing out where food, coffee sites can be found
- ❖ Some farm/business logos are at the back of the booth-making them hard to see
- ❖ Could use uniforms or other vendor identification, bigger signs from market org so consumers know
- ❖ Need better sign for bathrooms
- ❖ Need bigger signs at Marsh Rd./Grand River
- ❖ Could be better directions on where food and drink vendors are located, also on origin of produce
- ❖ Vendors selling homegrown and farmer direct seemed more likely to identify their products than those selling food procured from the wholesale market
- ❖ One customer stated: "I assume that everything in the market is home grown." Many other customers commented that they came for organic or ecological AND to buy from the farmer that grew the food

Customer Service:

- ❖ Investigate ways to legally provide samples of fruit so customers can get a better idea of taste
- ❖ Some stalls need more staff

Food Safety:

- ❖ Better shading for some vendors
- ❖ Gloves would work well while handling food (cookies)
- ❖ One caramel apple vendor didn't use protective wrap over apples, which attracted bugs
- ❖ Didn't see any trash receptacles

Other:

- ❖ Better protection in bad weather for vendors and shoppers
- ❖ May want to consider having a seating area where food vendors could be placed around

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**Meridian Township Farmers Market Suggestions-
Open Ended, from Suggestion Box**

I love the Market
I love being here- the atmosphere is so community-oriented. I learn a lot from the growers and I like the political tables & information.
As this is a macrocosm of our local community, we enjoy the non-vendors or other announcements of events and activities (except the politicians)
Love the Market
Can't live without it!
My primary reason for shopping here is because of the sense of community and as a "social" occasion. I see so many of my friends and come with my friends. I think you should have asked this question on your survey. I know this is a reason many of my friends come here on Saturdays
Signs
Please find a larger venue for more vendors and to reduce the crowd. Otherwise we love it.
Please clarify exactly what is "organic." Some vendors say they are organic farmers; in reality, they are not totally truthful. Thanks for your help.
Have a map of where everything is on booths out front.
I'd like to see organic or certified organic signs readily visible. "No sprays"- does it apply to all their produce? Hard to make decisions to support organic farmers without more clear labeling. Maybe more uniform or consistent signs.
Transportation & parking
I think that each vendor should have a little placard with their name, location of their farm, where their products are grown- weather their products are purchased from a wholesale vendor, etc. I want to know if what I am buying is grown by the vendors.
Please add bike racks, Bus stop?
Encourage alternative transportation
There is a bike path all the way from East Lansing; the Farmers Market should advertise that
Actually, I would love to have the Farmers Market in East Lansing, but the bike ride is nice on a Sat. too!
Suggestion: extend Wed. hours to the late time (was it 5?) so people can leave work only a little early
Move market to Meridian parking lot of old Meridian for better parking; drove 10 min. today trying to park
Market hours & schedule
I'm glad you have the artisan market and the farmers market on different days
Extend the Okemos farmers market to be year round if possible.

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I like it when the farmers market is open until 5 p.m.- then I can get there after work (now I can't on Wednesday!)
Miscellaneous
Have a little sit down coffee/ tea/ pastries area.
It would be good to have an ATM option like Allen St. Farmers Market; wooden tokens are easy, too.
All prices are same, fixed prices not good.
I will not buy produce from a vendor who buys their stuff from a wholesale market.

Compiled by:
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