

**Birmingham Farmers Market
Rapid Market Assessment**

September 7, 2008

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



Birmingham Farmers Market
Rapid Market Assessment
Sunday September 7, 2008

Market Sponsor: Birmingham Principal Business District
Market Hours: Sundays, June through October, 9 AM-2PM (22 weeks)
Location: 660 N. Old Woodward, City Parking Lot #6, north of Maple, south of Oak
Website: www.enjoybirmingham.com
Market Staff: Richard “Cousin Don” Hobson, Market Manager
Market Day Comments: Rainy until about 10:30, then clear, sunny and beautiful
Age of Market: Started in 2003
Fees: \$660 per season for 18’x18’ boot space; \$220 per season for electricity
Vendors: Typically 42 vendors each week, but early rain reduced vendors on assessment day to 21 vendors plus 3 information/education tents
Market Sales Estimate: \$16,671
Market Attendance Estimate: 1,410 adults
RMA Team: Jim Bingen, MSU; Cheryl Danley, MSU; Robin Danto, MSU Extension Oakland County; Fay Hansen, MSU and farmer; Masanori Kimura, Tokyo University of Agriculture; Ilene Satchell, educational consultant and former farmer; Susan Smalley, MSU; Pam Weinstein, farmers market manager

Introduction: The Birmingham Farmers Market was started in 2001. Sponsored by the Birmingham Principal Business District, the Sunday market draws customers from Birmingham, Bloomfield and surrounding areas for products that are primarily Michigan grown, produced or manufactured.

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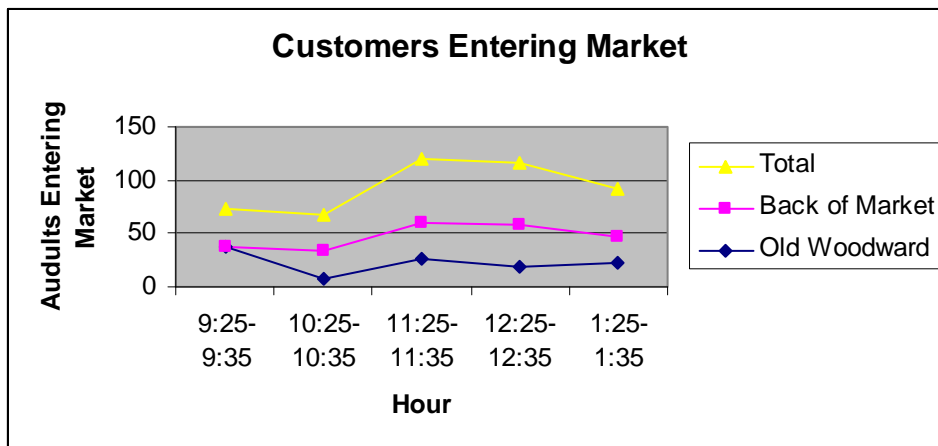
I. Total Estimated Attendance: 1,410

1 st hour (9-10) count =	37
2 nd hour (10-11) count =	34
3 rd hour (11-12) count =	60
4 th hour (12-1) count =	58
5 th hour (1-2) count =	46
Total Count =	235
Estimate of Total Market Customers =	1,410

Comments: The total count represents the number of adults entering the market during ten minutes of every hour. This count was multiplied by six to estimate total attendance of adults at the market. Rainy weather during the first part of the morning likely contributed to the market's relatively slow start, but customer numbers increased significantly after 11:00 AM and continued strong to the market's close.

Attendance by entrance and hour

	Old Woodward		Back (North) of Market		Total	
9:25-9:35	37	33%			37	16%
10:25-10:35	7	6%	27	22%	34	14%
11:25-11:35	27	24%	33	27%	60	26%
12:25-12:35	18	16%	40	33%	58	25%
1:25-1:35	23	20%	23	19%	46	20%
Total	112		123		235	



Comments: Early in the market day, most customers entered from Old Woodward. Later, perhaps as traffic and activity on Old Woodward increased and parking became less available, most customers entered from the back of the market.

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II. Dot Survey Questions

Question 1: What is your primary reason for coming downtown today?

	9:00-11:40 AM		11:40 AM-1:05 PM		1:05-2:00 PM		Total	
Shop at the farmers market	90	90%	83	81%	50	76%	223	84%
Eat downtown	4	4%	2	2%	5	7%	11	4%
Shop downtown	0	0%	1	1%	1	1%	2	1%
Birmingham atmosphere & experience	1	1%	4	4%	7	11%	12	4%
Other	5	5%	11	11%	3	4%	19	7%
Total	100		101		66		267	

Comments: Most (84%) of the customers surveyed indicated that their primary reason for coming downtown was to shop at the market, showing that it does draw significant numbers of people to the downtown area. Very few customers said that they came primarily to eat downtown (4%) or shop downtown (1%) or to enjoy the downtown atmosphere (4%). The very low number of people who came to shop is logical since the Sunday morning/early afternoon scheduling of the market is a time when few other shopping venues are open. Of the 7% who indicated that something else was their primary reason to come downtown, researchers hypothesize that coming to church was a probable option based on the way some market customers were dressed.

Question 2: Which of the following products would most likely bring you to this market in May?

	9:00-11:40 AM		11:40AM-1:05 PM		1:05-2:00 PM		Total	
Cut Flowers	11	10%	10	9%	9	13%	30	11%
Hanging baskets & bedding plants	17	16%	24	22%	17	25%	58	20%
Locally grown produce	70	67%	70	64%	32	47%	172	61%
Prepared foods	5	5%	5	4%	10	15%	20	7%
Would not come in May	1	1%	1	1%	0	0%	2	1%
Total	104		110		68		282	

Comments: Market customers who were surveyed are looking to purchase locally grown produce earlier in the season to bring them to the market during May, with 61% making that their priority. Hanging baskets and bedding plants would be the top May draw for 20%, cut flowers for 11%, and prepared foods for 6%. Several customers commented that they would be especially interested in bedding plants. With only 1% of those

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surveyed indicating that they would not come to a May market, it appears that the main challenge would be to produce and assemble the desired products. Given Michigan's climate, few fresh produce items can be dependably produced in the field for May sales, but hoophouse (unheated) or conventional greenhouse production has potential for some fresh items. Although beyond the questions in this survey, market organizers may also wish to look for farmers who could bring dairy, grains and meats to the market – all items that could help to round out the spring and early summer product selection.

Question 3: What would you most like to see added to this market?

	9:00-11:40 AM		11:40 AM-1:05 PM		1:05-2:00 PM		Total	
More organic products	53	56%	52	51%	26	41%	131	50%
More prepared foods	18	19%	20	19%	11	17%	49	19%
More arts/crafts	9	9%	13	13%	12	19%	34	13%
More kids' activities	6	6%	9	9%	10	16%	25	10%
Other	9	9%	8	8%	4	6%	21	8%
Total	95		102		63		260	

Comments: A full 50% of customers surveyed indicated that they would like to see more organic products in the market. Market organizers may wish to work with/through MSU staff members and/or use Michigan MarketMaker (<http://mimarketmaker.msu.edu>) to locate potential farmer vendors with organic products. In addition to the strong interest in organic, 19% of those surveyed would like more prepared foods added to the market, 13% more arts/crafts, and 10% more children's activities.

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

Number	9:00-11:40 AM		11:40 AM-1:05 PM		1:05-2:00 PM		Total	
1	48	49%	51	51%	21	34%	120	46%
2	42	43%	38	38%	39	63%	119	46%
3	5	5%	3	3%	1	2%	9	3%
4	2	2%	1	1%	1	2%	4	1%
5	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
6 or more	0	0%	6	6%	0	0%	6	2%
Total	97		99		62		258	
Mean					1.7			
Median					2			
Mode					1			

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Comments: The mean or average number of adults in each shopping group was 1.7. The median was 2 and the mode was 1. Market vendors need to be sure that their packaging provides appropriate amounts for small households.

Question 5: How much did/will your shopping group spend today at this market?

	9:00-11:40 AM		11:40 AM-1:05 PM		1:05-2:00 PM		Total	
\$0	0	0%	6	6%	3	5%	9	3%
\$5	10	10%	10	10%	10	16%	30	11%
\$10	17	18%	17	17%	7	11%	41	16%
\$15	20	21%	11	11%	9	14%	40	15%
\$20	13	13%	19	19%	12	19%	44	17%
\$25	12	12%	16	16%	4	6%	32	12%
\$30	13	13%	5	5%	5	8%	23	9%
\$35	6	6%	5	5%	4	6%	15	6%
\$40	0	0%	9	9%	2	3%	11	4%
\$45	1	1%	1	1%	2	3%	4	1%
\$50	0	0%	1	1%	1	1%	2	1%
More	4	4%	1	1%	4	6%	9	3%
Total	96		101		63		260	
Mean					\$20.10			
Median					\$20			
Mode					\$20			

Comments: Each shopping group spent or planned to spend an average or mean of \$20.10 at the market on the assessment day. The median and mode expenditures were each \$20.

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 (1410) by the mean number of adults per shopping party (1.7) and multiplying by the mean customer expenditure (\$20.10). This method suggests that total market sales for the day were roughly \$16,671.

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III. Constructive Comments/Observations

Market Atmosphere

What team members feel is working well

Market “feel”

- Interactive environment
- Very community and family oriented
- “Homey” feeling, very much a destination for customers

Shopper Demographics

- All age groups were present – a good range
- Most shoppers appeared to have higher income and education
- Shopper demographics probably reflect the community
- Some customers in “church” attire

Interactions, conversations

- Many friendly interactions between vendors and customers
- Especially the waffle lady seemed to thoroughly enjoy her customers
- Customers seem very loyal; many regulars
- People like buying local produce and don’t want the market to turn into a craft fair or supermarket



Educational or Entertainment Activities

- Live music is good!
- Tractor near market entrance was a huge draw for kids AND men – great idea!

Other

- Despite the rain, people were still walking to the market
- Several customers stated that they really liked that the market is open on Sundays because no other market in the area is open then. These customers liked being able to buy produce on Sunday to start off the week.

What could be improved upon

Market “feel”

- More programs to make the market seem like a place for a family outing
- Increase density of vendors (The day of the assessment, only about half the usual number of vendors was at the market because of early rain.)

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Shopper Demographics

- More diversity amongst shoppers (try to reach out beyond Birmingham/Bloomfield populations)
- More attractions for children could expand the number of families already visiting the market

Interactions, Conversations

- Vendors friendly but some customers were not into interaction with vendors
- Provide a tent with tables, seats for customers to relax and sit in the shade

Educational or Entertainment Activities

- Special theme days
- Invite school, community groups to perform (choir, band, etc.). If youth groups perform, their parents will likely come to the market.

Other

- Market may wish to consider staying open past 2 PM and/or extending the market season earlier and/or later.
- One customer indicated a preference to change the market day to Saturday.

Physical Characteristics

What team members feel is working well

Market Access

- Adequate parking, entrance seldom seemed backed up
- Market is on a “main” street but just off of the main business area

Flow of People and Traffic

- 3 entrances
- Street parking adequate for RMA day, not sure about busier days
- Open with room to move around

Liability Issues

- Regular health inspections
- Keeps cars out during market hours

Organization of Market

- Separate areas for food, flowers and value added items made it easier to comparison shop
- Landscape plants placed near entrance
- Large aisles, easy for strollers, walkers, etc.



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Access to Electricity and Phone Line

- Electricity available for a \$10 charge

What could be improved upon

Market Access

- More (and larger) signs in additional locations would be helpful
- Post “farmers market tomorrow” signs the day before
- Any research/information about the maximum distance around a market site signs can be posted to effectively draw in customers?
- Any potential for a season-long banner hung over street in downtown area reminding people about market?

Liability Issues

- Didn’t seem to enforce “No Dogs” rule per the sign.
- One customer commented to researchers that they would like market to allow dogs.
- One customer commented that they want the “no dogs” rule enforced.
- One customer commented that they would like to be able to bring a dog on a leash.
- This area needs clarification. If there is a rule, it is important to enforce it.

Organization of Market

- Maybe try to place heavy items near exit/entrance
- Encourage vendors to provide canopy area where customers can come to get out of sun, rain
- Move vendor tables back from aisle to allow space for customers to come under shelter
- Vendors seem very spread out and far apart from each other (possibly due to fewer than normal number of vendors on a day that started out rainy).
- Customers would like to see more farmers
- Picnic tables in back of market are not visible. Consider signs to help customers find them.

Access to Electricity and Telephone Line

- No easily accessible restroom, only port-a-johns

Other

- Towels were not always available at the hand washing station
- Hand washing station in the food court area?

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- One customer strongly believed that there is a compelling need to have a roof over the market and that the rest of the survey questions “are trivial” in comparison.

Vendors and Products

What team members feel is working well

Product Mix

- Mix of produce/prepared foods/arts is good (also flowers, bedding plants, etc.)
- Lots of heirloom/unusual local produce
- One customer said, “I just come for the food. Don’t care about anything else.”



Product Quality

- Excellent! Great!

Signage

- Good, poster near entrance has information about seasonality

Display

- Huge pile of corn by roaster an effective visual!
- Good job of keeping vendor vehicles nearby for restocking but away from customers and not the center of the market view.

Customer Service

- Wagons
- Package pick-up

Food Safety

- Food kept covered and not on ground

What could be improved upon

Product Mix

- Limited fruit
- Could bring in cheese, poultry, coffee
- More variety, add more common fruits and vegetables
- More value-added products

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Signage

- Make a list of vendor categories and/or a site map available
- Some vendors were not identified with signs
- Better explanations of products and freshness on signs



Display

- Display prices more prominently
- Too small to see from the side of the road (make display at entrance larger)

Other

- One customer said the prices at the market were too high

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