Grand River Farmers Market
Jackson, Michigan

Rapid Market Assessment Report
Friday, August 12, 2016

MIFMA Assessment Team:
- Christine Easley, Certified Market Manager and Market Manager Peer Mentor
- Rebekah Faivor, Hoophouses for Health Program Manager
- Michelle Gagliardi, Special Projects Associate
- Amanda Shreve, Program Director
Introduction to Rapid Market Assessment Report

A Rapid Market Assessment is an intensive, one-time market-day snapshot of a farmers market. This Rapid Market Assessment was organized and led by the Michigan Farmers Market Association (MIFMA) to use simple, tested methods to count market customers, survey customers using the dot survey technique, and compile market observations and recommendations. This report summarizes the data collected during the assessment.

Rapid Market Assessments were developed by Larry Lev, Linda Brewer and Garry Stephenson of Oregon State University (see http://smallfarms.oregonstate.edu/oregon-small-farms-technical-reports) and have been adapted for use in Michigan.
Grand River Farmers Market Information

The Grand River Farmers Market has been in existence for more than 30 years in its current location. The farmers market is currently located in a pavilion along the Grand River at the corner of Pearl Street and Mechanic Street in Downtown Jackson. It is held on Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. from May through October.

For the past five years, the market has been managed by the Jackson Downtown Development Authority (DDA). Nathan Mack, Executive Director of the Jackson DDA, oversees management of the market and can be contacted at 517-788-4355. The DDA employs an on-site market manager named Janet Meyer who was present during the Rapid Market Assessment.
Market Day Information for Friday, August 12

**Weather:** 93 degrees Fahrenheit – very warm with lots of sunshine

**Number of Vendors Present:** 9

**Number of Community Partners Present:** 2; Through a partnership with the local YMCA, a yoga class was offered in the morning. In the afternoon, a local radio station did a remote broadcast from the market. A musician was also present throughout the market to play guitar and sing.

**Estimate of Farmers Market Sales:** $5,100

**Estimate of Farmers Market Customer Attendance:** 485 adults and 45 children

Attendance estimates were made by counting all adults and children entering the market during a specified 20-minute period, from 20 minutes after the hour to 20 minutes to each hour. Two team members split the length of the market in half and counted only shoppers entering the market during the specified time on each half of the market.

Table 1. Actual Customer Attendance Counts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>East Entrance</th>
<th>West Entrance</th>
<th>Total Estimated Attendees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>Children</td>
<td>Adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:20 - 8:40AM</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:20 - 9:40AM</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:20 - 10:40AM</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:20 - 11:40AM</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:20 - 12:40PM</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|             |          |             |             |
|-------------|----------|-------------|
|             | Total    |             |
|             | 486      | 45          |
Dot Surveys

A dot survey is a simple data collection method in which five questions are posted on large posters. Market customers indicate their response to the survey questions using colorful, dot stickers; one “dot” or answer per question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 1: How many ADULTS are in your shopping group today?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:00 - 10:00AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On average, shopping groups included 1.6 adults. The most common response was 1 adult per shopping group. This data is important, as it allows us to conservatively estimate market sales when combined with data collected on average market spending and estimated customer attendance.
On average, customers spent $16.85 at the market on August 12, 2016. A conservative estimate of total market day sales is calculated by dividing the estimated total number of adult customers (485) by the average number of adults per shopping group (1.6) and then multiplying that number (303.1) by the average amount customers indicated they spent at the market that day ($16.85). This method conservatively estimates total market day’s sales of $5,100.

**Step 1:** Divide the market attendance count by the average shopping group size to estimate the number of shopping groups.

\[
\frac{485 \text{ customer count}}{1.6 \text{ shoppers per group}} = 303.1 \text{ shopping groups}
\]

**Step 2:** Multiply the number of shopping groups by the average purchase amount.

\[
303.1 \text{ shopping groups} \times 16.85 \text{ average purchase amount} = \sim 5,100 \text{ estimated sales}
\]
**Question 3: How much did you/will you spend at other downtown businesses today?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>8:00 - 10:00AM</th>
<th>10:00AM - 12:00PM</th>
<th>12:00 - 1:00PM</th>
<th>Overall Total</th>
<th>Overall Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$0.00</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$5.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10.00</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$15.00</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25.00</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30.00</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$35.00</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40.00</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$45.00</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50.00+</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On average, customers spent $11.64 at other downtown businesses on August 12, 2016. A conservative estimate of total downtown expenditures can be calculated by dividing the estimated total number of adult customers (485) by the average number of adults per shopping group (1.6) and then multiplying that number (303.1) by the average amount customers indicated they spent at other downtown businesses that day ($11.64). This method conservatively estimates the additional spending farmers market shoppers did at other downtown businesses in Jackson to be $3,520.

**Step 1:** Divide the market attendance count by the average shopping group size to estimate the number of shopping groups.

\[
\frac{485 \text{ customer count}}{1.6 \text{ shoppers per group}} = 303.1 \text{ shopping groups}
\]

**Step 2:** Multiply the number of shopping groups by the average purchase amount in downtown businesses.

\[
303.1 \text{ shopping groups} \times $11.64 \text{ average purchase amount} = \sim$3,520 \text{ estimated spending at other downtown businesses}
\]
Question 4: How would your farmers market attendance be affected if the market’s location changed to Horace Blackman Park (the new park downtown)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>8:00 - 10:00AM</th>
<th>10:00AM - 12:00PM</th>
<th>12:00 - 1:00PM</th>
<th>Overall Total</th>
<th>Overall Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My market attendance would not be affected</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would be more likely to attend the market</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would be less likely to attend the market</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am unsure</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because market leadership is considering a change to the market’s location, we asked customers how their market attendance would be affected by the proposed change of location. The most common response (51%) was that their market attendance would not be affected by the change. Only 3% said their attendance would likely increase at the new location while 28% said they would be less likely to attend the market in the proposed new location. Of those who indicated they would be less likely to attend, some cited concerns over parking, especially handicap parking, as the primary reason for their answer. The remaining 19% were unsure how moving the market would affect their market attendance.

Question 5: What kind of products would you like to see more of at this farmers market?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>8:00 - 10:00AM</th>
<th>10:00AM - 12:00PM</th>
<th>12:00 - 1:00PM</th>
<th>Overall Total</th>
<th>Overall Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fruit and vegetables</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheese and dairy products</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plants and cut flowers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baked goods</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepared foods</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ready-to-eat foods</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As additional vendors are recruited to join the market, it would be most helpful to recruit vendors selling products shoppers report they would like to see at the market. In this question, 30% of shoppers reported that they would like to continue to see a wide variety of fruits and vegetables present at the market. About 1 in every 10 shoppers would like to see additional meat, cheese and dairy products, ready-to-eat foods, and baked goods. Another 11% answered in the “other” category; some stated that they would like to see wine and organic products, including organic dairy products.
Constructive Comments and Observations

The Rapid Market Assessment team focused on market strengths and suggested changes and improvements for four key areas: physical characteristics, vendors and products, market atmosphere, and food assistance programs. The following comments were recorded throughout the day by the Rapid Market Assessment team based on their own observations and/or the comments provided to them by market shoppers and/or market vendors.

Physical Characteristics
What is working well?

Market Access
- Having parking so close to the market is a great benefit to both the market and the shoppers
- The market is very visible because it is near a busy intersection
- Having free parking available for both vendors and shoppers is ideal
- Because the market is located near a brewery, it offers a great exchange of customers between the two; market shoppers went to the brewery, and brewery customers came to the farmers market
- It is an advantage that the market is wheelchair-accessible with three different ramp locations
- The market is situated in a very visible location
- I commend the market on having a bike rack accessible to patrons

Flow of People and Traffic
- The flow of people through the market was very smooth, and I observed no issues
- The turnover of places in the parking lot happens on a regular basis, and there seems to be an adequate number of parking spaces for the current market attendance
- The current vendor to shopper ratio kept shoppers moving throughout the market at a good pace
- Wide aisles facilitate good shopper flow, and aisles do not get congested

Liability Issues
- Tents are appropriately weighted
- The pavilion is stable and structurally sound
Organization of Market (vendors, stalls, etc.)
- The layout of the market is very well organized
- Having clearly designated stall locations helps with vendor setup but also helps the customers differentiate from one vendor to the next
- It is very helpful to have the vendors able to back up to their market stalls; this aids in unloading and loading but also in replenishing supplies throughout the day
- Because the market manager was centrally located, she could easily greet customers and be visible to answer any questions

Other
- The market pavilion is visually appealing. The features like the apples in the peaks at the end, the flags that feature market products, and the highly visible name placard located in the center of the structure reinforce the purpose of the structure and create a welcoming market atmosphere
- It is convenient to have a portable toilet available for both shoppers and vendors

What could be improved?

Market Access
- I heard from shoppers and observed that parking was sometimes limited, especially for those needing handicap parking
- Shoppers commented that having the vendors park in front of market was inconvenient for them and that they would prefer to park in those places themselves
- There is a greater need for safe, handicap parking than is currently available
- The vendors with booths on the riverside of the pavilion felt cramped; because the pavilion is not centrally located, vendors cannot park on both sides of pavilion
- Promoting that the community can use nearby public transportation to reach the market could be an asset to shoppers and the market

Flow of People and Traffic
- The parking lot size may be unable to support continued market growth
- The parking lot appeared to fill up by 10:15AM and anyone arriving after that had to wait for someone to leave in order to be able to park
- In my observation, having the vendors primarily located on one side of the pavilion negatively impacted customer flow
**Liability Issues**
- Throughout the day, I observed many people, especially those who were older, who had young children with them and/or were handicapped, pull right up to the central entrance to the market to park in the entrance way. I’m afraid this is a dangerous situation to mix parking spaces and foot entrances and would recommended blocking off the two parking spaces directly in front of the entrance and to find another way to support the accessibility needs of these shoppers
- I watched customers drive right up to a vendor’s booth in the pavilion, often double park, and run in to grab something just from one specific vendor

**Organization of Market (vendors, stalls, etc.)**
- The market could use more room for additional vendors
- Some vendors were pulled into parking spots at unattractive angles and/or taking up multiple spaces which created an unpleasant/chaotic appearance. Having all of the vendors park the same way could add visual uniformity
- The live music performance somewhat blocked the central entrance. I understand the performer needed to be there to access electricity. Could electrical access be added to the riverside of the pavilion to provide for a better live music location that doesn’t block the entrance?

**Other**
- The portable toilet that is available is not handicap accessible. I recommend exchanging it for an accessible version and urge to you to consider adding a handwashing station as well
- I did not observe access to a handwashing station or potable water for either shoppers or vendors
Vendors and Products
What is working well?

Product Mix
- There were lots of great fruit and vegetables at the market, which is the cornerstone of a good farmers market
- The product variety was great with pork, chicken, cut flowers, baked goods, eggs, syrup, jams and jellies, shea butter, silk arrangements, beans and more!
- There was a good mix of products

Product Quality
- The quality of the produce sold was great
- I applaud the vendors on having Cottage Food and license-exempt eggs labeled properly
- All of the products seemed perfect for the farmers market

Signage
- Prices were clearly marked throughout the market, which is extremely helpful to shoppers and makes purchasing easier

Display
- All vendors had good quality displays
- Market displays were attractive and placed in good locations
- One vendor had all employees wearing shirts with the farm’s name. This made their team look professional and helped shoppers clearly identify someone they could ask questions of
- Vendors kept tables well stocked throughout the market day, which makes shoppers feel like there is an abundance to shop from

Customer Service
- All vendors seemed helpful, friendly, and polite
- When a market is full of happy vendors, like this one is, it makes the market feel welcoming
- I saw a vendor walk products out to a senior shopper’s car for him. This is excellent customer service and will help build loyal market shoppers

Food Safety
- Tents were used appropriately to cover baked goods and keep them out of the sun and other elements
- Cold food was adequately refrigerated
Other Comments, Including Vendor Comments

- One vendor suggested that the market could fill vacant spots with alternative vendors when farmers are absent
- One vendor suggested that creative promotion (e.g. tote bags) could benefit this market
- One vendor noted that advertising has been better this year than in the past
- One vendor observed repeat customers throughout winter
- Some vendors needed to be able to direct shoppers to market staff to process SNAP payments but could not access the market manager at all times during the day

What could be improved?

Signage

- The labels on some of the products needed more information for customer clarification
- Very few farmers and vendors had signs displaying their business name and location. Encouraging all vendors to display their name and where they come from can greatly enhance the market atmosphere and assist in marketing each of the vendors as someone to shop with
- No signs for Double Up Food Bucks or other food assistance programs were observed. Signage is so important to making these programs visible within the market and empowering shoppers with these types of currency to utilize their benefits at the market

Customer Service

- Many of the market shoppers were senior citizens with mobility challenges. Having wagons available for shoppers to use during their visit or setting up a volunteer run “veggie valet” type of program where a volunteer helps carry purchases out to the car for a shopper could be a helpful service to add. If assistance was available to help get their purchases out to their car, it may also alleviate some of need for customers to park close to the market in spaces that present safety issues for others entering the market on foot
- A few vendors were observed on their phones. This makes the vendor appear inaccessible to shoppers

Food Safety

- Some prepared foods in containers required better labeling
- Some items being sold under the Cottage Food law contained ingredients that require the end product be refrigerated. When a product requires temperate control, it is not eligible to be made under the Cottage Food law. Additional vendor education is needed in this area
- It is not a good practice for food safety when produce crates are stored on the ground. It’s recommended that all crates are elevated from the ground
- The containers of some prepared foods were not sealed well
- Birds in pavilion are a potential contamination hazard. I recognize that owl decoys are being used and encourage the market to stay vigilant in removing nests and discouraging residence
Market Atmosphere
What is working well?

Market “Feel”
- The market has a good general atmosphere
- The river and greenspace provide a nice background for the market location
- The musician that was present at the market was great – very engaging, had a good volume level that did not deter from vendor/shopper communication and provided good variety throughout the performance
- The vendors were friendly and welcoming
- Lots of seating was available for shoppers which encourages them to sit and enjoy the market for a greater amount of time. We know that the longer a shopper stays in a retail setting, the more they will buy!

Shopper Demographics
- The customers seem to represent a good mix of people that is similar to the diversity of the city of Jackson
- Shoppers were primarily 40 and up and appear to have disposable income to spend
- I observed a primarily female shopper demographic
- Some downtown professionals shopped at the market after mid-morning (approximately 10 AM to noon)

Interactions and Conversations
- I was encouraged by the good conversations between vendors and shoppers that I observed
- It appeared that many of the customers shop on a regular basis at the market and return regularly
- I heard a customer call a vendor by name. This shows that customers are making connections with the vendors and is a great indication of the kind of customer service that builds loyal and happy market shoppers
- It was apparent that most customers came to buy products and not just browse the market. Vendors prefer a market with a purchasing atmosphere like this one!

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1 These comments are based on subjective observations by team members and are recorded at different times throughout the market day.
Educational and Community Activities

- Yoga was offered in the park across from the market. This was a great addition to the market. How could the opportunity be promoted more widely?
- A piano was available in the pavilion. Is this for shoppers to play or for a musician who attends but was not present that day?
- A local radio station did a remote broadcast from the market and was interviewing shoppers and vendors. This is great promotion for the market!
- I appreciated the addition of live music

Other

- The pavilion is well-maintained
- The parking area is nicely landscaped and adds to the appearance of the market setting

What could be improved?

Market “Feel”

- More open/recreational space could feel more inviting and encourage multiple uses for the location
- Having most of the vendors on just one side of the pavilion can feel cramped and like the full space of the pavilion is not being maximized

Shopper Demographics

- I observed a lack of racial diversity among shoppers
- Very few children and young adults attended the market

Interactions and Conversations

- Evening hours might help the market feel more social and encourage more shopper to shopper interactions
- Customers do not linger or interact much with each other. Ready-to-eat items or activities could help to keep people interacting and shopping at the market longer.

Educational and Entertainment Activities

- More seating adjacent to the musician may help shoppers enjoy the live music more

2 These comments are based on subjective observations by team members and are recorded at different times throughout the market day.
Other

- Place-making efforts (chairs, picnic tables) were nice but underutilized
- I’m concerned that the connotation of “quicker, cheaper, easier” signage could be problematic. It wasn’t clear to me what the signage was in reference to and could be misconstrued to be talking about the products at the market or the market itself instead of the place-making initiative.
- The market had no customers until 8:30 a.m. even though the start time is advertised as 8:00 a.m. Very few customers arrived between 8:30 and 9:00. Perhaps a start time of 9:00 a.m. may be a better suited to the market

Food Assistance Programs
What is working well?

WIC Project FRESH

- It is beneficial to shoppers that vendors at the market accept WIC Project FRESH

Senior Project FRESH/Market FRESH

- Because so much of the customer base consists of seniors, it’s vital that the market continues to accept Senior Project FRESH/Market FRESH

SNAP Program (EBT, Bridge Cards)

- The market manager reported that approximately $700 is spent every 2 weeks by SNAP customers. This is a very good volume for a market of this size

Double Up Food Bucks

- After observing no Double Up signs in the market, I asked the market manager, and she distributed a Double Up sign to each applicable vendor in the market
- I observed only one Double Up sign at a vendor’s table

Alternative Redemption Systems

- Tokens are available for Visa/Mastercard redemption. This is a great service to both vendors and customers
- Signage communicating that Visa/MasterCard was accepted by the market was very visible and appealing

Signage

- Some signage is visible at the market table; additional signage would be beneficial
- Double Up signs were distributed to vendors during the market. For the visibility of the program, vendors should be encouraged to display the signs each market day
Other
- One vendor noted that he would like to see more social media marketing to communicate that the market accepts food assistance benefits

What could be improved?

WIC Project FRESH
- More visual signage is needed at each vendor’s booth. I only observed one sign, and it was taped to table underneath boxes of produce

Senior Project FRESH/Market FRESH
- It is not visible within the market that Market FRESH is accepted

SNAP Program (EBT, Bridge Cards)
- Signage was minimal and not visible to shoppers
- Vendor education on how Bridge Cards are accepted and what benefits can be used to purchase is recommended so that vendors can help promote this service

Double Up Food Bucks
- Vendor education on how the Double Up program works and what can be purchased is recommended so that vendors can help promote this program

Signage
- More food assistance program signage is needed at vendor tables