

**Linking Food to Community:
Farmers' Markets in Grand Rapids, Michigan**

**PROJECT REPORT
Anthropology 307 ~ Summer Ethnographic Field School
Department of Anthropology
Grand Valley State University**

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Community Partners:

- West Side farmers' market (WSFM): Andrea Bardelmeier was the market manager at the time of this study. Ms. Bardelmeier was the Turner Gateway/Cool Cities Project Manager and an active member of the West Grand Neighborhood Organization (WGNO).
- Fulton Street farmers' market: Jayson Otto was the market manager at the time of this study. Mr. Otto was also an active member of the Midtown Neighborhood Association (MNA).

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SECTION I: Introduction and Methodology

- The project, “Linking Food to Community: Farmers' Markets in Grand Rapids, Michigan,” was conducted between May 9 and June 20, 2007. Additional field work and data collection continued through October 2007.
- This report is the product of twelve weeks of classroom preparation and field work at the West Side and Fulton St. farmers' markets. Student researchers who participated in the ANT 307 course (Techniques and Laboratory Methods in Anthropology) learned about global and local food systems, prepared the surveys, spent four weeks at the markets, and wrote team reports on aspects of the food system: farmers, vendors, consumers, market management, and the surrounding neighborhood. Rhoads and the two field coordinators, Autumn Shroyer and Melissa Harrington, edited the team reports July 2007. Several students continued data collecting into the fall. In early 2008, Rhoads analyzed the findings in the context of the scholarly literature on local food systems and farmers' markets specifically. The revised report was written and reviewed. This final version was completed in August 2008.
- The research activities addressed several course goals:
 - To train students in anthropological methods and how to conduct “course-based action research.”
 - To understanding the link between the West Side farmers' market and the surrounding neighborhood.
 - To collect information on the systematic organization and dynamics at two farmers' markets, and integrate selected data on additional farmers' markets in the region.
 - To document baseline information on business activities in the surrounding neighborhood.
 - To help the neighborhood organization better understand the role played by a fresh food market in the community.
 - To engage in service learning activities to assist the West Side market manager in the operation of the market.
- The methodology relied on the tools of ethnography, participant observation and survey instruments. The students were divided into five teams, each responsible for collecting information on several interconnected domains: the markets themselves with an emphasis on market management, farmers, vendors, consumers, and the surrounding neighborhood.
- Ethical protocols are an essential part of working with human subjects. The project protocol was approved by the GVSU Human Research Review Committee. Consent forms were given to interviewees and other project participants. Whenever possible, the project tried to protect these individual's identity by using false names.

- **Methods Employed:**
 1. *Debriefing Sessions:* Once a week, the students met at the Anthropology Lab (GVSU) and “debriefed” activities in the field, and planned new ones.
 2. *Fresh Foods Availability Survey:* Data collection began with a survey of a selection of local grocery stores in the area. The goal of the survey was to determine types of produce available in the target neighborhood, as well as the quality and available quantity of fruits and vegetables.
 3. *Mapping:* The physical dimensions of three markets were mapped. The maps identified the vendor locations, and captured the general sense of space (including trees, parking, etc.). The West Grand neighborhood and business districts were mapped as well.
 4. *Stall and Products Survey:* Each day in the field, a group of students were responsible for collecting information on the number stalls, vendor names, and products for sale.
 5. *Consumer and Vendor Surveys:* As a class, students designed both the consumer and vendor surveys, pre-tested them in the classroom, and readjusted them in the field. In total, 230 surveys were collected at two markets.
 6. *Open-ended Interviews:* Farmers and vendors were asked general questions about their families, history of selling at farmers' markets, constraints faced in restructuring their farming enterprise, and issues faced in dealing with consumers. The market managers were interviewed as well.
 7. *Participant-Observation and Fieldnotes:* Students learn about culture by observing the constant flow of events and by participating in them to the extent possible. Students were asked to describe behavior and scenes at the markets and in the neighborhood; each student used a small notebook in the field into which notes were jotted. Later these were elaborated into fully detailed fieldnotes using a word processor.
 8. *Photographs and Video:* Students took photographs of the general scenes at the markets. One team of students interested in film and video created a 7 minute documentary of the role of farmers' markets in preserving local farming livelihood.
 9. *Data Collection and Analysis:* The data from the maps, surveys, interview transcriptions, and fieldnotes were indexed in a qualitative research software program, ATLAS.ti. The program allowed our students to categorize, compare, and retrieve information according to subjects, topics, and themes. The quantitative data from the consumer survey were entered into a statistics program (SPSS).
- The project assisted the market manager of the West Side farmers' market by monitoring the links between the market and the surrounding West Grand neighborhood. Students collected information on neighborhood history, the surrounding business district, employment, and fresh food availability within the broader neighborhood. Involvement in the market by the community and accessibility to the market by neighborhood residents were monitored.

SECTION II: Research Issues and Questions

- The project designed a set of questions consistent with the West Grand Neighborhood Organization's stated goals for creating a new farmers' market. How do farmers' markets provide sources of fresh food and health for communities? What role does the farmers' market play in the urban setting? What is the dynamic between the market and the growth of the community? Do farmers' markets help the local business community in general?
- The project adapted these concerns to knowledge of anthropological studies, from which four core issues emerged:
 1. *Establishing a new farmers' market:* Our project was interested how a new market develops, expands, and becomes viable. What should be the roles of market manager and vendors in such smaller markets? How does location in a neighborhood come into play? How do the needs of new and smaller markets differ from more established farmers' markets? One objective of the data collection was to monitor the size, location, and activity of both the new and established markets. Another was to document the organizational strategies put in place by the market managers. A third was to connect the functions of the new market with the surrounding neighborhood.
 2. *Preserving the rural landscape:* While farmers' markets attract attention to urban spaces, they may have an even greater effect on nearby farms and their restructuring, if not preservation. Direct marketing to consumers and farmers' markets specifically is viewed as a way to restructure the family farm by growing a variety of “high value” crops for local distribution. Our project wanted to understand the changes taking place on family farms that sell at the farmers' markets and how farmers and their families have adapted to their new enterprise.
 3. *Consumers, their motivations and needs:* Attracting a regular clientele of consumers is just as important to farmers' markets as securing sources of fresh products from local farms. Our project anticipated that consumers would be attracted to direct marketing for many overlapping reasons. In the context of this project, consumer demography can have a key impact on the success of a market if the goal is to serve a low-income community or a particular ethnic group. How can the market develop an out-reach strategy? How can market managers align the needs of consumers with the products brought for sale by vendors?
 4. *The role of farmers' markets in urban neighborhoods:* Related to the issue of local consumers, the project wanted to know how farmers' markets integrate into the surrounding neighborhood. In its second year, the West Side farmers' market was expected to offer local, fresh, and affordable food to low-income residents, as well as to become a “magnet” for stimulating economic and social activities in the neighborhood. How do community organizations and residents become involved in the market? What connections emerge among different actors and social groups? How do networks function to redistribute “food power”? What is the relationship between a farmers' market and the local business community?

- Together, these four topics – market formation, vendors/farmers, consumers, and the neighborhood – construct a *holistic* picture of the local food system. Using a “concept map,” the students could depict links among domains within a farmers’ market food system.

SECTION III: Market Organization

- The project collected information at two farmers’ markets: the West Side market and the Fulton Street market. Selected data was gathered at the GVSU farmers’ market. For comparative and analytical purposes, data collected from a previous study (2003) at the Holland farmers’ market was used.
- The West Side farmers’ market was in its second year of operation when this study took place. The location of the market is in the rear parking lot of St. James Catholic Church, 733 Bridge St. NW near the south boundary of the West Grand neighborhood. The market was open on Thursdays and Saturdays.
- The West Side farmers’ market was originally conceived both as a premise and as an experiment: How could a farmers’ market help revitalize a neighborhood community? The aim was to use a farmers’ market to create an environment supportive to immigrants, specifically Latinos, and to offer a venue for buying and sell products in their neighborhood.
- At the time of the study Andrea Bartelmeier was the market manager at West Side and assisted in the founding of the market. Russ Lewis replaced Bartelmeier by mid-summer 2007.
- At West Side, both vendors and buyers express a sense of concern about the isolation of the West Side market. The stalls could not be seen from Bridge Street, or any other street with high traffic flow. Furthermore, a major, elevated highway separates the market from the West Grand neighborhood to the north. As a more radical measure, the project encourages the neighborhood organization to consider relocating the market to a more visible site, centrally-located in the West Grand neighborhood, such as on Leonard Street.
- Regarding rules on what can be sold at the West Side market, anything is welcome to be sold as long as it was grown or made in Michigan. At the West Side market “resale” takes place minimally during the first few weeks, and is tolerated due to the unavailability of local fruits and vegetables.
- At the West Side market, the project recommends a gradual shift to the work of volunteers, and lowering operating costs to a basic budget reasonable for a local community. More outreach in neighborhood is needed. A steering committee should be established to direct the market and facilitate its role in the community. Volunteers could be responsible for grant-writing and outreach, which would be necessary for funding and encouraging the participation of the Latino residents that make up the majority population in the neighborhood.

- Research on farmers' markets suggests that there are phases each market goes through. One estimate is that it generally takes four years to have a consistent customer base to sustain the amount, and quality of vendors.
- The Fulton Street farmers' market is located at 1147 Fulton Street, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49504. The market is open for business on Tuesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays. The market, established in 1922, is much larger than either the West Side or GVSU markets, featuring 122 spaces designated for vendors, with two lines of 147 vendor/customer parking spaces running parallel to the rows of stalls.
- Unlike the other markets, Fulton Street has a permanent space and stall facilities, as well as an office and restroom on the premises.
- Parking at the Fulton Street market is limited. The parking lots are often congested and traffic is bumper-to-bumper as people wait for a space to become vacated. While the majority of people drive to the market, others bike or walk from the neighborhood.
- The Fulton Street market affords a positive climate for direct communication among vendors and consumers. Social exchanges are very common.
- Serving as the market manager, Jayson Otto collects his salary directly from stall rentals and seasonal stall rates and is the only official employee of the market. During 2007, there were thirty-two seasonal stall holders at the market, from which six vendors were elected to make up the "Market Committee."
- The group of seasonal stall holders makes up what can be viewed as "an established vendor hierarchy" vying for certain advantageous stalls throughout the market. For those who purchased a stall, certain vendor rules and regulations are enforced, ensuring proper vendor conduct.
- There is a well-established set of policies and procedures in the operation at the market. In the future, this system of organization will be challenged by the planned market expansion and accompanying neighborhood revitalization of the surrounding community ("Brikyaat Neighborhood Revitalization Planning Project").
- As a stable, large, and long-term market, Fulton Street's system of operation reduces the flexibility of the market manager to make changes and of finding consensus for reforms.
- Fulton Street is limited in its action to change the array of products sold because of its unwieldy size. Conversely, due to its small size, the West Side market can only afford to accept whatever products vendors bring as a way to encourage growing vendor participation.
- The Grand Valley State University farmers' market opens every Wednesday beginning June 13 and runs through August 22. The market opened last year for the first time and, similar to the West Side farmers' market, is in its early stages of development. The location of the market is at Grand Valley State's Allendale campus.

- The GVSU market location is strategic, close to supply sources and centrally placed on campus. There is ample use of signage and advertisements, and a strong institutional infrastructure supporting the market.
- At the time of the study, the GVSU market manager was Sue Sloop. According to Sloop, the market aims to support the sustainability of local food production, and to serve the GVSU community, seeking to create one of the “healthiest campuses in Michigan.”
- The application process for vendors is “first-come, first serve.” The market seeks to operate with ten to twelve vendors who can bring a variety of produce, with the understanding that all goods must be perishable (no dry-goods or crafts).
- The GVSU market is a great example of how food exchange can be tied to health education activities. Each week, a “health and wellness” orientation pervades market activities. Events organized by Campus Recreation, music, and educational speakers are scheduled each market, used both to draw customers and to organize the market around healthy activities. The Campus Recreation Center sets up a booth providing health information such as ways to exercise and healthy eating habits.
- Campus Dining attends the GVSU market every other week and provides a free healthy dish to serve to market goers. The dishes feature food items donated by one or more vendors at the specific market.
- In all markets, there was an ongoing debate as to limiting farmers’ markets sales to locally grown plants and vegetables only – and how this might affect vendor participation.
- The data suggest that the viability of a farmers’ market depends upon a level of sales that sustains a regular and committed group of vendors.

SECTION IV: Vendors and Farmers

- Two student teams documented the role of vendors. Vendors were viewed as a broad category of people who “set up stalls with products for sale at the farmers’ market.” Students were interested in the vendor “culture” – expressions of vendors’ livelihood, interactions with customers/consumers, relations among vendors and within families, and dealings with the market manager.
- The first part of the section focuses on vendors as a whole, and the second part considers those vendors who are farmers. According to the results of the vendor survey farmers made up roughly 60% of the vending community. Specifically, special attention is given to one in-depth case study of a farm family, which provides an illustration of how a farm family can make a successful transition to farmers’ market production. In addition, this section reports on “satisfaction” from the vendors’ perspective.

- Are local products sold by vendors? Vendors (and consumers) are concerned with the selling to many products that come from beyond Michigan's borders. The practice of "reselling" is frequently observed at the beginning of the selling season given Michigan's limited production during the spring months. There is less concern with selling nonfood items. All three markets sold food and nonfood items and permitted resellers.
- The project documented the food supply chain. We looked for patterns on where vendors live, how far they travel to the market, and the sources of their products. Products sold to consumers were predominantly Michigan in origin or locally hand-crafted.
- According to the vendor surveys, nearly one third of the vendors surveyed rely on farmers' market sales as their only source of yearly income. The remaining vendors (about 7 in 10) claimed to depend upon the market for at least 50% of annual income.
- Vendors are very clear on the benefits of selling at the two markets. In our surveys, vendors highlight self-employment, the ability to continue farming, selling their own products directly, flexible work hours, working close to home, offering fresh and healthy products to the consumer, making quick cash, and networking opportunities.
- Vendors feel frustrated that consumers lack awareness of *seasonality* in the context of the farmers' market. Supermarkets and corporate farms have done much to eliminate the concept of seasonality from the public mind. It will be important for vendors and market managers to "re-educate" consumers on the idea that seasonality is a special feature of the local food system.
- Vendors would like to participate more in government food service programs, such as WIC and Project Fresh. The West Side market does not participate in either. While sympathetic to food service programs, vendors express reservations about the red-tape and paperwork. However, vendors find creative ways to make the programs work for consumers.
- Vendors would like more opportunity to sell to neighborhood grocery stores and restaurants. We recommend replicating such programs found in other regional cities, and see a key role for the neighborhood association in collaborating with local businesses.
- The West Side market is at a disadvantage, attracting only five to ten vendors to each market. In addition, vendors at West Side complain that because the neighborhood is poorer than others, prices needed to be adjusted lower as compared to the Fulton Street market.
- We present a case of one farm and demonstrate the successful process of redirecting production in order to sell at the region's farmers' markets. This redirection generates a new range of crops, farming methods, and marketing strategies passed along to the consumer in the form of food and knowledge.

- Redirecting production requires a re-education on the farmer's part, learning about new crops, farming techniques, and the latest equipment. Likewise, the farmer must also learn a new skill set related to marketing and face-to-face communication with the customers and other vendors.
- Direct marketing helps farmers become sensitive to chemical use, health, and environmental care, as they find ways to reduce chemical use, and perhaps even consider "going organic" if feasible and profitable.
- We recommend that vendors provide information to customers in the form of handouts, poster and displays, describing their farm, the nature of their farming activities, and the source of their goods as "local." Given the appeal of locally produced "specialty" foods to certain social groups, farmers as vendors would do well to position their goods in contexts of symbols tied to supporting rural life and to authentic consumption.
- We find that vendors, with their many sales transactions and face-to-face contact with consumers, are an excellent source of information about the needs of consumers.

SECTION V: Consumers

- Understanding consumer behavior was one of the main objectives of the project. The project collected information on consumer demography, how often consumers visit the farmers' market, reasons for doing so, and possible improvements to the market. The ways that market managers tried to align the expectations of vendors/farmers and consumers with market organization were learned from the interviews.
- We collected data on consumer demographics, patterns of consumption, reasons for shopping at the farmers' market, and improvements to the market. We looked for similarities and differences between the two markets and, where appropriate, compared them to data from our 2003 study of the farmers' market at Holland, Michigan.
- Information was gathered from consumer surveys, vendor surveys, and first-hand observations. Fieldnotes are used to describe first-hand observations. One student, who is "legally-blind," sat at various locations at the market and recorded "sensory observations" – the sounds and smells of the market.
- The project collected 77 consumer surveys at West Side and 141 at Fulton Street, for a total of 218. The two-page survey took on average 5 minutes to complete. The survey was entirely voluntary, and the project offered people no compensation.
- The project finds significant differences in the population of consumers surveyed, especially with respect to gender, education, yearly household income, frequency of market visits, motivations for shopping, and potential improvements. Not

surprisingly, the information from both markets confirms the expectation that more women shop for food than men.

- Consumers shop at the market to buy fresh, locally-produced goods, find a good value, support the local farmers and businesses, and socialize with like-minded people. It appears from the evidence that the “buy local” movement is strong in the Grand Rapids area.
- Turning to education level, the results indicate that shoppers at farmers’ markets are highly educated. While all three markets attract college educated customers (at least 80% of adults), the Holland and Fulton Street markets boast a surprisingly high percentage of people with a post-graduate education, 37% and 42%, respectively. In contrast, the number of customers at West Side claiming a post-graduate education is 27%, which nevertheless is high on the whole.
- This social group, namely upper-middle class individuals, possesses an accompanying set of values attracted to specialty products purchased in an “authentic” setting. The farmers’ market thus supplies authentic niche commodities as symbols of social class. This may be evidence of a recontextualization of consumption, symbolizing new foods as “traditional” within a modern, local supply chain.
- Using zip code information, the number of shoppers that live within 4 miles of the market was calculated. The markets are comparable in that they draw a significant number of customers from the immediate locality.
- The overall findings of this section highlight several patterns affecting the viability of farmers’ markets: 1) women as customers, 2) buying locally, 3) variety and seasonality, 4) demand for products, including organic goods, 5) location and space, 6) ties to the surrounding community, 7) socializing, and 8) the role of the market manager.

SECTION VI: The West Grand Neighborhood

- This section describes the history of action that led to the idea of creating the West Side farmers’ market. We also note the contributions made by the neighborhood organization, and spend a good deal of space devoted to the neighborhood itself – its boundaries, history, and demography.
- The West Grand neighborhood is located west of the Grand River and downtown Grand Rapids. The neighborhood’s boundaries are circumscribed by Leonard Street to the north, John Ball Park on the west, Bridge Street to the south, and the Grand River on the east. The GVSU project focused mainly on the south half of the neighborhood.

- The West Grand neighborhood has a history as a working-class, immigrant enclave. Three major events shaped the history of the area: immigrants arriving for factory work, a major Grand River flood, and the destruction of a major swath of homes and businesses across the community to make way for the construction of several highways. Over these decades, in spite of the many changes, the West Grand neighborhood remained an ethnically-diverse community.
- Since 1990, the neighborhood has experienced a sharp decline among the elderly population, as a demographic shift has replaced longtime resident families with younger immigrant ones, primarily Latinos.
- According to census data, nearly 30% of neighborhood residents 25 and over do not have a high school diploma. Due to uneven social class patterns, demographic patterns at farmers' market in the region will vary from market to market.
- Can the farmers' market provision local residents with healthy foods? To answer this, the project needed to know the sources of fresh fruit and vegetables in the neighborhood. We conducted a "Fresh Food" survey, visiting five grocery markets within the West Grand and SWAN neighborhoods and documenting the availability and quality of fruits and vegetables.
- Even in the absence of a large, corporate grocery store within the neighborhood, our food survey indicates that a limited supply of fresh foods *are* available in the West Grand neighborhood. Most of the stores in the survey carry a large selection of fruits and vegetables, though its freshness and quality vary considerably across the stores. There are more locally produced food items available than the project expected to find. Students were surprised by the general absence of "ethnic" produce that makes up the Latino cuisine and "food basket."
- A team of five students mapped and surveyed the West Grand business district along Bridge, Stocking and Leonard Streets as a way to measure a set of neighborhood assets. The business survey mapped seventy-four business establishments.
- The business district mapping involved observations of traffic flow, descriptions of the streets, buildings and structures, and listing of business names, addresses and types of goods and services provided. The survey gathered information on the types of businesses, employment, and the physical condition of the district contributing to a shopping "atmosphere." The survey required students to talk with business owners, managers and employees about the status of local businesses, such as types of products sold, number of employees, future employment plans, and the potential impact of the new farmers' market local businesses.
- Our limited study of the neighborhood reveals a lack of substantive connections between the business districts and farmers' market, as can be expected during only the second year of market operations. In contrast to the Fulton Street and Holland markets, the nearby business district is not a shopper "destination," primarily due to the types of businesses there, which would attract people from beyond the neighborhood. At the Fulton Street and the Holland farmers' markets, shoppers are

attracted to the proximity of the farmers' market to a plethora of specialty shops and boutiques that enhance the shopping experience at the farmers' market. At this early stage, it is only possible to speculate on the potential of such a "partnership" that can stimulate economic activity in the West Grand neighborhood.

- Neighborhood studies serve the market manager with information that can be used as a basis for changes in market policies and direction, as well as data to support reports of accountability and proposal for grant funding.
- Overall, the findings point to a business district that has the potential to become a busy center of commerce and community, as it was in the past. The Stockbridge Business Association and the West Grand Neighborhood Organization have been at the forefront of efforts to reverse urban decline. A grant from the Turner Gateway foundation allowed the neighborhood organization to make improvements to the community, including the establishment of the West Side farmers' market.

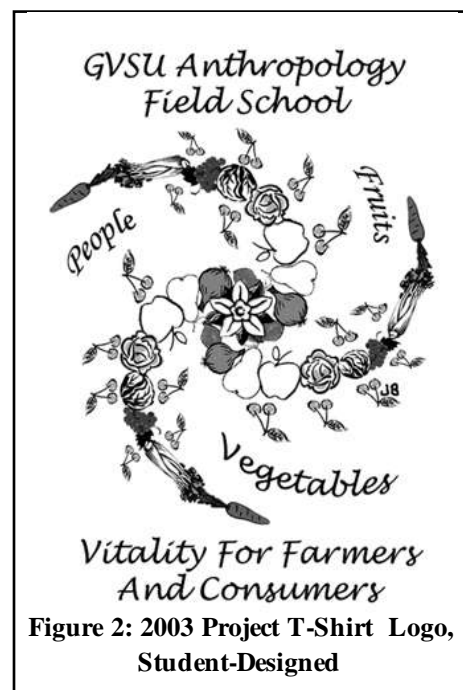
SECTION I: Introduction

The summer ethnographic field school evolved from the idea of giving students training in anthropological methods while engaged in a hands-on experience in the local community. The anthropology department had conducted an archaeology field school for many years, under the supervision of Dr. Brashler. In 1998, it was decided to add an ethnographic field school which would alternate on a bi-yearly basis with the archaeology one. The first ethnographic field course focused on documenting the life-histories of Latinos in Grand Rapids, which produced the report “Assimilation and Advocacy: Forging Identities in Hispanic Grand Rapids” (1998). Subsequent field schools conducted by Dr. Rhoads were “Exposure and Vision: A Latino Youth Photography” (2001) and “West Michigan Farmers' Markets: Increasing Vitality for Farmers and Consumers” (2003). The 2005 field school, supervised by Dr. Weibel, worked with the Kent County Habitat for Humanity.



**Figure 1: Project Field School
Flyer/Information**

The current project stems from Dr. Rhoads' research on small-scale farming and local / global food systems. The idea for the project was motivated by the 2003 research on the Holland farmers' market (Rhoads 2004, 2005). Rhoads wanted to build on those results by expanding the scope to Grand Rapids for comparative purposes. Rhoads was aware of other markets in the area (e.g., Ada and Rockford), and the fledgling market in the West Grand neighborhood was especially intriguing. He wondered what kinds of barriers and issues a new market might face as it tries to grow, and what impact it might have on the surrounding neighborhood. As a research focus, it would also be interesting to compare the West Side farmers' market with the well-established Fulton St. market. Could the ideas and organization from one market help in the planning of the other?



**Figure 2: 2003 Project T-Shirt Logo,
Student-Designed**

In the fall 2006, Rhoads contacted the West Side market's manager, Andrea Bardelmeier, and proposed the project. He learned that the West Side FM was a project of a "Cool Cities" grant awarded to the West Grand Neighborhood Organization (WGNO). Bardelmeier requested that the field school help her design and conduct

a needs assessment of the market and monitor the links between the market and the neighborhood. The idea was to use the field school to document baseline information on business activities in the surrounding neighborhood. These data could help the neighborhood organization better understand the role played by a fresh food market, and to measure the future growth and impact of the market in the vicinity. An anthropology senior, Autumn Shroyer interned at the West Grand Neighborhood Organization during the winter semester 2007, learning about the organization of the market and involved in planning activities. Ms. Shroyer would become a graduate assistant and field coordinator of the summer project.

During this time, Dr. Rhoads contacted the manager of the Fulton St. farmers' market, Jayson Otto, who was previously a student who participated in the 2003 Holland project. The Fulton St. FM was well-studied. The market has conducted its own surveys of vendors, and graduate students from MSU conducted an urban planning project there in 2006 (Eckstein et al. 2006). The market, it was agreed, could benefit from updated information on the consumers who come to the Fulton St. market, their demography, preferences, and attitudes towards the market.

This report is the product of seven weeks of classroom preparation and field work at both the West Side and Fulton St. farmers' markets. Student researchers participated in the ANT 307 course (*Techniques and Laboratory Methods in Anthropology*), learned about global and local food systems, prepared the surveys, spent four weeks at the markets, and wrote team reports on aspects of the food system: farmers, vendors, consumers, market management, and the surrounding neighborhood (West Grand only). Dr. Rhoads and the two field coordinators, Autumn Shroyer and Melissa Harrington (who worked on the 2003 project as well) integrated the student reports and added an introduction, a methodology and analysis of the results. That initial report was "preliminary" in the sense that the process of data collecting and analysis continued over the summer.



Figure 3: Students Presenting Their "100 Mile Diet"

Project Goals and Activities

The project, "Linking Food to Community:

Farmers' Markets in Grand Rapids, Michigan," was conducted between May 9 and June 20, 2007 by students of the ANT 307 course (See Appendix A, Project Personnel). The research activities addressed several goals stated in the outline of the course (See Appendix B, Course Syllabus):

1. To train students in anthropological methods and how to conduct "course-based action research" (Hofman and Howard Rosing 2006, Rosing 2007 et al.).
2. To understanding the link between the West Side farmers' market and the surrounding neighborhood. In its second year, the WS farmers' market was designed to become a "magnet" to help stimulate economic and social activities in the neighborhood, and to provide local, fresh, affordable food to low-income residents.
3. To collect information capturing the systematic organization and dynamics of the farmers' markets – information that could serve as a basis for future market planning.
4. To engage in service learning activities to assist the market manager (WSFM) in the operation of the market.

Timeframe

- *Week 1:* Literature review of local and global food systems; regional farmers' markets studies; Grand Rapids neighborhood histories and development; organized 6 student teams.
- *Week 2:* Design needs assessment methodology on the farmers' market (social space, vendors, and consumers' preferences) and the surrounding business district (asset mapping, availability of fresh foods); meet with Neighborhood Association; tour the Fulton Street farmers' market.
- *Weeks 3 - 5:* Begin work at the West Side Market two days per week and at the Fulton Street Market one day per week. Conduct interviews and surveys at the farmers' markets. One team carried out the "Visual Documentation" project; student teams share responsibilities for market set-up, flier distribution, and assisting vendors with "Project Fresh." The class met an additional day per week for "debriefing" and compiling fieldnotes and information in computer databases (ATLAS.ti and SPSS).
- *Week 6:* Data analysis and report writing; meet with Neighborhood Association with draft report. Student team presentation of the report to the community. Report publication.

The 19 students registered for the course spent the initial class periods learning about global and local food systems, discussing readings and the video, "The Future of Food" (Koons Garcia 2004). The second week took students on two field trips. The first was to the Visser family farm near Zeeland, Michigan, where students could see "where our food comes from." At the farm they became made aware of how family farms could successfully restructure farming to produce a variety of crops specifically for regional farmers' markets outlets. The second field trip took students to the Fulton St. farmers' market where they tested their new research "lens" by observing market activities and making a map of the social and physical spaces.



Figure 4: Students Interviewing Vendors at the Fulton Street Market

After these preparations, students conducted systematic field work for the next three weeks. The main tasks were:

1. To document the organization, management, and dynamics of running a farmers' market.
2. To map the physical and social spaces of the two markets.
3. To survey vendor demography, products, and preferences.
4. To survey consumer demography and preferences.
5. To conduct a fresh food survey of food availability in the surrounding neighborhood. Students surveyed 5 commercial businesses that sold fresh fruits and vegetables.
6. To document the range and types of businesses in the surrounding neighborhood, mapping the physical resources and surveying employment.
7. To write fieldnotes of observations and index them with a qualitative computer program and to process survey information with a qualitative computer program.
8. To assist the market manager in setting up and publicizing the market.

9. To create a DVD of the local food system with an emphasis on the West Side farmers' market. The DVD and photos would help the market manager create a future web site and to promote market publicity.
10. To prepare a "100 Mile Meal" in which the ingredients for food dishes are found locally within the region.
11. To write a preliminary 15-20 page report.
12. To write a reflection essay on the student's experiences in the course.

Methodology

The field school was designed as course-based community research, known as "action anthropology" (Strand et al. 2003). According to Hofman and Rosing (2006), course-based action anthropology (CBAA) engages community members with students and faculty in the course of their academic work. Unlike traditional research, CBAA is collaborative and change-oriented service learning, combining classroom learning with social action (Hofman and Rosing 2006, Rosing et al. 2007).

The project was conducted mainly by undergraduate anthropology students at Grand Valley State University. It was designed to give students a complete and authentic experience participating in legitimate field work in an accelerated time frame. The purpose of the course was to research the two farmers' markets, one fledgling and one established, and the terms of interaction between the West Side farmers' market and the surrounding community. The methodology relied on the tools of ethnography, participant observation and survey instruments. The students were divided into six teams, each responsible for collecting information on interconnected domains: the markets themselves with an emphasis on market management, farmers, vendors, consumers, and the surrounding neighborhood.

The next section describes the general techniques used to design and collect information, followed by sections on the specific methods and data-collecting activities applied by each team.

General Techniques

■ *Informed Consent*: Ethical protocols are an essential part of working with human subjects (See the Informed Consent Form, Appendix C). The project submitted a proposal to the GVSU Human Research Review Committee, explaining our procedures for protecting the rights of human subjects. The proposal was approved. Several measures were put into place during the field work. First, when in the field students carried "Cover Stories" - a brief description of the project including contact information. Students handed out the cover story sheets to people and used them to help address questions from consumers, vendors and neighborhood people. All respondents who were formally interviewed were asked to sign a consent form. This document informs the respondent of her/his rights and it protects the individual's anonymity. It also ensures that statements and materials collected will be protected by the University and will not be used for any purposes other than education without the respondent's consent.

■ *Project Identity*: During time in the field at the markets, student researchers and supervisors wore project t-shirts - with the project title and university affiliation. These shirts gave us a

“uniform” visibility and let people know that the students were at the market for the purposes of our project.

■ *Debriefing Sessions*: Once a week, the students met at the anthropology lab and “debriefed” the previous week’s activities in the field. Typically, the students would view pictures taken at the markets and use them to discuss issues and observations from the field experience. Debriefing sessions were used to draw attention to new ideas using the feedback or iterative-inductive approach (O’Reilly 2005:26-34), to address ethical issues, and to plan a strategy for the next first-hand field experience.

■ *Survey, Fresh Foods*: Data collection began with a survey of a selection of local grocery stores in the area. Each team was assigned a specific store to survey. The goal of the survey was to determine what types of produce are available in the target neighborhood, as well as the quality and available quantity of fruits and vegetables. A survey form was provided and filled out accordingly, describing the price, quantity, condition of produce, origin, and type, as well as any other information that happened to be observed while at the store. This information was then compared to the other results from the various assigned grocery stores at one of the “debriefing” sessions.

■ *Survey, Consumers*: As a class, students designed both the consumer and vendor surveys. At the beginning of the semester students worked on the consumer survey, as this would comprise the core of our survey data. Students began by posting a set of questions they thought were relevant to our project. Rhoads and graduate assistants Shroyer and Harrington then categorized the questions into related groups that formed sections of the total survey. We pre-tested the survey in the classroom, then readjusted it after one day in the field (See the Consumer Survey, Appendix D). The consumer surveys were filled out at tables set up at each market and staffed by students. Consumers filled out the surveys on clipboards. The time needed to fill out a survey ranged from 5-10 minutes. In total, 218 surveys were collected at both markets (40% from the West Side market).

■ *Survey, Vendors*: Similarly, a survey for vendors was administered. Several students were assigned a certain number of vendor surveys to distribute to vendors at each market. These surveys were “self-serve” in that the project provided the surveys with self-addressed and stamped envelopes. Vendors had the option of returning the survey to a student at a later date or mailing the survey to Rhoads. With just over thirty vendor surveys handed out, thirteen were completed and returned to the project (See the Vendor Survey, Appendix E).

■ *Survey, Stalls and Products*: Each day in the field, a group of students were responsible for collecting information on the number stalls, vendor names, and products for sale.

■ *Participant-Observation and Fieldnotes*: Systematic observation is the major method in cultural anthropology. Students learn about a culture by observing the constant flow of events and by participating in them to the extent possible. Fieldnotes are written accounts of the observational events, and they address a wide range of topics. Students were asked to write two kinds of fieldnotes. One type involves a specific focus, such as the traffic flow to and from the

market. The other type is open to general observation. Students were asked to describe behavior and scenes; the idea behind this is that descriptions that do not seem important now may be very important later to the analysis. Each student used a small notebook in the field into which jottings noted. Later the jottings were elaborated into fully detailed fieldnotes using a word processor. These files were posted on the course Website each week, reformatted, and added to the computer database (ATLAS.ti).

- *Mapping*: The physical dimensions of the three markets were mapped. The vendor locations were noted, and the general sense of space (including trees, parking, etc.) were captured. The West Grand neighborhood and business district were mapped as well.

- *Open-ended Interviews*: Farmers and vendors were asked general questions about their families, their history of selling at farmers' markets, constraints faced in restructuring their farming enterprises, and the issues faced in dealing with consumers. The market managers were interviewed as well. During some of these formal interviews, students used audio voice recorders as a memory device. These recordings were then used to make transcriptions of the interviews which were included in the team fieldnotes.

- *Photographs and Video*: Students took photographs of the general scenes at the markets. One team of students interested in film and video created a 7 minute documentary of the role of farmers' markets in preserving local farming livelihood. Consent forms were obtained from those interviewed.

- *Audio Fieldnotes*: Due to the special needs of one student, who was legally blind, the project designed a special method that, it was felt, would add a significant contribution to the data collection by taking advantage of the student's ability to "listen." During several market events, the student sat nearby the "action" and listened to the sounds of the market activities. At other times, another student led him through the market from one end to the other. During these periods, the student reported his observations with a digital voice recorder. Later he expanded these "jottings" into detailed fieldnotes, which were added to the computer database (ATLAS.ti), indexed, and made available to all students for team analyses.

- *Data Collection and Analysis*: The data from the maps, surveys, interview transcriptions, and fieldnotes were indexed in a qualitative research software program (ATLAS.ti) which allows researchers to categorize, compare, and retrieve information according to subjects, topics, and themes. The program then creates links and networks which depict the connections between strings of related textual information. The quantitative data from the consumer survey (about 80% of the survey content) were entered into a statistics program (SPSS).

Methods and Issues Specific to the Teams

Each team adapted the above methods to meet specific objectives related to studying, for example, consumers or market managers. Each team developed a strategy for using a particular assemblage of techniques. The following section describes these strategies and accompanying methodological issues.

Market Management Team:

The Market Management Team was responsible for documenting the organization and management of the two markets. In addition, they included the new GVSU farmers' market, located at the Allendale campus, in their sample. The teams used consumer survey variables such as zip code, frequency of visit, transportation, reasons for coming to the market, and improvements regarding market structure. The team utilized the fieldnotes submitted by other teams (in the ATLAS.ti database) in addition to their own fieldnotes. The ATLAS.ti database provided the team with information on advertising, market structure and service, traffic and parking, prices, stalls, improvements, and weather. These topics were retrieved and analyzed.

In addition to the information collected in the field, the teams used published sources to provide a context for making sense of the data and locating it within a broader scholarly framework. The majority of team information of this nature came from the *Fulton Street Farmer's Market Study* produced by Michigan State University (Eckstein et al. 2006). This source, alongside the "Brikyaat Development Plan" report (Midtown Neighborhood Association 2006) offered a noteworthy portrait of market dynamics for our research. Additional information was tendered from the "Fulton Street Farmer's Market Rules of Operation" as well as indirect information from readings such as "Managing Farmer and Consumer Expectations: A Study of a North Carolina Farmer's Market" by Andreatta and Wickliffe (2002). In addition, the team used images and information such as bus route maps, flyers, advertisements, and maps of each market.

The final method of data collection used by the team was a series of formal interviews of individuals involved in the management of each market. Members of this team were assigned persons to interview with questions provided to structure the interview to a certain degree. The team interviewed Jayson Otto, manager of the Fulton Street farmers' market, Kelly Otto, representative of the MNA, Susan Sloop, manager of the Grand Valley State University farmers' market, Andrea Bardelmeier, manager of the West Side farmers' market, and Russ Lewis, who replaced Bardelmeier in August 2007. Each interview was recorded and informed consent documents were signed by all of the interviewees. The questions asked all regarded the structure and organization of the respective markets.

Vendors Team

The specific research topic for this team was to study the role that vendors play in the big picture of the farmers' market. This focus incorporates many different aspects of the vendors as a whole. The group's goals included studying:

1. The types of vendors selling at the markets
2. Vendor stalls and booths – what they sold, what they looked like and how they were organized.
3. The range of interactions involving vendors, such as vendor-vendor and vendor-consumer.
4. The other markets the vendors sold at and how often, and whether or not they also sold their goods for resale to wholesale dealers.
5. The effects of the weather, seasonality, consumer traffic/volume and the neighborhood on the vendors willingness to sell at the market how much these factors effect a vendor's profits and productivity at the market.

6. The attitudes of the vendors and their opinions on the structure of the markets.
7. The vendor's needs to help insure the stability of the farmers' markets.
8. Ways that vendors can help to keep fresh, affordable food accessible to the surrounding neighborhoods.

The vendor survey was an important component of the information that the team collected. The survey (and a self-addressed, stamped envelope) was distributed to all vendors present at the West Side Farmers' Market on May 31, 2007, and at the Fulton Street Farmers' Market on June 1st. Vendors were given the option to return the surveys to any of the field school students during our market study days, which was stated to the vendor when they were presented with the survey. In an unusual case, a vendor at the West Side Market was given a survey, and he stated that he could take the survey right then, as long as he could dictate to students the answers to questions asked of him. When the survey was completed, he asked the students to help him unload some of the goods he had brought to the market. In this way, there was some reciprocation for the time the vendor spent answering our questions.

The members of the team conducted casual interviews during the field study. These began during the stall survey on the first day of field work at Fulton Street Farmers' Market. As a group, the four-member vendor team surveyed our assigned block of vendors, asking them questions pertaining to their wares and their experience with the market. Information was also gleaned from vendors during conversations struck up during field activities, such as distributing surveys.

Participant-observation was a key method employed. For example, participant-observation involved helping to construct and distribute signage advertising the West Side farmers' market. Another way in which the students engaged in participant-observation was in purchasing from the vendors at various points during the study, whether for our own needs or for class activities, such as the 100 Mile Meal activity in which students prepared dishes from local ingredients. In one case, one student noted in his fieldnotes that he used the strategy one day of purchasing from different vendors to see if he couldn't elicit different responses from them as a buying consumer, than as an obvious researcher.

Farmers Team

Although the specific focus for this team was "farmers," the farmers population were actually a subset of the vendors. In other words, all farmers are vendors but not all vendors are farmers. This team focused only on the vendors who were farmers. The bulk of the information utilized by this team came from the surveys and an informal set of questions that served as a "farmer's survey." Specifically, the Farmer team was interested in describing the differences between vendors as farmers and vendors who did not farm. The team wished to document farmer motivations for producing and selling locally at the farmers' market, how farmers restructured their production and farm organization, the extent to which family members were involved, and new skills learned in face-to-face marketing. The team was also interested in the issue of organic farming and the use of GMOs (genetically modified organism) and pesticides.

Casual interviewing was another method employed by the Farmer team to collect data. The conditions of the market dictated how successful this method was; if the market was busy, the farmers and vendors did not like to have the flow of business interrupted. If the market was relatively slow, the participants were more likely to answer questions. After the first week of

study in the field, the vendors and farmers at the Fulton Street market requested that students participating in this study avoid spending time in the aisle between the stalls, thus limiting extended interviewing from taking place. At this point, participant observation became a tactic used to collect data during “busy” markets. Team members listened to conversations and watching interactions between vendors, farmers, and consumers as goods were exchanged.

After spending several hours at the farmers' markets two days a week, detailed fieldnotes were completed either during the market or shortly after leaving. A cyclical system of observation, note taking, and analysis allowed research to be precise and fluid at the same time. Other methods used in this project included viewing films about the restructuring of the farming industry, reading articles about sustainable and organic farming, and taking field trips to local farms. The team spend a good deal of time at the farm belonging to one of the main vendors, the Vissers, who operate a 120 acre farm near Zeeland, Michigan. Much information was gained through casual conversation with the vendors and the market managers. For example, Jayson Otto, the market manager at Fulton Street, provided the team with valuable information concerning the vendors' attitudes towards organic produce and farming. Members of the team attended local events on food systems, such as a video shown at the Wealthy Theater on the dangers of genetically modified foods. *The Health Dangers in Genetically Engineered Foods, and Their Cover-up* revealed concerns that consumers do not have enough information on the food they eat.

Inevitably, there were some problems and issues encountered while collecting data in the field. Mentioned above was the problem of limited access to farmers during busy market times. On the other hand, if the market was too slow it was also difficult to collect data due to a lack of farmers, vendors, and/or consumers. In only its second year in existence, the West Side market was often slow; there were only four to five stalls present at a time. Another problem encountered by the team was the lack of an adequate sample population. In response, the team focused on a few in-depth case studies of farmers and their enterprises. While the limited results are quite interesting and do have promise, further research would need to be conducted across a larger population of farmers.

Consumers Team

The Consumers team focused on the role of the consumer at the markets and in the surrounding community. The team addressed demographics, consumer behaviors and expectation, both quantitatively and qualitatively. One team member who is legally blind collected and analyzed sensory data (sounds and smells) from the markets utilizing digital audio recordings. While the team might have relied exclusively on the quantitative data from the consumer surveys, members quickly realized the importance of the qualitative contexts captured in fieldnotes. Mingling with the consumers and vendors were thus central to the team's effort. By taking notes while surveying consumers, team members began to understand the contexts for motivations and attitudes.

Participation played an important role for the team. Relating to the consumers was not a necessarily difficult task; all students had to do was purchase vendors' products. In addition, the team members personally agreed that the farmers' market and its role were personally important. The team felt an integral part of the market, both as consumers and social scientists. To say that

the students came to understand what the consumers were thinking is not too intuitive a statement.

During the market debriefing in the classroom each week the team convened each week to discuss findings among team members. This allowed the team to share information with the other groups. The team was able to access the on-going results of the survey. The team used this time to discuss the most effective ways of approaching consumers. It is important to note the interdependence between groups which made the field school dynamic. Without the fieldnotes from the other groups, the team's work would be incomplete.

Neighborhood Team

To acquire information, the Neighborhood group did a great deal of participant-observation as well as surveys, maps, and interviews. The team's primary task was to map and surveyed the West Grand business district. Over a three weeks, the team conversed with many business owners on Bridge, Stocking, and Leonard streets. Questions were asked about the potential impact of the new farmers' market, the number of employees, and the future employment plans of each business. The first survey involved describing the buildings' conditions in addition to talking with the owners or managers about employment. However, the subsequent survey elicited more specific data on employment, which was used to help the local Neighborhood Organization collect information for their grant report.

The team explained the project to each business owner and encountered very few obstacles. Field work is not always easy; in fact it's probably not easy most of the time. However, people did not seem to mind the students' questions; students were polite in explaining the project and their connections to the University and to the farmers' market. The turning point was the second, more direct survey. Because students asked about employment, some business owners or managers, as expected, declined to talk to them about this information.

Video Documentary Team

This team completed a seven minute DVD entitled, "From Field to Farmer's Market." The documentary explores the relationships between farmers, consumers and how farmers' markets affect their lives. The team wanted to examine the significance of the farmers' market to local farmers and urban communities. The teams' visual essay was aimed to bring awareness to the kinds of relationships that can emerge over time from the nexus of involvement at a farmers' market. The video suggests the potential for farmers' markets to stimulate local economic and cultural activities in West Michigan.

Overall, each team tackled a different domain and social group found at the farmers' market. Students discovered the benefits of cooperation between teams and with team members. The teams quickly realized the rigorous demands of participant observation and the necessity of thorough preparation and planning before entering the field. Teams also adapted a range of methods to meet specific team objectives, and each developed a strategy for use of a particular assemblage of techniques.

SECTION II: Research Issues and Questions

“Farmers' Markets: Linking Food to Community in Grand Rapids” documents two farmers' markets in Grand Rapids. The project began with the idea that food produced and distributed locally is fresher and more likely without preservatives or other chemicals used to preserve a fruit or vegetable over long distances. We began with a set of questions derived from the West Grand Neighborhood Organization's stated goals for creating a new farmers' market. How do farmers' markets provide sources of fresh food and health for communities? What role does the farmers' market play in the urban setting? What is the dynamic between the market and the growth of the community? Do farmers' markets help the local business community in general? We adapted these to our knowledge of anthropological studies and other academic literature on farmers' markets and local food systems in general. We identified four core issues to be explored in the research: establishing a new farmers' market, preserving the rural landscape, the motivations and needs of consumers, and the role of farmers' markets in urban neighborhoods.

In conventional research, the researcher begins her/his project with a research question or hypothesis for testing (Sidky 2004:29). This thesis or question is the result of extensive preliminary library research and/or previous research in the area. In the present research, the students entered the project without a hypothesis, though they had many questions about their research based on class readings and previous experiences. Instead of the conventional (deductive) research design, the students were asked to proceed inductively, formulating possible themes, issues and questions throughout their observations and interview experiences. When the teams wrote their final reports, they were required to formulate detailed research questions based on various issues which were revealed to them in the data and interviews, and from their experiences working together:

1. *Establishing a new farmers' market:* The West Side farmers' market is a new market, only in its second year. The neighborhood organization and the market manager are starting from scratch. Although there are many resources available to guide the formation of a new market, growth depends mobilizing vendors and consumers, and connecting them in time and place. A slow process, it can take years to build an established, reliable market. Our project was interested how a new market develops, expands, and becomes viable. What should be the roles of market manager and vendors in such smaller markets? How does location in a neighborhood come into play? How do the needs of new and smaller markets differ from more established farmers' markets? One objective of the data collection was to monitor the size, location, and activity of the new and established markets. Another was to document the organizational strategies put in place by the market managers.
2. *Preserving the rural landscape:* While farmers' markets attract attention to urban spaces, they may have an even greater effect on nearby farms and their restructuring, if not preservation. The growing viability of family farms would likely benefit surrounding rural communities. Since the 1970s, sprawl and the rapid growth of suburbia have overrun former farming landscapes. These changes were caused in part by the restructuring of farming and the food procurement system brought on by expanding the economies of scale, industrialization, consolidation, and the vertical integration in the farm and food industries. The local food system transformed into a global food system, pushing out many smaller

family farms (Grey 2000). Faced with these difficulties, some small-scale farmers increasingly turned to alternative growing and marketing strategies to sustain their livelihood. Direct marketing to consumers, and farmers' markets specifically, are viewed as ways to restructure the family farm by growing a variety of "high value" crops for local distribution.

Restructuring involves noteworthy changes in the way crops are produced and in the use of farm labor. Multi-crop farms require new technologies and a sensitivity towards the application of fewer and fewer unhealthy biocides. Such farms are often more labor-intensive and necessitate a greater range of work activities. Members of farm families themselves typically deliver and market the crops, and develop new communication and marketing skills by having to interact with the consumers face-to-face. Our project wanted to understand the changes taking place on those family farms that sell at the farmers' market and how farmers and their families have adapted to their new enterprise. Focused primarily at the farmers' market, however, our methodology allowed us to directly study farmers only in a few cases. Even so, students were able to learn much from farmers as vendors and about their marketing strategies and skills.

3. *Consumers, their motivations and needs:* Attracting a regular clientele of consumers is just as important to farmers' markets as securing sources of fresh products from local farms. Our project anticipated that consumers would be attracted to direct marketing for many overlapping reasons. A review of the popular media gives the impression that people primarily want locally fresh, seasonal foods. The media also points out the appeal of organic fruits and vegetables, "back to nature" or "buy local" movements, and that farmers' markets may be viewed as a romantic return to traditional agriculture. Finally, farmers' markets might find their appeal as an "anti-globalization" strategy (Starr and Adams 2003), a space created to resist the all-pervading corporate, global food system. Many consumers are concerned that it is virtually impossible to know where one's food comes from and what kinds of chemicals were used to produce it. Consumers are increasingly removed from the source of their food, which on average, according to Schlosser (2002), has traveled 1,300 miles before it reaches the consumer's plate (see Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture 2008).

Aside from media impressions, there were very few scholarly studies from which to draw. Our students relied heavily on a key article by Andreatta and Wickliffe (2002), "Managing Farmer and Consumer Expectations: A Study of a North Carolina farmers' market." One key issue raised by the authors is the significant difference in the types of consumers, especially in educational level and in household income. Associated cultural "tastes," distinctions of desired foods, and cuisine may determine what consumers seek at the market – whether the demand is for basic fruits and vegetables, or for specialty crops and "value-added" goods. In the context of this project, consumer demography can have a key impact on the success of a market if the goal is to serve a low-income community or a particular ethnic group. How can the market develop an out-reach strategy? How can market managers align the needs of consumers with the products brought for sale by vendors?

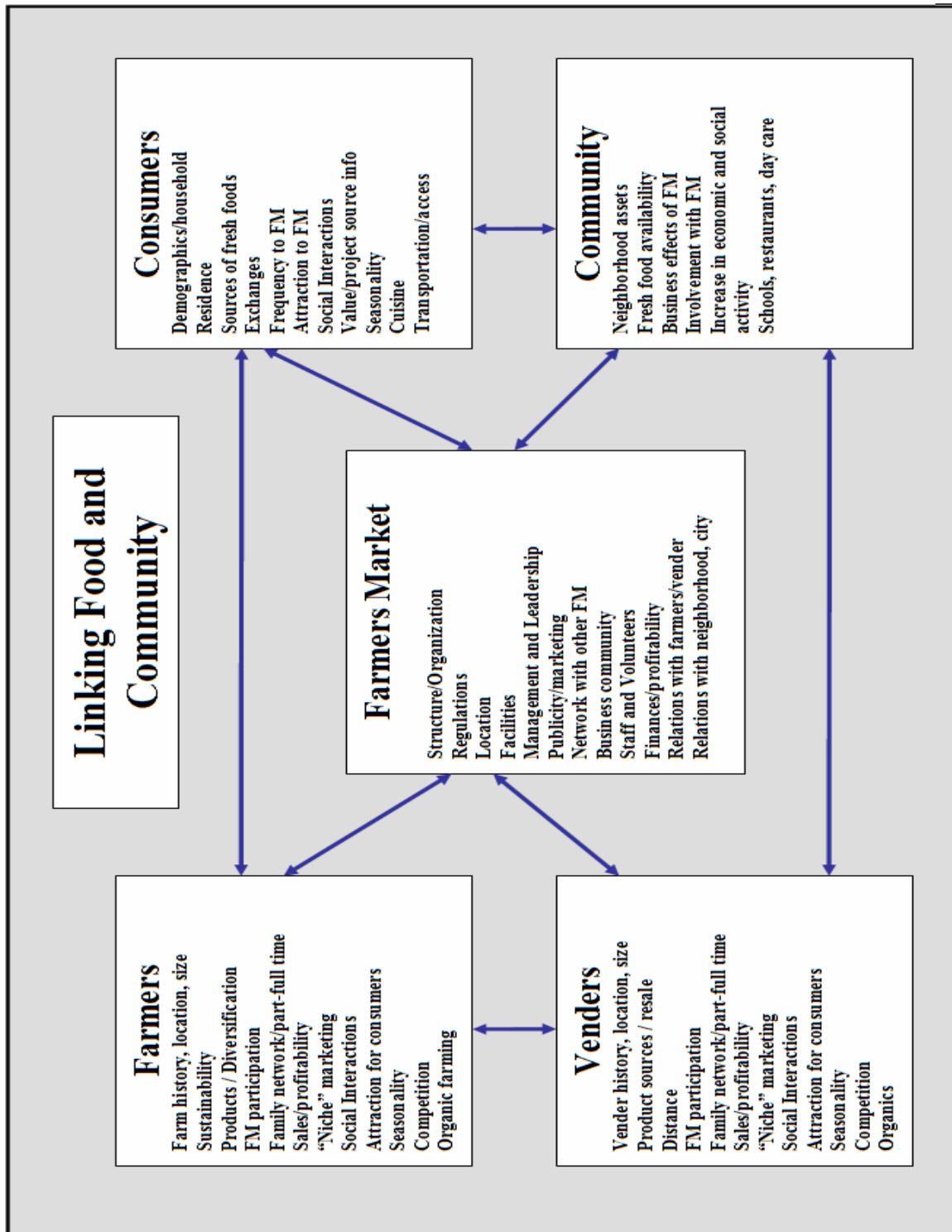
4. *The role of farmers' markets in urban neighborhoods:* Related to the issue of local consumers, the project wanted to know how farmers' markets integrate into the surrounding neighborhood. In its second year, the West Side farmers' market was projected as a way to offer local, fresh, and affordable food to low-income residents, as well as to become a

“magnet” for stimulating economic and social activities in the neighborhood (Corum, Rosenzweig, and Gibson 2005, Ford Foundation 2003, Kantor 2001, Kellogg Foundation 2003). How do community organizations and residents become involved in the market? What connections emerge among different actors and social groups? How do networks function to redistribute “food power”? What is the relationship between a farmers' market and the local business community? Our project assisted the market manager of the West Side Farmers' Market by monitoring the links between the market and the surrounding West Grand neighborhood. Students collected information on neighborhood history, the surrounding business district, employment, and fresh food availability within the broader neighborhood. Involvement in the market by the community and accessibility to the market by neighborhood residents were monitored.

These four topics – market formation, vendors/farmers, consumers, and the neighborhood – were studied by different teams of students. As described in a previous section, each team developed a set of topics and a methodology for gathering information on their specific domain. While teams worked independently, they also connected their activities and findings with other domains in order to construct a *holistic* picture of the local food system. Figure 5 depicts the topics investigated by the teams, comprising a network of relationships represented in the concept map. Note that farmers and vendors are separated into two domains. While it is true that all farmers selling at the market are vendors, not all vendors, especially those who “resell” products, are farmers. The distinctions between these two types of vendors are seen in each group’s marketing strategy, involvement in the farmers’ market, and commitment to rural preservation.

In the report's conclusion, these four topics are discussed in greater detail – in light of the project's findings. The next several sections present the findings from the team reports submitted in June 2007, subsequently edited and elaborated by the author for this final report.

Figure 5: Conceptual Map



SECTION III: Market Organization

The following students made contributions to this section based on their field report written for the course: Ryan Ames (Sociology), Ty Falk (Anthropology), Hannah Rodgers (Anthropology/History).

West Side Farmers' Market:

The West Side Farmers' Market was in its second year of operation when this study took place. The location of the market was in the rear parking lot of St. James Catholic Church, 733 Bridge St. NW near the south boundary of the West Grand neighborhood. The market was open two days per week: Thursdays 12:00 - 6:00 PM as during the previous year (2006), and for the 2007 season, Saturday mornings 8:00 AM – 12 PM. The vending fees were \$10 per day, \$15 per week and \$250 for a season consisting of 19 weeks. The market was sponsored by West Grand Neighborhood Organization and the Stockbridge Business Association.

Andrea Bartelmeier was the first market manager. Initially, she took a job with the West Grand Neighborhood Organization and helped write the Cool Cities grant, which included a farmers' market component. Once the grant was funded, Bartelmeier then took on the task of organizing and establishing the farmers' market. In an interview, she described the early stages of market formation:

We had a couple meetings in the summer [2006] . . . The initial idea was to create an immigrant market so Mexicans and immigrants could sell in the neighborhood. More people were open to the open air market that would serve more people, all different cultures, and the farmers' market was the best idea. We organized it in about two weeks, and started it in mid-August [2006]. We had a huge turn out on the first day because we gave coupons for three dollars and that spurred a lot of people to get out here. Many know of the market because of that . . . but it will take the market about four years for to sustain itself.

Bartelmeier had explained how the farmers' market idea was originally conceived both as a premise and as an experiment: How could a farmers' market help revitalized a neighborhood community? The original idea for the market was to create an environment that was supportive to immigrants, specifically Latinos, and to offer a venue for buying and sell products in their neighborhood. As Bartelmeier indicates in her statement, only two weeks before the market opened, this idea was abandoned in favor of a more inclusive market, reaching out not only to Latinos, but to residents and workers in the area. This change – and the offering the coupons circulated throughout the neighborhood prior to opening day – helped the market to a good start initially.

The \$13,000 grant from the city of Grand Rapids allowed the market to continue into 2007 for a full season. According to Bartelmeier, the cost of running the market included the salary for the manager, the porta-potty toilet, and advertising materials like flyers and billboards. Of these expenses, about \$9,000 went to manage the market and to support the market manager. The new market was to serve the west end of the city of Grand Rapids and, specifically, the “West Grand” neighborhood (see Figures 6 and 7).

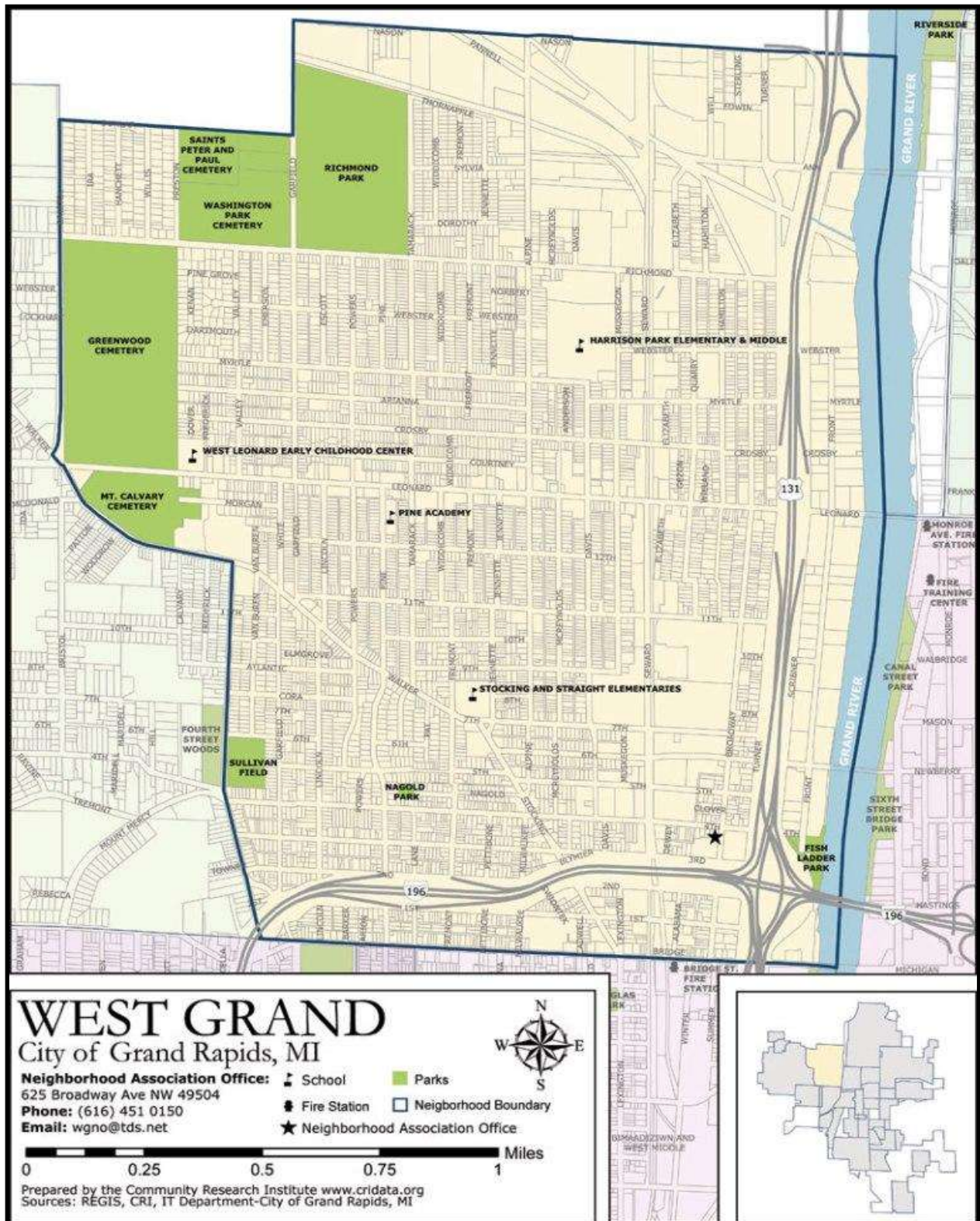


Figure 6: Market Location in the West Grand Neighborhood

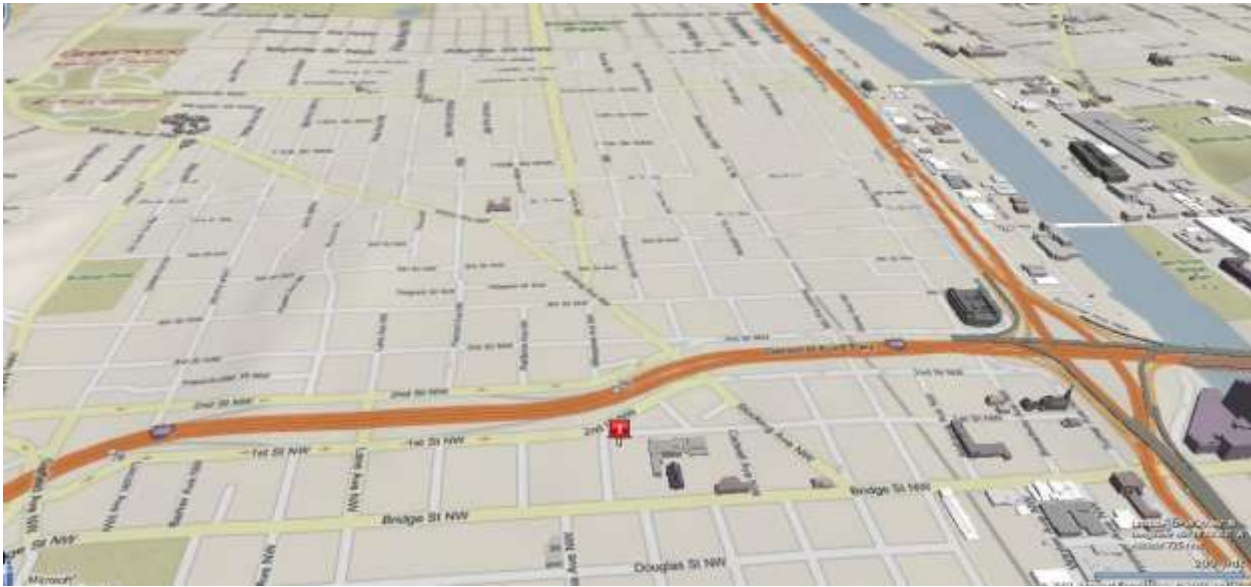


Figure 7: Aerial View of West Side Farmers' Market, Looking North



Figure 8: West Side Farmers' Market Block

In the Figures 8 and 9, note the location of the church along Bridge Street, which runs east-west. The market is located in the west parking lot of Saint James Church at 733 Bridge Street NW. The church lies between First Street and Milwaukee Street and its parking lot is shared with the Goodwill's Hartley Center (on the east side of the lot) that offers social services and training. Goodwill does not charge the farmers' market a fee for use of the parking lot, but there are restrictions on stall location and parking (Figure 9).



Figure 9: Stall and Parking Map

Whenever the market hours coincided with an event or training session at the Goodwill building, the market manager unrolled yellow tape down the center of the parking lot, delineating the market's stall and parking boundaries. During these occasions students did not notice confusion about parking, and did not see any market patrons or vendors attempting to use the Goodwill section. The parking lot is surrounded by cyclone fencing with two entrances (Figure 9).

People approach the market by many means including by foot, bicycle or vehicle. There is of course pedestrian access and a bus stop nearby located at Bridge and Garfield streets on the West Fulton route. In addition, the flat parking lot makes the area accessible for those with special needs. During our field study, students saw people in walkers, wheelchairs, and kids in stroller at the market. Most of the consumers came without vehicles, walking to the market from their work or from other shopping; others parked in the lot or along the neighborhood street on the periphery of the market.

The vending area contained roughly 20 stall spaces. The amount of space taken by each vendor varied, and was not at issue; during the study, never were all the spaces filled (Figure 10). In an effort to fill the stalls, a policy of "All vendors are welcome" became apparent. This situation contrasts sharply with that at the Fulton Street farmers' market where, due to its



Figure 10: West Side Stalls

popularity, many vendors are on a waiting list to acquire a space; many are turned away each market day. Though West Side market could accommodate up to two dozen vendors, most often there were only five or six on market days. The vendors paid \$10.00 for a stall, the proceeds of which went toward payment for marketing and the port-a-potty on location.

When students began working in the field on May 24, the turnout was light at the market (Figure 14). Bardelmeier expressed disappointment about this. Unlike the previous year,

when the market began at peak growing season, she understood that this might be the case in the early season; most vendors could only offer bedding plants and perhaps asparagus and rhubarb by late May. In addition, a decision had been made to discontinue with the “coupon” strategy from the prior year, as there was a problem with unauthorized duplication. Bardelmeier also worried about the lack of vendors and variety of produce, which would make it difficult to grow a consistent customer base, especially during the first weeks of the market.

It was quickly apparent that some of the initial customers did not understand why there was so little to pick from; many customers were unaware of the seasonality of crops and harvest pattern in Michigan. When strawberries and peaches were not offered at this early date, customers commented that the market was “lacking.” Bardelmeier began to stress the importance of food education and how the market could be an important place to promote such ideas as seasonality, health, and local farming. A poster was placed on the “office” table at the market entrance, depicting the harvest season for a long list of Michigan fruits and vegetables (Figure 11). Likewise, other displays were at the table, such as books on the history of the neighborhood, and pamphlets on local foods systems and other farmers' markets. These communicated the importance of education about family health, fresh food, local cuisine, and cultural richness.

The methods the market used for advertising primarily focused on signs and posters. Several signs, including the entrance banner (Figure 12),



Figure 11: Growing Season Display

Figure 12: Banner at Main Entrance



West Grand neighborhood to the north. This visibility concern, as will be discussed at length below, contributed to a general sense that local people were unaware of the market's operations.

Bardelmeier tried to expand visibility through other types of media. She appeared on several radio programs, including the local community radio station, WYCE. She distributed flyers, chalked sidewalks, and posted information on church bulletins as ways to advertise the market. The Stockbridge Business Owners Association helped fund and design a large street billboard featuring the West Side farmers' market; the billboard will rotate at various locations around the neighborhood over the summer months.

Regarding rules on what can be sold at the market, Bartelmeier stressed that anything could be sold as long as it was grown or produced locally in Michigan (Figure 13). Baked goods, processed jams, and crafted objects were allowed. At the West Side market "resale" took place minimally during the first few weeks, and was tolerated due to the unavailability of local fruits and vegetables. By and large, the products inventoried at the market conform to Brown's (2002a:658) definition of a farmers' market: "recurrent markets, at fixed locations where farm products are sold by the farmers themselves . . . [and] some, if not all, of the vendors must be producers who sell their own products." It was unclear, though, if vendors needed appropriate licenses for selling processed food or organic certification. The market



Figure 13: A Variety of Products from Visser Farms

manager encouraged the vendors to take responsibility for this. It would be difficult for the market manager, Bartelmeier reasoned, to ensure the veracity of each vendor's claims. For example, one vendor baked her own goods. She was responsible for acting upon rules from the local health department, and, if necessary, securing the proper permits. In the future, it will be important for the market to institute a formal policy the market by -laws with respect to permits and certification.

The future viability of new farmers' markets is always at issue. Research on farmers' markets suggests that there are phases each market goes through. One estimate is that it generally takes four years to have a consistent customer base to sustain the amount, and quality of vendors (Andreatta and Wickliffe 2002:196; Lloyd, Nelson and Tilley 1987). It can be argued that a farmers' market surviving this period depends upon strong leadership and community support. West Side market is still in the first phase and it remains to be seen if such support can be generated and sustained. The Cool Cities grant would expire after the 2007 season. By the end of the 2007 season, there continued to be fewer vendors than desired, and consequently less produce available, which undermined the rate of growth in the consumer base. By the end of the summer, stall space was offered freely as an incentive to attract sellers. The market generated little in the way of funds to kick off the 2008 season.

By late July, 2007, a major change in leadership impacted the West Side market. Bartelmeier decided to leave the managerial position to attend graduate school. While attending a meeting of a group called the Neighborhood Venture, Bartelmeier met Russ Lewis, a "neighborhood activist," and asked him if he would have an interest in applying for the market manager position. Soon after, the West Grand Neighborhood Organization hired Lewis.

How would this leadership change impact the market? During interviews, Bartelmeier explained her role as the person who secured grant funds to help establish the market, and as the one who organized the first two years of market activities – putting the market on the map, so to speak. But she admits the limitations of that role. For the market to survive, the next manager will need to put energy into community outreach. Lewis agrees.

His vision embraces outreach of neighborhood volunteers to take an interest in running the market and forming a steering committee to decide on the role the market should play in the community. A future manager, perhaps a neighborhood volunteer like himself, would be responsible for the practical aspects of daily operations. Other volunteers invested in the market would be responsible for grant-writing and outreach, which would be necessary for funding and encouraging the participation of the Latino residents that make up the majority population in the neighborhood. While the market should be community operated, Lewis cautions that it needs to nurture its rural ties as well, by encouraging farmers into the market network. Otherwise, it can turn into a local "flea market." As Lewis explains: "The stars of the market are the farmers themselves, and the market is a showcase of our agricultural community . . . [It's a] farm show; the fruits and vegetables, the produce [are] . . . actually the reason for the market to exist." The farmers, he emphasizes, know marketing and are skilled in presenting information about their products. The manager's role is to provide the farmers and the consumers with "a backdrop that is pleasant and accessible and consistent."



Figure 14: Grand Valley Student Volunteers

Finally, Lewis stresses the gradual shifting of resources to the work of volunteers and lowering operating costs to a basic budget reasonable for a local community generate each year – about \$3,000, he estimates. Volunteers will be all the more needed if the grant funding is not renewed. In addition, volunteers from local institutions, such as schools and colleges, will also find a key role to play in helping the market monitor itself by collecting data on market activities (Figure 14), especially as the market grows in size and complexity. Such home-grown studies can be used to support grant-writing projects. Donations can also play a key role as both the location of the market as well as the models for the billboard were donated by members and organizations within the community.

The West Side farmers' market is a fledgling project and has certainly seen its share of growing pains. Growing towards viability will mean constant change and adjustment ("Change is a very common way to talk about a farmers' market."). It remains to be seen if Lewis' initiatives will energize the neighborhood residents to participate in the market. The market can be a tremendous asset to the community, but at some point, as Lewis anticipates, "the neighborhood will pretty much accept us or reject us based on their perceived need and the benefits that they see from having the market."

Grand Valley State University Farmers' Market:

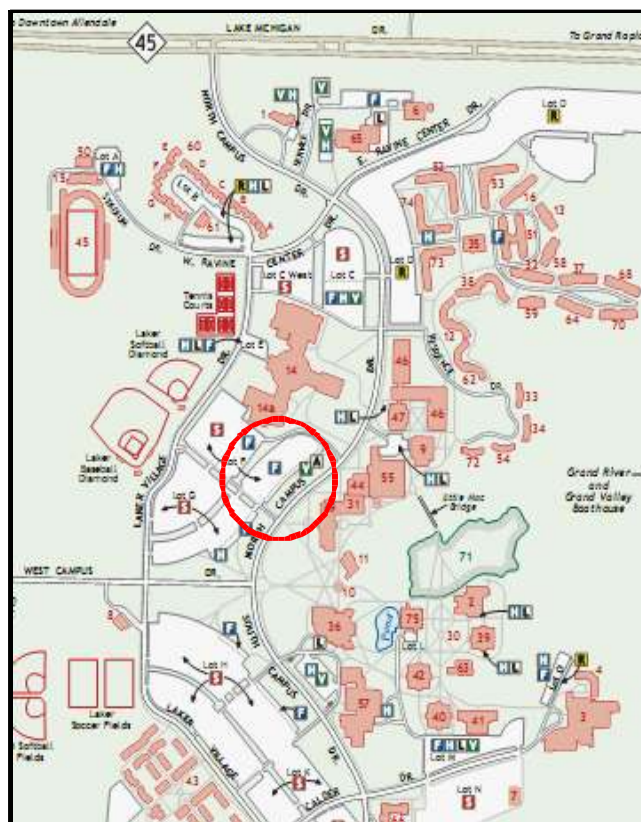
The Grand Valley State University farmers' market opened every Wednesday from 10:00 am until 2:00 pm beginning June 13 and ran through August 22. The market opened last year for the first time and, similar to the West Side farmers' market, is in its early stages of development. The location of the market is at Grand Valley State's Allendale campus in parking lot F (Figure 15) in front the recreation center and near the Student Services building. As the parking lot is both flat and open, providing suitable handicap accessibility to the majority of disabilities and allows individuals with strollers. There is ample parking, as well as local transportation options

on the Rapid's GVSU 50 route, which comes every twenty to thirty minutes on weekdays. The market itself can be easily seen from the adjacent street passing straight through campus. Many people who are at the nearby golf course on market days will notice the street advertisements. In addition, many students and staff who attend GVSU in the summer will park in lots nearby the market.

On adjacent the streets, students observed that signs announcing the market were placed strategically. One bright yellow sign read “GVSU Farmers' Market going until August 22nd, every Wednesday from 10 – 2.” The market manger’s email address was posted next to the sign. In addition to the advertisements located at each entrance, there were signs at each end of the market where the lot was blocked off to allow pedestrian traffic only. These signs were about waist high and could be seen from a short distance away. The location itself was central to the campus, allowing a wide array of individuals to visit the market due to its easy accessibility and centralized local. The market entrance was from north to south, as the vendors occupied the east and west border of the market, paralleling each other on opposite sides. The middle walking lane, fifteen to twenty feet wide, easily accommodated the consumers who browsed the length of stalls. Two trash cans were placed at either end of the lane. However, there were no benches or places to rest for consumers. People were observed sitting down on the curbside near the vendors. Finally, there were neither restrooms on the premises nor signs pointing in a direction to restrooms.

An interview with the market manager, Sue Sloop, was completed in early June 2007, when the market just got underway. According to Sloop, the aims of the new market are to support the sustainability of local food and to serve the GVSU community, seeking to create one of the “healthiest campuses in Michigan.” There is a campus wide health and wellness initiative from which the market derives its mission statement. In addition to Sloop, a graduate assistant and an intern helps to organize and monitor the market and events. The assistant is paid through GVSU, while the intern volunteers without pay. The market receives exposure by placements in the *Advance* newspaper, the *Forum*, a faculty/staff newspaper, and a feature article published in the school newspaper, *The Lanthorn*. Sloop explained that she sent flyers announcing the market to farmers in Ottawa County and communication was made with the Allendale Chamber of Commerce in order to secure approval from the city. In addition, flyers were distributed to both the faculty and staff of GVSU.

Figure 15: GVSU Market Location, Allendale Campus



As the market is funded by GVSU, the management does not have to pay for the lot. A \$10.00 daily stall charge is required from every vendor. This fee goes towards the health and wellness programs on campus. Vendors may choose to pay a \$90.00 fee for a seasonal stall that includes all ten of the market dates. There are no pricing regulations implemented by the market on the products as the prices are self-regulated by vendor response to customer demand. The application process for vendors is “first-come, first serve.” The market seeks to operate with ten to twelve vendors who can bring a variety of produce, with the understanding that all goods must be perishable (no dry-goods or crafts).

With its “health and wellness” orientation, the GVSU market is much more than a place to buy fruits and vegetables. Events organized by Campus Recreation, music, and educational speakers are scheduled each market, used both to draw customers and to organize the market around healthy activities. The Campus Recreation Center sets up a booth providing health information such as ways to exercise and healthy eating habits. (This information is geared more towards women than to men, reflecting the main clientele who attend the market. Most of those observed at the market are women over 40 or young mothers with their children.) Campus Recreation highlights a different theme for each of the market days. On June 27, for example, the theme was “Kids Week.” On July 11, our field school students observed activities associated with the theme, “Yoga on the Lawn.” Campus Recreation set up a location on the grass with yoga mats where an instructor invited market-goers to come and join in her yoga session at no charge. On July 18, the next theme, “Women’s Health,” featured free buttons with the women’s health logo, and a giveaway of items from the GVSU Women’s Center, including a women’s health book and goodies in a tote bag. Free blood pressure tests were offered to anyone who wanted one. And while this was a women’s health theme, many men were observed showing interest in the recipes being given away or information about ways to prevent cardiac arrest.

Still, other promotions added to the overall healthy atmosphere of the market. Campus Recreation encouraged people to join in a “walking monitor” activity. Patrons would sign up at the beginning of the market in June, or any time thereafter, and adopt a “challenge” to use a step counter for keeping track of how far they walk for exercise in a week’s time. Walking routes, consisting of maps of the Allendale campus and Pew (downtown Grand Rapids) campuses, were available for distribution. Finally, in collaboration with Campus Recreation, representatives from Campus Dining attended the market every other week and provided a free healthy dish to serve to market goers. The dish featured food items donated by one or more vendors at the specific market.

Based on several observations from mid-June to mid-July, students observed the market to be busiest at its opening. At this time, the special events were getting underway, and many students and staff of the university were present. Other consumers appeared to come from the nearby town of Allendale. Allendale residents probably learned about the market from flyers distributed in the community and posted at local businesses. On one occasion, the staff from a retirement home brought a group of residents – eight elderly women. A few were handicapped and had walkers to aid them. On another occasion, two men came dressed in business attire, shopping together; they asked questions of the vendors which made them seem like first time customers. Generally, the consumers did not bring their own bags, also indicating the relative newness of this market experience. Since the lunch break for the summer classes is from 11:00 AM to 1 PM, students expected the market to become busier during this time, but on this occasion (July 11), the market began to dwindle by afternoon.

The field school did not study the GVSU market as in-depth as the West Side market. The students did not circulate questionnaires and conduct stall and product maps. However, they felt that observations and interviews at the market would be important for two reasons. First, the market is a GVSU-sponsored effort. It represents an attempt to offer a farmers market at an atypical venue – a college campus – creating a new kind of network among farmers, vendors, students, GVSU staff and faculty, and local Allendale residents. More importantly, the market is a great example of how food exchange can be tied to health education activities. The resulting “fair” becomes a multifaceted event potentially attracting a broader range of customers with varied interests. The project acknowledges that GVSU has ready resources to create an “extracurricular” context around the buying and selling functions. At the same time, the project wishes to stress the relevance of the GVSU model for neighborhood venues such as the West Side and Fulton Street markets.

Fulton Street Farmers' Market:

The Fulton Street Farmers' Market is located at 1147 Fulton Street, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49504. Since 1922, the market has served local residents at several locations. People talk about the market as an “institution” (Figure 16). In 2005, management of the market shifted to the Midtown Neighborhood Association. The area allotted for the Fulton Street farmers' market is approximately two acres, located at the intersection of Fulton Street and Fuller Avenue (Figure 17). The market layout runs north and south, perpendicular to Fulton Street, as Fountain Street provides the northern boundary (Figure 18). The market is at the southeast boundary of the Midtown Neighborhood, and adjacent neighborhoods to the east and south are Fulton Heights and Easttown, respectively. The market is much larger than the West Side farmers' market, featuring 122 spaces designated for vendors, with two lines of 147 vendor/customer parking spaces running parallel to the rows of stalls (Figure 18). The market is over 200 feet long and has an eleven foot wide pedestrian walk running through the center. There is an overhead pipe



Figure 16: Fulton Street Farmers' Market Website
<http://www.fultonstreetmarket.org/>

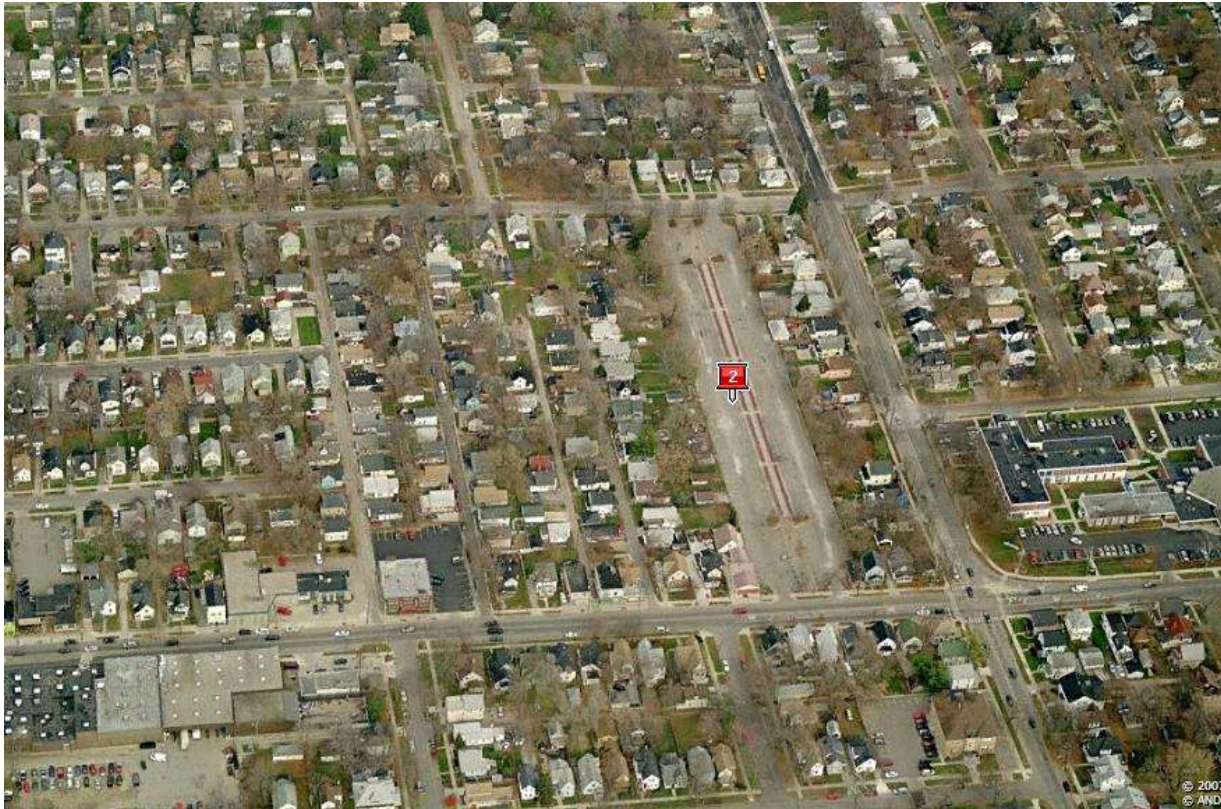


Figure 17: Fulton Street Farmers' Market and Vicinity

structure running the length of the top of the stalls, although the awnings are supplied by the vendors themselves (Figures 19 and 20). Each stall has permanent table, eight feet long. Both the southern and northern end of the market have one bench, a bike rack, and a trash can, while the market office and restrooms are located near the Fulton Street exit.

There are several main areas of activity in within the Fulton Street farmers' market, each serving a variety of functions for vendors and shoppers (Figure 19). The center of the walkway is the central area of pedestrian traffic within the market. The traffic flows following the north-south orientation mentioned before, as consumers purchase from the vendors and spend time talking with fellow consumers, which occasionally congests the flow of traffic down the isle, especially on Saturdays. The southern entrance of the market (off of Fulton Street) with the benches, trees and a trash receptacle is often used by consumers as a place to rest. One market day, students noted additional chairs placed in this area by a hot-dog vendor. A similar space exists at the north end of the market as well, where benches are situated near trees.

Another important place of activity is the office and restroom space located at the southern end of the market (Figure 18). This space was used by all of consumers, vendors, and the employees of the market. The restroom for men and women served the entire grounds. The main office was often busy; during the early market hours, one might have to wait in line to take care of business at the office with the manger. It was at this time the manager was occupied with stall arrangements, and the lottery for deciding which vendors could take the remaining vacant

stalls. Phone calls, faxes, and emails were part of the office activities, and organizational supplies were stored there, including registration slips, fee collections, seasonal stall lists, etc.

A Rapid bus stop, near the market office and restrooms at the corner of Fulton Street and Fuller Avenue, served as a transportation location for those who participate in the market. A bus arrived every thirty minutes on the weekdays and every forty-five minutes during the Saturday market. At any given time, students documented two or three individuals waiting for the bus, often holding bags from the farmers' market.

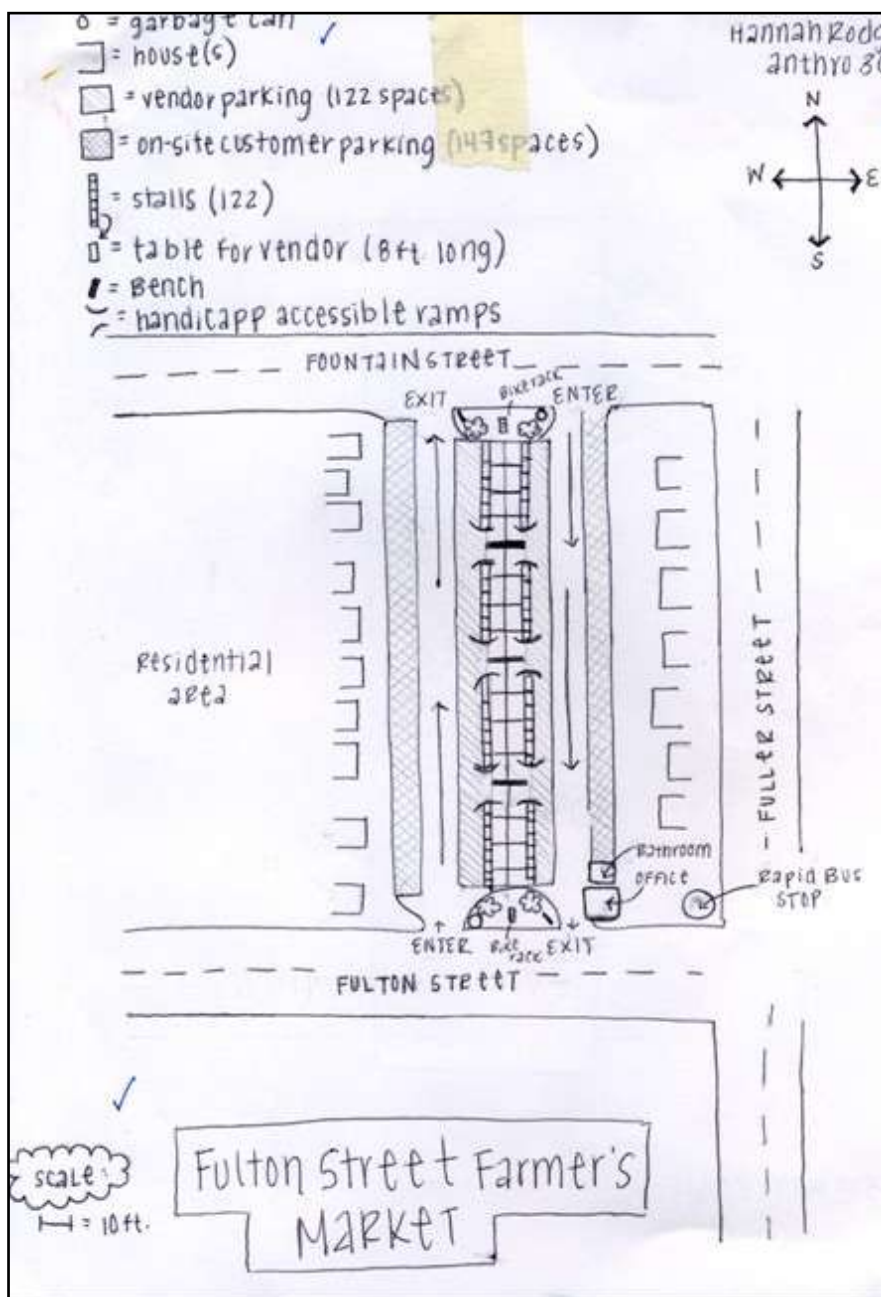


Figure 18: Fulton Street Physical Layout (Student Map)



Figure 19: Vending Walkway, Fulton Street Farmers' Market

entering and exiting the market. With the majority of the traffic entering from the south on Fulton Street, there is a left turn lane for those heading east on Fulton, turning into the farmers' market.

Parking at the market was limited and often congested with traffic. On each side of the market, these spaces were for both vendors and consumers (Figure 18). The vendors' vehicles filled up the row of spaces located directly behind the vendor tables, while the consumers tried to find parking elsewhere. The traffic flowed south on the eastern side of the market, and north on the western side. The lots were often congested and traffic was bumper-to-bumper as people waited for a space to become vacated. Shoppers could also parking on Fountain Street and Fuller Avenue. While the majority of people drove to the market, others biked or walked from in the neighborhood. People also entered the market from a variety of points within the central walkway.

Some of these points were for handicap accessibility. With six wheelchair and stroller ramps spaced between the vendor stalls, the market was easily traversed by those with handicap and baby needs. In addition, there were three parking spaces at each end of the market designated for vehicles with handicap status. These spaces were in very close proximity to the market and allow for only a short walk from the car to the pedestrian walkway. The market itself was level and could be negotiated with little trouble by those in a wheelchair.

Overall, the center of the market, where the consumers and vendors had direct communication with one another, dominated the space. The customers came primarily to buy fresh

Nearby, the parking lots were extremely busy. Traffic flowed into the market from both Fulton Street to the south as well as Fountain Street to the north. Entering on the left and exiting on the right, the traffic followed "One Way" signs posted at each of the four entrances and exits of the market. People 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 (Eckstein et al. 2006:20). There was room enough for one car to pass through the parking lot on each side of the market at any given time, as well as when



Figure 20: Vending Tables

fruits and vegetables, flowers, bread, meats, cheeses, and some craft goods were also available for purchase (Figure 21). Social exchanges were as common, with extended conversations between vendors and shoppers, and among shoppers. Most documented exchanges like these took from three to five minutes. The topics ranged from the production and preparation of the items purchased, to the livelihood of farmers and the lifestyles of the vendor. Many of the shoppers appeared to know the vendors from previous visits. Based on this cursory description, the market's success and popularity is evident. But the space, while "cozy" and functional, is in need of expansion to accommodate vendors, shoppers, vehicles, and conversations.

Issues of space and upkeep are a high priority to city and market planners. The Fulton Street Farmers' Market property itself is owned by the city of Grand Rapids and has been leased for \$6,000 per year to the local neighborhood association since 2005. Currently in a contract with the city, the Midtown Neighborhood Association (MNA) will have another opportunity to bid on a renewed lease in 2008. According to Jayson Otto, market manager and representative of the MNA, the city of Grand Rapids is responsible for the majority of upkeep within the property, counting real estate maintenance as well as structural repairs. In addition,

Other responsibilities include maintaining all exterior light, 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 (Eckstein et al. 2006:23-24).

After speaking to Otto, it became clear that the majority of upkeep and maintenance is completed by the MNA and not the city of Grand Rapids, despite the specifications of the lease. The contracts and policies afforded by the city are rarely maintained and the private lessee often pays a significant amount of money toward city-responsible issues.

The expenses of market were incurred mostly in operational costs including electricity and other utilities, upkeep, leasing, and employment. Costs for advertising and marketing, as well as general office needs were also included, and paid for through the seasonal and daily stall fees collected by the management. The cost for a seasonal stall at the Fulton Street farmers' market is \$275.00 per stall, while a daily stall costs \$10.00 on weekdays and \$15.00 on Saturdays.

As the market manager, Otto collected his salary directly from stall rentals and seasonal stall rates and was the only official employee of the market. At the beginning of each year, Otto allotted himself a certain amount of money, but rarely saw that until the middle and end of the market season. Barely breaking even each year, the market relied heavily on the continued participation of vendors, consumers and volunteers in the Fulton Street Farmers' Market.

During 2007, there were thirty-two seasonal stall holders at the market, from which six vendors were elected to make up the "Market Committee," which meets as a group to decide which individuals on the waiting list will be allotted a seasonal stall location the following summer. With elections every three years, the Fulton



Figure 21: Vendors Sell Breads, Meats, Cheeses, and Crafts

Street Market Committee has created a system of staggering the terms of each of its members and votes on those nominated by the standing committee to fill any vacant spots. The next election will be held in the fall of 2009, and those elected will begin their term in the spring of 2010.

This representative body of vendors looks at the applications as well as the overall market participation of each applicant before making their decision on who can sell seasonally at the market. Craft vendors were strongly discouraged from applying as the market was currently trying to focus more on local, sustainable agriculture and products versus the sale of craft goods. Each year, as the stalls are assigned, the group of seasonal stall holders makes up what can be viewed as “an established vendor hierarchy” vying for certain advantageous stalls throughout the market. Such seniority was taken very seriously by both the management as well as the vendors when considering who would be granted a certain set of stalls. A vendor begins seniority status the date the stall rent was paid in full the first year of renting seasonal stalls (Fulton Street Farmers' Market 2007:2).

As a seasonal stall holder, one was not allowed to lease that stall to additional vendors or occupy more than five seasonal stalls per operation. Those who did occupy more than six stalls prior to this new rule, such as Turtle Island Farms, were allowed to maintain their current stall assignment. In addition, those who had not yet paid their seasonal stall fee by the first of August would be charged an additional \$40.00 per day by the management. On market days, the assigned seasonal stalls were held for the permanent vendor until 7:30 a.m. each morning of operation and those left unoccupied after that time were rented out to a daily renter. Daily renters hoping to lease a stall could not call in ahead and reserve a space, but had to be present with their products in order to be considered for a daily stall. Retaining at least five open stalls a day for daily renters, the market manager then assigned the open stalls, giving preference to farmers who were selling their own produce.

For those who purchased a stall, certain vendor rules and regulations were enforced, ensuring proper vendor conduct. Forestalling, hawking, obstructing market driveways, having pets/animals (except to assist those with special needs), and misrepresented products were all prohibited from the market operation. In addition, those renting a stall were required to keep it clean by removing waste generated during their time at the market. On the other hand, Otto and the market were responsible for the general upkeep of the common areas. The weighing of products sold must take place in front of the consumers and all vendors must be properly licensed and identified before selling at the market. The resale of products was tolerated at the market, but was discouraged by the management.

To Otto's relief, many of the regulations were most-often enforced by the vendors (and consumers) present at the market. The system for filing a complaint allowed vendors/consumers who witnessed an infringement to submit an explanation of the violation to management. The vendor responsible for violating the rule was subject to the market manager's choice of enforcement. According to rule 5.2 of the Fulton Street Farmers' Market contract:

Any seller, daily or seasonal, in violation of these rules is subject to suspension as determined by the Market Manager and/or Committee. Violators shall forfeit rental of stall(s) during suspension and may be reassigned to different stalls after the suspension is lifted (Fulton Street Farmer's Market 2007:2).

The contract also states that the market manager has the ability to cite violators and can issue complaints in writing to members of the Market Committee.

In the future, this system of organization and rules will be challenged by the planned market expansion and accompanying neighborhood revitalization of the surrounding community. Entitled the “Brikyaat Neighborhood Revitalization Planning Project,” this proposal encourages an extension of the market to encompass the entire block between Fuller Avenue and the proposed Mack Avenue. The market would double in size, and be permanently covered, offering the potential for a year-round farmers' market. In addition, a number of houses in the area would be torn down and replaced by new, brick townhouses available for rent. The Revitalization proposal was designed as collaboration between several stakeholders: the neighborhood organization and residents, farmers' market vendors, and the city.

An analysis of information collected by our study yields several broad patterns on market organization. The most important factor playing into the management style at a particular market is its size and patronage. A smaller market, such as the West Side market, has the benefit of being able to change more easily due to the smaller number of stakeholders who must consent. Conversely, the size of a market like Fulton Street allows for the luxuries of stability and permanence lacking at smaller markets. When a market reaches a stage of permanence (i.e., permanent location and infrastructure), as one finds at Fulton Street, many instabilities disappear with accompanying investment by the vendors and the community. At the same time, this stability and continuity in daily operations reduces the flexibility of the market manager to make changes in the operations. The manager runs into the problem of finding a consensus for proposed changes, or must respond to a chorus of “we’ve always done it that way!” At some point, the scale tips, and it takes a big reform effort such as the Revitalization project to dislodge the market from its historic trajectory.

A second point involves the absence of a systematic business model upon which to base operations. Established literature and prior studies take a very systematic approach to running a farmers' market, using such a model as a foundation (Corum, Rosenzweig and Gibson 2005; LaLone 2004). Using this understanding of market organization as a guideline, students conducted a variety of interviews to determine how the individual markets and their managers take the basic model and tailor it to their own specific needs. Overall, the project discovered, the studied markets expressed the business methodology in only the most basic way. For example, the literature emphasizes the importance of publicity and advertising. Yet Otto and the neighborhood association do little to promote the Fulton Street market because its permanence and popularity cut down the need to advertise. On the other hand, the West Side market and neighborhood organization (WGNO) spent close to two thirds of its budget on advertising. At this early stage in the emergence of the market, the manager needs to concentrate on recruitment and publicity. While always a concern, the management of vendors and products takes a lower priority due to limits on her time and energy. Organizational policies such as vendor selection criteria, reducing non-food sales, and vendor committees have to wait until a market gets on its feet and attains some degree of permanence and stability.

While the three markets provide the consumer with a place to purchase goods, there were some instances in which they were limited in being able to adapt to the needs and attitudes of the consumer. Seasonality is one of the best and most common examples. Supermarkets and corporate farms have done much to eliminate the concept of seasonality from the public mind. The supermarket experience creates a perception that all kinds of domestic and exotic produce is available all year, shipped from around the globe. Many consumers come to the farmers' markets expecting the same sort of artificial availability, only to be disappointed when they cannot get

corn in May or strawberries in September. The market would simply become an outdoor grocery store if it made allowances for reselling to cater to this demand. Instead, it must rely on consumer education on this issue.

An exquisite irony emerges when considering the markets that were studied. Size, students found, limited the fulfillment of one of the purposes of any market: to serve the needs of the consumer. Fulton Street was limited in its action to change the array of products sold because of its unwieldy size. Conversely, due to its small size, the West Side market could only afford to accept whatever products vendors will bring as a way to encourage growing vendor participation. In spite of these growing pains, the West Side market provided a unique opportunity for the manager and neighborhood organization to design a market tailored to the needs of the residents and community (more in a latter section).

Concerning the Fulton Street market, larger changes are already in the making, which have the potential to transcend the lethargy of change and reshape how the market is organized. The expansion plans will address the many complaints about space and parking, and the need for a permanent awning. At the same time, this larger change can provide the impetus for thoughtful consideration of the goals and ideology of the “new” market, and for internal reorganization. The project anticipates that the findings of this study can contribute to a conversation on the future management of the market, or at least benchmark data for later assessment.

In summary, the project was surprised to learn of the laissez-faire attitude regarding the running of the markets that the students studied. This is not unexpected, really, given the obstacles and daily demands of running a market, and the “reactionary” mode in which managers find themselves. The project feels that managers and neighborhood groups could benefit from a more systematic approach that might include the following: reviewing literature on managing farmers' markets and discussing experiences with other market managers.

The literature offers practical guidelines on managing markets, offering key practices and training tips. For example, a Rapid Market Assessment (RMA) is an excellent way to create a team of market managers and community members (Krasny and Doyle 2002, Whyte 1991). The team schedules visits to each others' markets and documents the physical setting, the market atmosphere, and products sold. The members of the team talk to shoppers, watch vendors, and explore the local neighborhood. RMAs emphasize that “learning is two-way” and such collaboration helps market managers disseminate new methods and ideas across markets (Lev, Stephenson and Brewer 2007:92). Planning periodic meetings and joining in conversations with other managers can help a manager share ideas and organizational approaches. To this end, interest groups like the Grand Rapids Food Systems Council (GRFSC) and the Michigan Food and Farming Systems (MIFFS) can serve as clearing houses for ideas and best practices, a way to become aware of regulations, and a source of grant funding and other resources.

Another strategy is to collect more systematic information on products, exchange patterns, and vendor/consumer needs. Markets and neighborhood organizations would do well to enlist the help of supportive academic institutions to assist with market self-monitoring and assessment (Lev, Stephenson and Brewer 2007:84-85).

Finally, our group appreciated witnessing the passion with which managers like Otto, Bardelmeier and Sloop run their markets. Their desire to continually improve the lives of market participants and local residents is commended. Studying market organization also open windows on the key roles played by vendor, farmers, shoppers, and the surrounding community affecting the status and future of a market.

SECTION IV: Vendors and Farmers

The following students made contributions to this section based on their field report written for the course: Vendor team: Jack Davis (Anthropology), Kate Monahan (Psychology and Anthropology), Sarah Munoz (Liberal Studies), Katrina Peshka (Anthropology and Classics); Farmer team: Brad DiBenedetto, (Art)Elizabeth Grabowski (Anthropology), Erin Skidmore (Anthropology), Kristyn Stankiewicz (Anthropology)

Vendors

Two student teams documented the role played by vendors (Figure 22). Vendors were viewed as a broad category of people who “set up stalls with products for sale at the farmers’ market.” As anthropologists, the students were interested in the vendor “culture,”¹ which includes vendors’ interactions with customers/consumers,² relations among vendors, including within families who work together, and in dealings with the market manager as well. Vendors are concerned with improving the efficiency of market operations, marketing strategies, and profitability. As such, students felt that incorporating vendor experiences into this report could have a positive impact on the future sustainability of the markets studied. Specifically, the analysis and recommendations are aimed at helping to ensure the stability of the West Side market to bring accessible and affordable fresh food to neighborhood residents.

In the previous section the structure and organization of the farmers’ markets was described. Here, one can see how this organization shapes the interface between vendors and consumers. According to Andreatta and Wickliffe (2002), who conducted an anthropological study on farmers’ markets in North Carolina, “The farmers’ market itself plays an important role in structuring the relationship between farmers and consumers and in determining whether the experiences of selling and buying at the market are satisfying to them.” This section will report on “satisfaction” from the vendors’ perspective. The first part of this section focuses on vendors as a whole, and the second part considers those vendors who are farmers. Specifically, the second part gives special attention to one in-depth case study of a farm family. The case provides a rich illustration of how a farm family can make a successful *transition* to farmers’ market production.

This project collected information from vendors at the West Side and Fulton Street markets.³ In the present study, students learned that the vendor group shares a diverse set of experiences at the markets. In addition, they noted the distinction between vendors and farmers. While farmers are vendors, not all vendors are farmers. The student team studying the farmers

1 Generally, anthropologists view culture as the acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and generate behavior. In the context of the farmers’ market, we propose viewing “culture” as 1) the material goods and products exchanged and consumed, 2) the general processes which produce such goods and give them meaning to social groups, and 3) the social relationships and practices in which such goods and processes become embedded.

2 The terms “customer” and “consumer” are used interchangeably in this document, as people who come to the market to purchase goods. However, a special note will be made in cases when the vendors themselves act as “consumers.”

3 When relevant, for comparative purposes, we integrate data from a 2003 field school study of the Holland farmers’ market.

identified them simply as “vendors who sell what they grow,” though official definitions are based on the total agricultural sales of a family-based corporation (USDA 2007). During field work, students quickly discovered the many significant differences between the two groups, such as demographic profiles, motivations, marketing strategies, and products sold. Using vendor surveys and observational fieldnotes, students collected information on:

1. Types of vendors selling at the markets, demographic characteristics, involvement of family members, scale of their business, markets they frequent as vendors, location and distance of their residence from the markets,
2. Products sold, such as vegetables, fruits, crafts, flowers, etc.,
3. Marketing strategies, including types of stalls, resale, use of displays and educational materials, and
4. Social interactions and communication skills.

Other factors surveyed were seasonality, the effects of the weather on production, consumer behavior, and vendor attitudes about the neighborhoods surrounding the markets (i.e., the business district). Vendor sales and profits would be good indicators of economic viability; however, this information was not collected due to its sensitive nature and to the limitations of our methodology.

Vendor diversity was measured by the kinds and amounts of goods sold in the three markets studied. During the early growing season when the project was conducted, locally grown plants included lettuce, scallions, spinach, radishes, peas, onions, rhubarb and asparagus. Some of these were greenhouse grown. It was obvious that many other products came from beyond Michigan’s borders and were resold in the market. Given Michigan’s limited production during the months of May and June, this practice is common at the



Figure 22: Student Team Surveying Vendors

beginning of the selling season. In all, the items documented during the early season were: varieties of peppers, broccoli, cabbage, eggplant, tomatoes, apples, oranges, watermelon, muskmelon, and strawberries. Aside from food plants, the majority of other items documented in the market were bedding plants and greenhouse flowers, including Petunias, Lobelia, Impatiens, Fuchsia, Lantana, Gerbera Daisy, Plectranthus, Chrysanthemum, Geranium, and Peonies.

A shift in products to more locally-grown fruits and vegetables was confirmed by a stall survey conducted in later in the season (July) at West Side market from six vendors. The following items were sold: potatoes, cucumbers, tomatoes, zucchini, acorn and butternut squash, corn, green beans and peaches. One vendor, Visser Farms (the largest vendor), offered products not sold elsewhere by other vendors: green peppers, lettuce, spinach, white beans, celery, carrots, radishes, turnips, and several varieties of onion. Another vendor offered fruits not sold by others: blueberries, apples, and cherries. A different vendor sold only types of meat, mostly pork, “free-range” eggs, honey, and maple syrup. Two of the vendors sold nonfood items; one offered homemade jewelry, and the other, cut flowers and potted herbs.

Compared to the West Side market, the Fulton Street market possessed many more vendors, filling the 122 stall spaces. In addition to fruits and vegetables, many nonfood items were offered there: baskets, woodcarvings, homemade jewelry, hand woven baskets, hand knitted blankets, shirts, sweaters, scarves, birdhouses and other wood products, concrete poured in the shape of leaves, antique-style glass bottles, and metal-sculpted weather vanes. The diversity of product types sold at Fulton Street has the potentially of attracting more consumers, especially when the items are locally produced (Figure 23). Including the Grand Valley farmers' market, all three markets sold food and nonfood items and permitted resellers, though most of the goods were of regional origin or locally handcrafted. The Fulton Street manager tried to limit the sale of non-food items; newer vendors were required to sell food or plants. Some long-time vendors with seniority were allowed to resell or sell nonfood crafts. The debate on limiting farmers' markets to the sales of locally grown plants and vegetables - and its affect on vendor participation - will be addressed later in the report.

The project wanted to know if local markets were serviced by local vendors. We looked for patterns in where vendors live, how far they travel to the market, and the source of their products. The vendor surveys indicated that one third (35%) of the vendors who sold at Fulton and West Side farmers' markets were from the Grand Rapids metropolitan area. The other two-thirds of the vendors came from the wider West Michigan region, places like Byron Center, Charlotte, Cazenovia, Fennville, Holland, and Zeeland. Charlotte was the most distant location; a vendor traveled roughly 70 miles to sell at Fulton Street. In general, vendor origin indicated that the majority traveled distances from 20 to 30 miles one way to the markets. As there were only a few "resellers" at these markets, the project concludes that the products consumers are predominantly regional in origin.



Figure 23: Vendors Selling Potted Herbs

The West Side market is at a disadvantage because it attracts only five to ten vendors each market. In addition, vendors at West Side complained that because the neighborhood is poorer than others, prices needed to be adjusted lower as compared to the Fulton Street market. It is not surprising, then, that the vendors at the two farmers' markets studied (West Side and Fulton Street) agreed that the Fulton Street market is more reliable in generating a steady consumer base and therefore better revenues. It may seem self-evident that vendors participate in markets to make money. Indeed, students learned that farmers' market income contributes significantly to the farmers overall income.

While students did not ask vendors for specific money amounts, they did learn from the surveys what percentage of vendor income is derived from selling at the farmers' market. One third of the vendors surveyed rely on farmers' market sales as their only source of yearly income.

The remaining vendors (about 7 in 10) claimed to depend upon the market for at least 50% of annual income. These data indicate a substantial reliance on the market for to support vendor families, and suggest that the viability of a farmers' market may depend upon a level of sales that can sustain a group of vendors, regular and committed.

Although vendors prefer the higher volume markets, vendors are attracted to the West Side market because of scheduling. The market is open on Thursdays, when Fulton Street is closed. This 2007 season, West Side expanded to add a Saturday market its second year of operation. For good reasons, the manager reasoned that West Side could serve as an overflow for vendors unable to obtain a stall at the competitive Fulton Street market. Perhaps, West Side could be a relaxed atmosphere for consumers who desired that over the helter-skelter crowds at Fulton Street. However, one observation hints that consumers did not respond as anticipated, and some vendors who began the season at West Side disappeared from the Saturday market as the season progressed (Nixon 2007). Due to the fragility of the vendor/consumer mix at West Side, it became difficult for vendors to make an adequate income, attract loyal consumers, and sustain regular social interactions. These are essential for building exchange networks and the kinds of social infrastructure characteristic of successful farmers' markets.

Vendors were very clear on the benefits of selling at the two markets. The Andreatta and Wickliffe study (2002) reports that vendors appreciate independence: being one's own boss and doing something different each day. In our surveys, positive responses highlighted self-employment, the ability to continue farming, selling their own products directly, flexible work hours, working close to home, offering fresh and healthy products to the consumer, making quick cash, and networking opportunities. As reported elsewhere, vendors spend hours and hours together in shared interaction (Hamby 2004).



Figure 24: Face-to-Face Interactions

Vendors helped each other frequently, such as covering each others' stalls for brief periods, and sharing information on other markets, crops and varieties, farming techniques, marketing methods, and social life.

Not surprisingly, the appeal of social interaction with customers ranked high in the surveys (Figure 24). Vendors enjoyed working with the public at the markets. Many commented that the market environment was a great place to raise their children and to teach them about social and family values. Students found vendors engaged during sales transactions in face-to-face contact with consumers. As such, vendors were an excellent source of information about the needs of consumers.

To illustrate, while interacting with customers vendors learned about customer perceptions of crop seasonality. In the surveys, vendors complained that customers purchasing goods would

often ask for products not yet in season, such as asking for corn or tomatoes in late June. When experiencing customer disappointment, vendors felt frustrated that consumers lacked awareness of seasonality in the context of the farmers' market. Certainly, appreciation of seasonality of local food production is undermined by the globalization of the food supply chains; while grocery store shopping, consumers can find most produce is "always available" throughout the year. We found this perception contributing to a general consumer perception that grocery stores are "better" than farmers' markets. Vendors and market managers will need to "re-educate" consumers on the idea that seasonality is a special feature of the local food system. Vendor's products change in type and variety as the market season progresses from spring through the summer and fall. Vendors can tout "in season" crops and managers can provide displays of recipes and canning/preserving instructions as ways to help the consumer take advantage of seasonality (Figure 25). While conducting the surveys, students helped customers understand this by pointing out information from a poster-chart listing the month-by-month availability of Michigan fruits and vegetables.

Figure 25: Educational Displays



Vendors would like to participate more in government food service programs, such as WIC and Project Fresh.⁴ The latter is a federal program in which vendors are required to register. Customers purchase products with coupons, which the vendor can then redeem at a participating farmers' market. The West Side market does not participate in Project Fresh, while the Fulton Street market does. While sympathetic to food service programs, vendors express reservations about the red-tape and paperwork, which distracts from time needed to sell their goods.

4 The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) safeguards the health of low-income women, infants, & children up to age 5 who are at nutritional risk by providing nutritious foods for supplementing diets, information on healthy eating, and referrals to health care. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/>.

Redeeming the coupons take time. One strategy at West Side involved vendors who accepted Project Fresh coupons, but redeemed them later at another farmers' market, such as Fulton Street. At times, vendors collaborated; an unregistered vendor would accept coupons and have a vendor/partner redeem the coupons later. Vendors suggested that market volunteers could provide a service to help them process paperwork for government programs. Finally, vendors would like information on opportunities to sell to neighborhood grocery stores, schools, and restaurants (Gregoire, Arendt and Strohbehn 2005). This report encourages that programs be implemented by the neighborhood association with assistance from the market manager.



Figure 26: Portable Awnings at West Side

The last set of survey questions asked vendors about improving the physical infrastructure of the market. Not surprisingly, vendors expressed a good deal of consensus on needs. A third of the vendors would like to see a uniform canopy that covers the stalls; vendors complained about the difficulty of bringing and setting up their own portable canopies and awnings (Figure 26). A second improvement addresses the physical location of the market. At the Fulton Street market, vendors wished for more vending and parking space, and an increase in the number of available stalls. Many welcomed the city's new plan to expand the Fulton Street market infrastructure and space. At the West Side market, vendors were more concerned with the market's location and visibility, and its overall ability to attract consumers. Advertising, the vendors felt, could play a major role in building the customer base, supplementing word-of-mouth promotion. At West Side, Bartelmeier took measures to help raise public awareness. With each market opening, staff painting signs and located them on Bridge Street. Flyers were regularly distributed in the neighborhood. As described above in the section on market organization, Bartelmeier used the local community radio as a source of advertisement; she also enlisted the help of the local business association to help finance a rented billboard, depicting healthy vegetables at the West Side market. Scheduling special events, as at the GVSU market, might attract people to a festive atmosphere, which could feature modest entertainment and educational events. As a more radical measure, vendors suggested relocating the market to a more visible site, centrally-located in the West Grand neighborhood.⁵ This topic will be addressed later in "Neighborhood and Community."

Clearly, vendors are in a good position to communicate key information on both vendor and consumer needs to market managers. Vendors should be invited to become key partners, integrated into discussion and planning, where they can help close the expectations-gap between all the participating stakeholders.

Farmers as Vendors: Redirecting Livelihood

⁵ By the time this report was completed, the author learned that the West Side market had indeed moved to a more central location within the West Grand neighborhood.

With the diversity of vendors present at the market our group thought it important to have a grasp on how many of the vendors were farmers who brought their own products to the market. As pointed out in the previous section, not all vendors are farmers; it should not be assumed that all vendors at a “farmers’ market” are farmers⁶ – people who grow the products they sell. According to the results of the vendor survey farmers made up roughly 60% of the vending community. The non-farmers are resellers of fruits and vegetables, who obtain products through wholesale suppliers. Some process basic goods, creating value-added products, such as jerky or jam. Many make and sell nonfood items such as crafts and clothes. Farmers are involved in these activities, as well. Here, what interests us are the roles individuals and families can play *as farmers* at a farmers’ market, and the benefits they bring to the viability of the market.

This report argues that farmers’ markets need to invite the participation of as many “farmers” as possible. Of course, farmers as vendors are a source of fresh products for the market. Just as important, farmers bring cultural and technical knowledge from the field to the consumer through vending exchanges and face-to-face interactions. These exchanges and interactions are tangible ways to help consumers encounter food-connections: where food comes from and how it is produced. Consumers are linked to real people with land in the region surrounding urban centers. To be most effective, a farmers’ market needs to provide a nexus linking multiple spaces and social groups (Lev et al. 2007). In this way, buying food has an accompanying social meaning. Contact with farmers embeds consumers in the production process, and customers embed farmers in the domain of consumption. According to Berry (1990), “eating is an agricultural act,” connecting production to consumption. This section illustrates the benefits of recruiting farmers to sell at farmers’ markets by looking at an in-depth case study.

Visser Farms Case

“Going to the Visser Farm created for me a sense of awareness and an appreciation for who the farmers are before they get to the market.”

“After visiting the Visser Farm, I had a much greater respect for the work and dedication involved in operating a farm. Viewing their contribution to the farmers’ market as a necessary commitment to the local economy, the Visser family demonstrated the devotion farmer’s feel for their crop as well as their concern for the consumers.”

“I found that our time at Visser Farms was very valuable in seeing first-hand how a farm is operated. When I hear of the term ‘family farm’ I would think about ‘old and rustic.’ Visser Farms, however, is very modern and forward-looking.”

“Casey [Visser] is a great individual to work with and learn from because he is so open and willing to educate anyone who wants to stop and listen. I think his story is an important one for the consumer to hear. It would give them a clear picture of how their

6 We define “farmer” as an individual who grows products and sells them at the farmers’ market. Elsewhere, the definition of “farmer” is tied to legal definitions tied to the “family farm.” This ranges from a “noncommercial” unit that has less than \$50,000 in agricultural sales, to commercial farms with sales of under \$250,000 (The National Commission on Small Farms), to sales of under \$500,000 (Small Business Administration). By the latter standards, about 97 percent of U.S. farms qualify as “small farms” (USDA 2007).

food is produced, where it comes from, and the people whose lives are devoted to producing it. People like Casey make a difference, by educating the public one consumer at a time.”

These “student voices” were found in the project fieldnotes. The sentiments reflect the value of having a first-hand experience on a family farming involved in farmers’ markets. Casey Visser became one of the first farmers whom students met during fieldwork. According to the vendor survey, Visser Farms is the largest family farm participating in the study markets (<http://www.visserfarm.com/index.html>). Though students did not collect financial data, the Visser enterprise likely surpasses \$50,000 in total agricultural sales, making it a “commercial” small farm. While the Visser enterprise may or may not be representative of farmers who participate in regional farmers’ markets, the objective here is to demonstrate the successful process by which a farm family made the shift to a farmers’ market model of production. The future success of regional farmers’ markets will depend upon redirecting more and more farm production in this way.

Figure 27: Visser Farms Entrance



The Vissers began farming in West Michigan in 1902 and generations of Vissers continue involvement in farming at several locations. In the early 1980s, students were told, Doug and Phil (father and son) began going to the nearby Holland Farmers’ Market to supplement other farm production and sources of family income. In but a few years family members began circulating Visser goods at several farmers’ markets in the region. By 1990, in order to grow spring flowers, the first “farmers’ market” greenhouse was raised at their Zeeland farm. By 2000, Visser family members could be found every day at thirteen farmers’ markets in the region.

Today, the Zeeland farm comprises 200 acres of farm land, 120 of which are reserved exclusively for farmers’ market vegetable production.

One sunny morning in May, 2007, students visited the Zeeland farm at Blair Street, approximately twenty-five minutes from our classroom at the Grand Valley State University’s Allendale campus. During our trip, we passed miles and miles of open farm land, dotted occasionally with houses, barns and lines of boundary trees. On the way, we saw two colorful wooden signs advertising the location of the Visser farm; the farm is well-known for their U-pick strawberries. At the driveway entrance was a third wooden sign directing customers to a parking lot (Figure 27). We drove into the dirt driveway and were immediately surrounded by four greenhouses, three silos, a cooler, and a big, wooden barn. In the lot, we saw several trucks, used to ship produce to locations far and wide. There were four huge trees on the property and wooded zones surrounding the farm houses. Nearby stood two houses - a cheerful, two-story, white farm house and an older house belonging to Casey’s grandparents. Wearing a Detroit

Pistons sweatshirt and a baseball cap, Casey pointed to the old house with a big smile: “We would like to build a new house,” Casey remarked, half apologizing for the old one, “but we keep some of old things, like the barn, because it keeps Grandpa happy.”

Students began learning about the Visser farm from Casey, who guided us through four greenhouses (Figure 28). The greenhouses were long, low plastic covered structures. One was filled



Figure 28: Greenhouses for Early Spring Crops

with vegetables and flowers in hanging baskets, flats, and pots.

Entering the space overwhelmed us with fresh floral smells and bright, vibrant colors. In the middle of a carpet of flowers, an elderly woman looked up at us, suspending her task of tending to a pot held in both hands. “That’s grandma,” Casey indicated with a wave of his hand, “she likes the flowers.” Playfully, he raised his voice, “we try to keep her happy, too.” The next and largest greenhouse was home to other annuals, which were at the moment watered with a sprayer, ready for the farmers’ markets. The third greenhouse was filled with young tomatoes and peppers, planted in February. Finally, the last greenhouse accommodated a variety of vegetables: eggplants, sweet potatoes, green peppers, jalapeños, and tomatoes. These were ready to be moved into the fields when the spring weather improved.

The equipment barn was inhabited by large, angular shapes of machinery and accessories (Figure 29). In all, the Vissers maintain 42 tractors, some new, most old. Casey’s grandfather and great grandfather preserved machinery that was actually pulled by horses and used by a single individual. These included a tomato harvester as well as a radish planter, still used on occasion and kept around the farm for the

Figure 29: Equipment - Old and New

grandfather’s sake. He showed us one new tractor customized for transplanting. According to Casey, the farm must continually replace the machines with newer technologies designed for farmers’ market crops. The newer equipment, he remarked, is more specialized and efficient: “We’re much more high-tech today . . . especially over the past ten years. These transplanters, for instance, you can get plants in the ground in one hour instead of six hours like before.” Pointing to a space with a repair shop in the corner, Casey commented that an oil



change for one of their tractors costs \$80. He estimated that over \$6,000 a year is spent on equipment repair and upkeep.

Casey reported that the farm utilizes fertilizers, pesticides, and other chemicals, which one could see piled up along one wall of the barn. White, vinyl drums, sitting on benches, lined another wall, displaying labels of different “blends.” Several seed bags had names like Great Lakes hybrid, Sea Company, and Honcho Plus. Some declared that the seeds were “Round-up Ready.” As expected, the students were concerned with the use of chemicals on the farm. Casey explained that chemical use was necessary, especially for fertilization and weed control. “It would be almost impossible to operate the farm without some way to control the weeds,” he added. He was very matter-of-fact about this: “It would be nice to grow organically, but it’s difficult to do that successfully in Michigan because of rainfall patterns and the cost.” He then reflected, “Since we’ve been selling at the markets, we know that people are concerned with chemicals. So we’ve learned other ways to use as little spray as possible on the crops, especially with early season crops when the weeds and insects are at a minimum.” A second barn contained other equipment such as transplanters, corn chuckers, pea and corn planters, wheat spreaders, brush hogs, a potato harvester, and two trackers.

The fields closest to the barns were covered with black plastic, perforated in rows with little holes. In the early spring, the plastic is used as a method used to keep the onion seedlings warm. The farm began using the technique five years ago on the onion plots. Casey explained that they use a tractor accessory to lay the plastic and bury the sides, getting it “nice and tight.” He emphasized the importance of adopting technology that allows the farm to *extend the growing season* using green houses and “high tunnels.”⁷ In this case, getting the earliest start possible in the growing season is important to be one of the first to offer locally-grown products at the markets. The irrigation system is one of these technologies, Casey pointed out (Figure 30). Water is piped underground to the many fields and they use semi-permanent drip-hoses extensively, adding fertilizer to the water in hydroponic fashion. “The system was tested on many varieties of crops; sometimes it didn’t work,” lamented Casey. The drip system was a more efficient use of time and water resources, and better than having to move bulky irrigation tubing from plot to plot. In addition, Casey considered the method “soft,” meaning gentle on the delicate crops grown for the farmers’ market, which could not withstand the powerful irrigation spray. The old irrigation could spray a quarter of a mile, and is still used on corn, soy and wheat fields.

Next to the barn was another field of onions. There were yellow and red onions which were started in the greenhouse and moved outside and into the field. After harvest, some would



Figure 30: Students Learn about New Irrigation Technology

⁷ High tunnels are also known as hoop houses; they are solar-heated structures that allow farmers to extend the growing season for many fruit and vegetable crops, without using fossil fuels (Union of Concerned Scientists 2008).

be destined for the farmers' market, but most they would sell wholesale to a national food distribution company. A group of farm workers crouched down transplanting onions from flats (Figure 31). According to Casey, in spite of all the expensive tractors and equipment, 90 % of the farm work is done by hand. The farm is operated by the seven or eight family members involved in the "nitty-gritty" farm activities: Casey, his younger brother, his parents and grandparents. Farming has been a family tradition passed down for over one hundred years. "The Lord told me that farming was my calling and I could not be happier," he said proudly. However, not all family members chose to work on the farm. Several of Casey's siblings have other professions. But as Casey points out, they still around and take on specific tasks, especially marketing activities such as operating stalls at farmers' markets.



Figure 31: Nonfamily Farm Workers

Of course, the Vissers require the nonfamily labor of farm workers, such as the groups we saw stooping in the onion field. With a chuckle, Casey referred to those in the field as "our Mexicans." Typically, the farm employs 12-15 dozen workers, even more during peaks in the crop cycle. The workers are migrant Latinos and, according to Casey, all work legally in the United States. When the Vissers began hiring nonfamily workers about eight years ago, they found it expedient to invite back the same workers and families each summer. He drew our attention to the importance of paying the workers a decent hourly wage and treating them with respect, so that they would return the next season. n.

According to U.S. census data from 2000 (Kayitsinga, Post and Villarruel 2007), the Latino population in Michigan increased over 60% in the 10 year period from 1990 to 2000. Of the 643,147 people added to the state's overall population growth during this period, Latinos



Figure 32: Students on a Farm Tour

comprised nearly 20% of the increase. The Visser farm is located in Ottawa County, which has one of the highest densities of Latino population in Michigan, along with neighboring counties that depend upon substantial agricultural activities. Ottawa County (2000) is 7% Latino, a 65% increase in their population from 1990. By comparison, Latinos comprise only 3.26% of the total Michigan population.

While the figures for West Michigan are high, the population is likely underrepresented because of the large numbers of workers and their families that seasonally visit Michigan's farms, such as the Visser farm. While Casey can

calculate the important role played by the workers on the family farm, the overall impact of migrant labor on farms redirecting production to farmers' markets is difficult to assess.

According to Casey, the Visser farm has shifted to planting a wider variety of new crops in small plots from the days of using machinery to sow vast fields with only a few crops. It appears that more work done by hand is required on farms producing for the farmers' market.

During our visit in May 2007, students toured the many outlying plots, stretching away at a distance from the farm structures (Figure 32). In addition to the onions, fields of cabbage and spinach, all of which looked very fresh, were well tended. Casey proceeded to show us how to harvest the spinach by cutting below the heart. This allows the farmer to get three cuts from one plant, he claimed, adding that the spinach would be ready for harvest in a week's time - and sold at the West Side and Fulton Street farmers' markets. Next, the parade of students came upon a field of strawberry plants. In the summer months, when the berries are ready, the farm hosts "you-pick," which becomes a profitable activity and helps customers get to know the farm. He was particularly proud of the cold weather strawberries, "the one's modified with a cold water gene from a fish!" Similarly, the farm started growing raspberries a couple of years ago in response to customer demand at farmers' markets. They tried cultivating heirloom tomatoes as well. As Casey reported, "we try to do everything as new as possible." When Casey spoke, one student took note, he expressed certain affection for all of the crops and spoke of each with reverence.

The fields we toured would nourish dozens of varieties of crops during the agricultural season. Table 1 lists the diversity of crops produced on the 120 acres, 70% of which will be truck-bound for Visser tables and displays at regional farmers' markets.

Table 1: Diversity of Crops Grown at Visser Farms

(Source: Visser Farms Website: http://visser-farms.com/thingswegrow.html)	
Bedding Plants & Hanging Baskets	Pickles
Strawberries – Picked & U-pick	Cucumbers
Spinach	Zucchini
Radishes – Red & White (Icicles)	Summer Squash
Lettuce (Green & Red Leaf, Romaine, Boston)	Egg Plant
Green Onions	Sweet Corn
Carrots	Green & Yellow Beans
Beets	Winter Squash (Butternut, Buttercup, Acom, Ambercup, Delicata, Hubbard, Spaghetti)
Dill	Gourds
Snow & Snap Peas	Mini Pumpkins
Potatoes (Blue & Red, German Butterballs, White, Russets, Yukon Gold)	Pumpkins
Candy Onions – Sweetest you will find	Indian Corn
Tomatoes (Roma, Canning)	Corn Stalks
Peppers (Green, Red, Yellow, Orange, Chocolate, Purple, Ivory, Jalapeno, Habenero)	Broom Corn
	Wheat Sheaves
	Straw Bales

This diversity is a function of growing primarily for the farmers' markets. Casey explains how the family tailors the crop mix and quantities to the consumer demands at the markets. Even without conducting formal surveys, the family keeps track of finances and sales to know what people like and which items are more popular at different markets. The information is communicated through sales, conversations with other vendors, and interactions with customers. This strategy works for two reasons. According to Casey, a farm like theirs is able to continually adjust to customer demands. Furthermore, direct marketing allows for personal relationships and the exchange of information between consumers and farmers.

This account of the Visser farm highlights the time and energy that goes into adapting new farming practices. Perhaps an equal effort must go into learning new skills for the marketing side farm operations. Casey not only helped manage the farm operations, he also marketed Visser farm produce during the farmers' market season. Carefully calculating the items he needed at a specific market, he loaded the truck at cooler with the first light of dawn. The cooler was used to store the produce until it was shipped to a vending location such as farmers' markets. Two trucks were in position to be loaded. These days, Casey sells at both the West Side market (Thursday) and the Fulton Street market (Saturday).

GVSU students spent many hours with Casey and other vendors at both markets. The students observed Casey and often wrote about activities at his stall. The following sketches illustrate many of Casey's marketing skills:

"Casey finished setting up [at West Side] with the help of one of the field school students, unloading wooden crates of produce wrapped in burlap. The goods were set out on a folding table under an awning. Casey was very particular about how the produce was displayed, and he spent a lot of stacking this and that item at just the right height and angle for display. He wanted all of the vegetables to be laid out in the same direction. He had a practiced routine, and was very efficient."

"[At Fulton Street] Visser Farms of Zeeland occupied three stalls. Casey brought his truck and has set up an awning with three tables on which he has set his produce. He was selling strawberries, rhubarb, radishes, green onion, romaine and purple lettuce, spinach, about 13 hanging baskets, 2 buckets of fresh cut flowers, 25 or so flats of flowers, and four container arrangements of flowers. He has the largest variety of items among the vendors. Before many customers arrived, we interviewed Casey using the vendor survey. He seems to anticipate the busy marketing day, and stood fidgeting during at the start of our conversation, nervously chewing ice in between questions. After a while, he began telling stories and relaxed. This was the first week that he brought strawberries, and he offered some to us. They were on the small side but very fresh and sweet."

"Casey was very straight forward with the customers and he seemed sure of himself because of how quick he could take and process orders. We observed Casey's interaction with one customer who was purchasing a few items at his stall. Casey was very friendly, asking the man questions about his job and about recipes for the produce. While the transaction took place, there was not a moment without conversation."

For these one can ascertain Casey's marketing strategy. First, he employed an efficient setup routine and knew exactly how to display the items to look most appealing to the customer. Second, his displays ranged in diversity – from flowers to hanging baskets, fruits to vegetables,

and bedding plants. Third, his experience allowed him to carry out transactions very business-like *while* engaging the consumer face-to-face in a personal way, swapping stories and information. Similarly, Casey gave customers samples, and practiced “reciprocity” or mutual exchange with the students. This reciprocity was often extended to other vendors as well. One student wrote, “I witnessed how the bartering system works among vendors/farmers through our experience with Casey Helping each other appears to a given in this [vendor] culture.”

Obviously, the Vissers are committed to making their “new” farm work by reorganizing their livelihood towards a direct marketing orientation. The Vissers future plan to expand their farmers' market operations is further evidence of this success. According to Casey, “We’re constantly thinking more ideas. Like this year we want to build new green houses, Lord willing. But every year it seems like you’ve got to go bigger and bigger 'cause you have to make a living . . . This is where I get my main source of income, and thirty years down the road hopefully that’s where my family gets their main source of income, from farming.”

Several lessons are learned from the Visser Farms case study and their involvement in regional farmers' markets:

1. Visser Farms began the transition to direct marketing in the 1980s. At this time, the restructuring of farming and rural America transformed the “small farm” (Heffernan and Constance 1994, Llambí 1993, Lyson and Raymer 2000, McMichael 1994). We need to know how the Visser experiences compare to farmers who recently enter the farmers’ market environment.
2. The Visser farm has been around for 100 years with a large family of several generations dedicated to the farm livelihood and engaged in marketing at different levels. Having a significant farm infrastructure (120 acres) and a committed family group are key ingredients in the success of farms to redirect production towards farmers’ markets.
3. The use of greenhouse agriculture is a necessary transition in order to produce a variety of crops, especially flowers. Furthermore, greenhouse agriculture extends the growing season, expands income over a longer period of time, and helps a farm gain an advantage in the market over other competitors by offering a variety of crops earlier in the season. The evidence demonstrates the need to shift to new crops grown in greater variety.
4. This redirection of production requires the use of new technology and methods specific to “soft” production. Direct marketing helps farmers become sensitive to chemical use, health, and environmental care, as they find ways to reduce chemical use, and perhaps even consider “going organic” if feasible and profitable.
5. The use of hired, farm labor will increase with the production of farmers’ market crops. According to Casey, 90% of the farm activities involve hands-on field labor. With the need to hire migrant labor, farmers will find ways to retain quality laborers year after year by providing them with a better (though still inadequate) working environment.
6. Redirecting production requires a re-education on the farmer’s part, learning about new crops, farming techniques, and the latest equipment. Likewise, the farmer must also learn a new skill set related to marketing and face-to-face communication with the customers and other vendors.
7. Direct marketing will facilitate the exchange and flow of information between farm and customer, allowing farmers an ability to adjust production to suit the demands of the marketplace. Successful farms will need to be characterized by flexibility and innovation.

Tulip Acres Case

While all the students did not visit a second farm like the Vissers, some continued to visit farms and interviewed several farmers who were vendors at the markets. One such interview stands out and will be reported here. Like Casey, the vendor “Betty” is a farmer.⁸ She is from the Comstock area and sells only at the Fulton Street Market. She is a small, robust woman in her early sixties. She looks very healthy, with red cheeks and a broad smile. Her hands are strong, knowledgeable, and the skin tight and red with use. During our four weeks at the Fulton Street market, Betty spoke most frequently to the student teams. She was proud of her work and the way that she and her husband turned around their farming business to sell at the farmers’ market. Like Visser Farms, Betty planted a variety of crops, partly to meet the demands for a range of different items, and partly to extend their selling season by growing crops that mature earlier and later during the growing season. In students’ fieldnotes, one learns about strawberries - the main crop sold by Betty in early June. Strawberries turn the greatest profits, Betty exclaimed, because she uses a berry variety that is large and sweet. She explains that the plants are ordered as dormant, bare root cuttings from a national distribution company called Nourse Farms located in Massachusetts. The company’s website indicates that they distribute strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, asparagus, and rhubarb, and ship more than 20 million plants a year.⁹

Betty made it clear that Nourse Farms is not an international corporation, but rather a family-owned farm that began as a strawberry nursery and then expanded successfully. Everything else, she says, comes from local sources. She highly values locally produced vegetable and fruit. She complained about “middlemen” at the market - resale vendors – who do not grow anything that they sell. She admitted that some farmers add resale products to their own home-grown items; this mostly takes place “early in the season before local harvests kick in.” The students’ fieldnotes reveal a consensus held among most farmers: those who resell only are not very welcome. When asked if resale is a common practice at the Fulton Street market, Betty whispered, “an awful lot of vendors buy from wholesale then resell.” In such cases, she says, it is important for the vendors to inform the customer about the source of the produce. But many don’t. She added, “They sell next to farmers like us and get carried on our coattails. The customers are fooled. They are misled on where their food may be coming from.”

As a local vendor at the market, Betty places a special value on her food, which could not be found at a retail outlet. Consumers, too, are likely to cast a suspicious eye on vendors who sell non-local goods. The emotional reaction of vendors and consumers against non-local goods may amplify a sense of “purity” expected at the farmers’ market. This purity is threatened by “polluted goods” sold by vendors who are often non-local as well. Often expressed, this sentiment reflects the popular idea that a farmers’ market should not be “debased with symbols of modern capitalist consumption, i.e. mundane commodities found year-round at the supermarket” (Otto 2004).

By looking at two case studies of farmers as vendors, this section illustrates the benefits of recruiting local farmers to sell at farmers’ markets. This section demonstrates the successful process by which the Visser farm *redirected* production to serve the region’s farmers’ markets. This redirection generated a new range of crops, farming methods, and marketing strategies

8 Participants in the study had the option of remaining anonymous. The individual “Betty” and the place “Tulip Acres Farm” are used as false names in this section to protect the identity of the vendor.

9 <http://www.noursefarms.com/>. Accessed March 31, 2008.

passed along to the consumer in the form of food and knowledge. Clearly, the exchanges are two-way, linking farmer and customer, rural and urban, each depending upon the support of the other. At the West Side market these linkages require constant nurturing, requiring that market managers invite and entice the participation of as many “farmers” as possible. The Tulip Acres case demonstrates that the successful farmer can operate on a smaller scale than do the Vissers. Furthermore, the case reveals the importance of the “local” aligned with the sentiment of authenticity.

These cases highlight the value placed on vendors who are farmers and who sell what they produce. In addition to learning new farming techniques for new crops, farmers must also learn how to market and sell their goods to the public. According to Hinrichs and Barham (2007:347), “small- and medium-scale family farms . . . cannot content themselves with knowing their farm machinery, their livestock, or the needs of their field. They also must grapple with marketing strategy, consumer relations, and more.” The book *The New Farmers' Market* (Corum, Rosenzweig and Gibson 2001) is a good place to begin in developing these skills with its chapters on “displays,” merchandising and the people side of face-to-face, direct sales. Similarly, the project recommends that vendors provide information to customers in the form of handouts, poster and displays, describing their farm, the nature of their farming activities, and the sources of their goods as “local.” Given the appeal of locally produced “specialty” foods, farmers as vendors would do well to use symbols that tie their goods to rural life and authentic consumption. The farmers’ market can be used as a nexus for linking multiple spaces (farm and market) and social groups (producers-vendors-consumers-activists) (Lev et al. 2007).

SECTION V: Consumers

The following students made contributions to this section based on their field report written for the course: Brian Crandall (Anthropology/Film and Video), Tim Elrod (Anthropology), Emilie Korpi (Anthropology), and Derek Moore (Anthropology)

Understanding consumer behavior was one of the main objectives of the project. Several years ago, Brown (2002b) inventoried a range of studies on farmers’ markets to compare consumer demographics and patterns of consumption. She highlighted categories of information useful for our study as well, such as consumer demography, how often consumers visit the farmers’ market, reasons for doing so, and possible improvements to the market. Furthermore, our project learned from interviews how market managers try to align the expectations of vendors and consumers with market organization. These topics allowed us to identify patterns of consumer values. These values - notions of “local,” authenticity, and quality - find expression in the transactions around food.

Consumer surveys were conducted between May 19 and June 14 at both the West Side and Fulton Street markets. The project collected 77 surveys at West Side and 141 at Fulton Street, for a total of 218.¹⁰ Our strategy required setting up a table at an access point (entry/exit). On the table sat clipboards with the surveys, project information, and more general information about farmers markets. As shoppers passed, students asked them to participate in the study,

¹⁰ For detailed information on the survey method and how we employed it in this project, see the Methodology Section of this report.

sharing their experiences and viewpoints on the farmers' market. Other students wandered from the table with survey clipboards and handed them to people who were interested in participating in the project. Most often, curious consumers were attracted to the table, stopping by on their own accord. The two-page survey took on average 5 minutes to complete. Most people were eager to share their experiences and express their opinions on how to improve the market. They needed very little encouragement to take the survey. Judging by the participation rate, it was obvious that consumers were invested in farmers' market and wished for its success. However, not all passersby took the survey. Some people simply passed our table unresponsive, or continued on with a shake of the head or a wave of their hand; others paused and explained (courteously) that they did not have time to spare.

In this section the survey results are described, with the inclusion of two additional sources information: vendor surveys (described in the previous section) and researcher fieldnotes. Students documented first-hand observations of market activities, describing events and observations on personal notepads. Fieldnotes are typically employed as a primary method of data collection in anthropology. Later, students converted the field jottings to expanded descriptions, and then input these into a qualitative analysis, computer program. This allowed the project to assign codes (topics/variables) to the written descriptions and to retrieve multiple entries across the entire collection of students' fieldnotes.

Before reviewing and discussing the findings on consumer behavior, it will be useful to get a sense of the atmosphere of the market. One student recorded "sensory observations" – the sounds and smells of the market. This student, who is "legally-blind" and sat at various locations at the markets while recording smells and sounds, adds a perspective that is often lacking studies like this:

What I studied was the sounds and smells at both farmers' markets. This day I was at the West Side market. It was nice but a little cool due to the rain. I sat by the survey table with a little voice recorder. There were birds singing, mixed with sounds of the cars and trucks on the nearby road. Then a noisy vehicle pulled up. It sounded like more vendors were showing up.

The farmers started to come and set up for the day. I could hear the sounds of the farmers talking to each other. One farmer came by and asked the other how much he was selling his plants for; the farmer said one dollar. One farmer had his children with him. The children were running around the area, laughing, where the farmer was setting up. Other than that, it was very peaceful. It sounded like this parking lot was very big.

People were coming and going. I heard people walking. People came by and started to buy from the farmers. The farmers and the consumers were getting along. The atmosphere was very pleasant – a good sense of humor. Everyone was enjoying what they were doing by the way they were talking to each other. The customers were friendly to the vendors.

Many consumers were asking the farmers questions. More people came asking the farmers about their produce and plants. One lady asked how much they were selling their produce and plants for. A family came with their child in a baby stroller. Many families came with their children to shop at the market. There were sounds of people talking to each other; some were talking about the weather.

At the Fulton Street market, the sounds of the people told me that it was very busy there . . . more activity here compared to the West Side market. Many people came by the table to fill out a survey; some asked questions before they completed the survey. A man came to the table and asked what was going on; one of the students started to explain to him and asked him if he would like to fill out a survey. More people were talking. Some of the people stated that they would come back and fill out a survey when they were done buying in the market. A woman came by the table and filled out a survey, and she stated that one of the vendors was smoking over his produce. This was a big concern for her when she comes to the farmers' market. One day, a vision impaired man came by the table and asked that someone read the survey to him. This is noticed immediately!

There was lots of activity at this site. All types of people were there – mothers with children in strollers, elderly, and young people. It sounded initially very crowded but the crowd thinned out – then the people came again. Noisy – quiet – noisy – quiet again – the noise picked up as I walked back through the market. I came to a woman who told her children to get out of the way when she saw my cane. One of her children asked her why I had the cane to walk with; she told him that I was vision impaired.

Different types of nationalities were there. People of different cultures were there buying from the farmer. I could tell by the way they talked – their accents. Some people talked about getting coffee. Customers were asking questions of the vendors. A woman asked a farmer about the plants she had and what kind they were and how much they cost. One farmer was giving instructions to a woman on how to take care of the plant she purchased. There was a difference of sounds when walking. For example, I could tell when farmers had their stand covers up - they had less sound. The ones that were not covered had more sounds around them.

The different plants and veggies smelled very good. There were smells of the plants and produce – both were different, some were strong and the others had a nice, sweet smell, like the strawberries and green onions. I could smell the spinach, too. Later, I smelled the fresh bakery. There was also the smell of hot dogs and ethnic food in the air at the farmers' market. According to voices I heard, there were more people buying hot dogs than the other food. There was also the smell of coffee, and a man and a lady were talking about going to get something to eat. During the day I came across the smell of homemade soap, women's perfume, and men's cologne (some did not smell pleasant).

The sounds of vehicles coming and going were nonstop. There was also a motorized wheelchair that went by me. And dogs were barking around the market. The trend was consumers had their dogs in the market. (I had mine.) I was told that the sign over the entrance stated that no dogs are allowed in the market.

At both farmers' markets the people were friendlier, I believe, than those at a supermarket.

Consumer Survey Findings

Three topics are presented from the survey: consumer demography, reasons for going to

the market, and potential improvements. The project decided that these would be most useful to the market managers and for understanding patterns of consumer behavior and expectations. The survey elicited such demographic variables as age, gender, education, yearly household income, household's primary language, residence status, and zip code. For analytical purposes students compared and contrasted consumer patterns from each market (West Side and Fulton Street).

The markets attracted people of a wide range of ages. At Fulton Street, students found 76% of the consumers were between the ages of 25 and 54. At West Side, 62% of the people surveyed were in this age range. The fieldnotes suggest that West Side tended to attract older-aged customers, mostly women. The surveys at West Side market confirm that 75% of the survey-takers were women, and the number of people 55 and over comprised 28% of the survey population. At Fulton Street, this older population makes up only 15% of the customers. However, the corresponding number of women at Fulton Street was also high - 60% of the survey-takers. Not surprisingly, the information from both markets confirms the expectation that more women shop for food than men.

Turning to education level, the results indicate that shoppers at farmers' markets are highly educated. The students compared the levels of educational attainment at three markets, including data from a similar project conducted in 2003 at the Holland Farmers' Market in Holland, Michigan (Table 2). Both the Holland and Fulton Street markets were busy, long-established markets, located in the city center within the embrace of the downtown shopping district. While all three markets attract college educated customers (at least 80% of adults), the Holland and Fulton Street markets boast a surprisingly high percentage of people with a post-graduate education, 37% and 42%, respectively. In contrast, the number of customers at West Side claiming a post-graduate education is 27%, which nevertheless is high on the whole. The findings also point to a greater number at West Side with a high school education only.

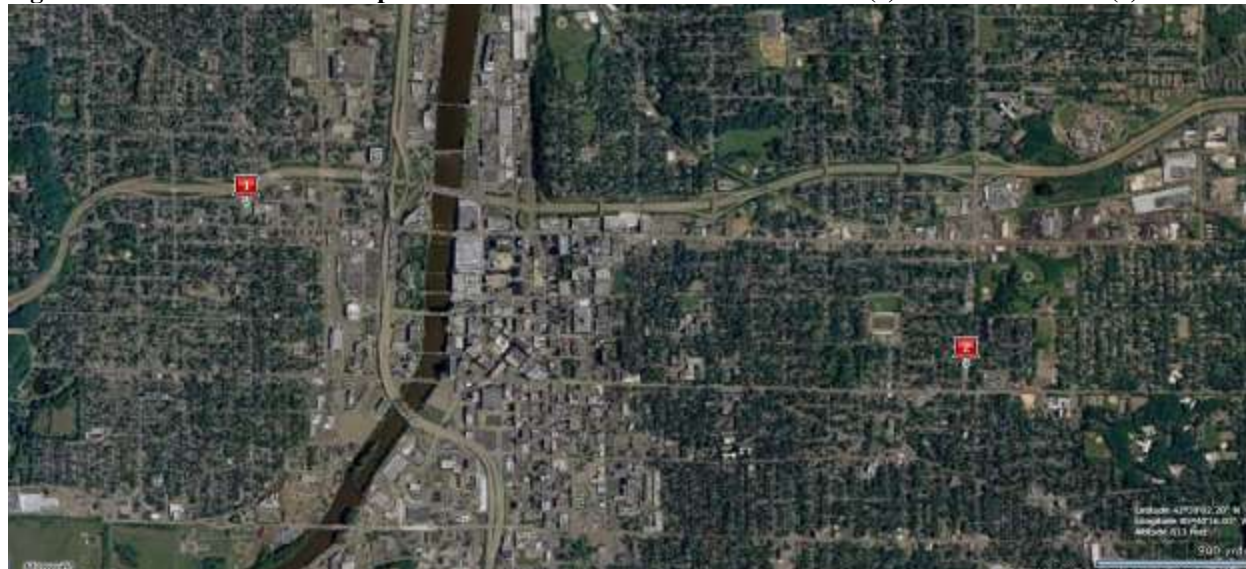
Table 2: Education by Farmers' Market

Educational Level	Farmers' Market		
	<i>West Side</i>	<i>Fulton Street</i>	<i>Holland</i>
High School Diploma	19%	5%	10%
College ¹	81%	95%	90%
Post-Graduate ²	27%	42%	37%
¹ Includes some college along with earning a college degree.			
² Includes some post-graduate education along with earning a post-graduate degree.			

This difference may be consistent with the locations of the markets (Figure 33). In particular, the West Side market is located in a neighborhood with fewer assets than the others, and further away from downtown shopping.

Education often corresponds to income level. At West Side, 22% of the customers live on an income of less than \$20,000; at Fulton the figure is only 8%. Those who reported earning a family income of \$60,000 or more make up 40% of the customers at Fulton Street, whereas at West Side this figure is 26%. By comparison, the same high income group at the Holland farmers' market makes up over 55% of the sample. What is one to make of these figures? Clearly, farmers' market customers at these three venues are both educated and middle-to-upper middle class. One sees less of this pattern at the West Side market where nearly 50% of the customers have a family income of less than \$40,000. Again, this is consistent with the working-

Figure 33: Downtown Grand Rapids and Relative Distance from West Side (1) and Fulton Street (2) Markets



class status of the West Grand neighborhood.

In terms of residence status, the project wanted to know how many people “own versus rent” their residence. Surveys from Fulton Street demonstrate that 72% of consumers own their current residence, while one quarter rent. At West Side, the numbers are similar, with 68% owning and 28% renting. Ownership often indicates both higher income levels and residential stability in the neighborhood. The data is consistent with income levels: over two-thirds of customers own their home. There does not appear to be a significant difference in residential status across the two market populations.

It is understood that not all customers come from the surrounding neighborhood. Therefore, the project wanted to learn where the customers actually live, and how far they come to shop at the market. Using zip code information, students calculated the numbers of shoppers that live within 4 miles of the market. Figure 33 locates the two markets relative to the downtown area. The distance between the two markets is 3 miles, about a 5-7 minute drive. Figure 34 identifies the zip code boundaries. The West Side market is located at the east end of the 49504 zone. The Fulton Street market is located at the southeast boundary of the 49503, which was combined with the 49506 zone. This places the market



Figure 34: Customer Residence and Zip Code Zones Relative the Two Markets

closer to the center of both zones combined.

For the West Side market, 70% of the consumers who filled out the 77 surveys live within four miles of the market. Of these, 80% live in the surrounding 49504 zone. Turning to the Fulton Street market, 68% of those who filled out 141 surveys live within four miles of the market. Both markets are comparable in that they draw a significant number of customers from the immediate locality. Roughly 30% of customers reside beyond four miles. Of interest is the fact that, according to the zip code data, Fulton Street attracts customers from across the state, while the numbers of customers at the West Side market who came from beyond Grand Rapids was negligible.

How often do customers visit the farmers' market? Do shoppers come every week? Sixty-two percent of the Fulton Street customers visit the market each week. Only 7% were visiting for the first time. At the West Side market, only 22% had come each week. First-timers accounted for nearly 50% of those surveyed. These patterns reflect the gap between a long-established market and one struggling to build a customer base and to put itself on the map. By comparison, the pattern found at the Holland farmers' market (2003) is very similar to Fulton Street case: 60% shop each week, 20% every two weeks, and 12% once a month. A small percentage of shoppers were first-timers only.

What are the characteristics of the market that attract people to come and shop? A second set of data collected on the surveys focused on customer motivation, a theme often discussed in the literature on farmers' markets (Andreatta and Wickliffe 2002, Archer et al. 2003, Brown 2002, Brumfield et al. 1993, Lockretz 1986, and Wolf 1997). In this section of the survey, consumers were asked to rate a list of "reasons for coming to the market." Based on a modified Likert scale, the rating system measures the consumer's level of agreement with a statement, with the four choices as very important, important, somewhat important, and not important. For the purposes of presenting the findings, the reasons for attending the market are ranked from

Table 3: Reasons for Shopping at the Farmers' Market

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. To buy fresh food: | At the West Side farmer's market, 76% of the individuals surveyed thought buying fresh food was a "very important" reason for shopping at the farmers' market. Eighty-five percent thought the same at the Fulton Street market. |
| 2. To buy local food: | West Side: 71%, Fulton Street: 73% |
| 3. To support local business: | West Side: 71%, Fulton Street: 75% |
| 4. To supporting farmers: | West Side: 66%, Fulton Street: 69% |
| 5. Product quality: | West Side: 66%, Fulton Street: 69% |
| 6. Product variety: | West Side: 55%, Fulton Street: 53% |
| 7. To buy organic food: | West Side: 39%, Fulton Street: 35% |
| 8. To buy inexpensive food: | West Side: 23%, Fulton Street: 17% |
| 9. To shop downtown: | West Side: 18%, Fulton Street: 26% |
| 10. To socialize: | West Side: 10%, Fulton Street: 13% |
| 11. To buy from a preferred vendor: | West Side: 7%, Fulton Street: 20% |
| 12. The market's location: | West Side: 41%, Fulton Street: 28% |

high to low in terms of the percentage of consumers who chose the “*very important*” response.

The Table 3 ranked “fresh food” as the most often cited “very important” reason for attending the market. Three-fourths of consumers considered fresh food the main reason for going to the farmers’ market. Similarly, seven in ten are attracted to “locally-produced food.” Equally, shoppers view farmers’ markets as local business sites, and wish to support vendors/farmers and their small businesses. Shoppers desire a variety of high quality foods reasonably priced (compare Brown 2002b:167). Over one third consider the sales of organically-produced foods at farmers’ markets as very important. On the other hand, going to the market to shop downtown, to socialize, or to buy from a specific vendor were relatively less noteworthy as motivations for shopping.

While the data for both markets is similar, there are key differences to be discussed. Patrons at the West Side market were looking for value and less expensive food. This orientation could be expected in a lower-income neighborhood. More people at the Fulton Street market (one-fourth) saw the importance of connecting farmers’ market activities with other downtown shopping. At Fulton Street, a market with a long-standing vendor/customer base, customers are more likely to frequent a specific vendor whom they have known over a season or even over several years. Finally, location is a big issue at both markets, but for different reasons. At Fulton Street, the survey results hint at the great location of the market, in the Midtown neighborhood. What is not revealed is the problem associated with a vendor/consumer base that has outgrown the size of the market. Many vendors were turned away and put up with long waiting lists to secure permanent stall spaces. Parking was limited, and the market was often noisy and crowded, especially the Saturday market. At West Side, *too much empty space* was the problem. A new, relatively-unknown market, West Side began with a disadvantage. The situation was further exacerbated by a location lacking in visibility and prominence. The market sits on the edge - rather than in the center - of the neighborhood which the market is designed to service.

The third set of questions from the consumer survey focused on market improvements. Customers were asked to list new products that they would like to see at the farmers' market. At the West Side market, the concern was weighed towards a desire for a greater *variety* of goods due to the limited vendor base there. As to specific items, shoppers wanted to see more root vegetables, turnip leaves, endive, watercress, chard, green and soy beans, avocado, vegan foods, and spices. Others desired more fruits be sold. There were requests for organic foods, such as organic meats, dairy products, and fruit. Finally, a small number of surveys (5) suggested that the market needs more stalls selling arts and crafts.

Other suggested improvements address the physical and social spaces at the market. As discussed earlier, Fulton Street is in need of more space; consumers want to see parking lot improvements and better access for cars and bicycles. Furthermore, shoppers desire more spaces for stalls, wider aisles, and bicycle racks. At the West Side market, customers want more vendors, local farmers, and a greater selection of goods. Mentioned as well were suggestions on improving signage and publicity throughout the neighborhood.

Discussion: Aligning Expectations

This project focused on consumers with the objective of aligning expectations between vendors/farmers, consumers and market managers (Andreatta and Wickliffe 2002). The project collected data on consumer demographics, patterns of consumption, reasons for shopping at the farmers’ market, and improvements to the market. Information derived from consumer surveys,

vendor surveys, and first-hand observations. The findings described similarities and differences between the two markets and, where appropriate, compared them to data from our 2003 study of the farmers' market at Holland, Michigan. Significant differences in the population of consumers surveyed were found, especially with respect to gender, education, yearly household income, frequency of market visits, motivations for shopping, and potential improvements. Overall, the findings highlight several patterns affecting the viability of farmers' markets. These are 1) women as customers, 2) buying locally, 3) variety and seasonality, 4) demand for products, including organic goods, 5) location and space, 6) ties to the surrounding community, 7) socializing, and 8) the role of the market manager. Each is discussed in turn.

1) *Women as customers*: Although more and more men are becoming involved in food preparation and cooking, the evidence indicates that many more women than men shop at the farmers' market. This has implications for vendors in terms of choice of goods brought to the market, consumer education and marketing, and interactions with customers. For market managers, it will be important to design publicity in ways that target women, and to provide a clean and safe atmosphere for families, including benches and suitable toilet facilities.

2) *Buying locally*: Consumers go to the farmers' market primarily because they think the produce is fresh and local, and because they want to buy from local farmers/vendors. The association of the local with something "authentic" is problematic, however. Customers *are* sensitive to the differences between local and global food chains, so markets will need to weigh choices involving who should sell at the market (reseller?) and what should be sold.

3) *Variety and seasonality*: While a market can be too crowded, it can never be too large or diverse. In one study the unavailability of produce during certain times of the market season was listed often as one of the top five complaints consumers had about farmers' markets (Andreatta and Wickliffe 2002). Customers desire variety and choice. They want many vendors selling a variety of goods, including value-added and nonfood items. However, *local* supply chains are a limitation in the amount and variety of goods. Farming is seasonal and crop cycles generate "in season" abundance. While farmers such as the Vissers attempt to "extend" the growing and harvest seasons with greenhouse technology, the fact is that farmers' markets are seasonal and crops appear at the market "in season." The problem here lies with consumer expectations, and the perception of what should and should not be available as fresh food not aligned with the reality of seasonal variation and the limitations of the climate here in Michigan.

Both vendors and managers will need to do a better job educating customers on seasonality – not as a limitation, but as an admirable quality. Seasonality posters for fruits and vegetables, recipes, workshops on preserving food (i.e., drying and canning), in season events ("The Strawberry Festival") would go a long way to help consumers work with seasonality, if not to anticipate and treasure its cultural dimensions, such as regional "cuisine." According to on author, appreciating regional Michigan cuisine is much more than a marketing ploy to capture market niches. It is "a way for us to reattach to and engage with the processes and relationships that build bodies and cultures of place" (DeLind 2006:141).

4) *Demand for products*: Farmers' markets largely draw customers who are educated and middle class. This is especially true at the Fulton Street and Holland markets with their respective shopping districts, and less so at the West Side market, surrounded by a working-class neighborhood. Clearly, economic status and social class are factors in creating demand for products one market or another. The demography of those who shop at urban farmers' markets, namely middle-upper class individuals, emphasizes the symbols of "authentic" commodities –

goods made by the person selling them, not like the common products sold in supermarkets. Like the concept of local cuisine, a desire for authenticity may be evidence of a “recontextualization” of consumption, symbolizing certain foods as “traditional” within a modern, local supply chain (Otto 2004).

This is especially true for organic goods. More than one third of consumers surveyed considered organic goods as a “very important” product at the market. According to Pollan (2006), the “farmers’ market” conjures up the image of a “supermarket pastoral,” and the idea that all fresh foods should be plentiful, natural and healthy - by implication, organic. As consumer demand grows for locally produced organics, farmers may be served by investing in controlled greenhouse production, as did the Vissers. This is already happening at both large and small scales in west Michigan. Production at Elzinga & Hoeksema Organic Greenhouses, a successful family business, has begun providing the giant Meijer Stores with organic vegetables and potted plants.¹¹ In Kalamazoo, a small-scale specialty farmer, who grows about 200 pounds of greens a week, sells his organic produce to restaurants and a hospital in west Michigan, to supply specialty produce such as onions, radishes, garlic, arugula, mustard greens and varieties of lettuce (Wood 2008). On the other hand, in the vendor surveys and interviews, small-scale farmers explained to us the difficulties of growing organic crops in Michigan, due to the effects of the weather and the costs.

5) *Location and space*: Space and parking is a prominent dissatisfaction at Fulton Street farmers’ market. However, currently the city of Grand Rapids has redesigned the market and will expand its physical size to address vendor space and parking problems. The plan calls for a covered structure and spaces for long-term, market-related tenants (bakery, butcher, restaurant) (Midtown Neighborhood Association 2006) (Figure 35).¹²

The problems with the location and site of the West Side farmers’ market are well-known. In the section on Market Organization, the background and rationale for selecting the current site, located near Bridge Street in a church parking lot, was explained. The location and the newness of the market conspired to limit both vendor and consumer bases over the first two years of operation. Our surveys show that only 22% of respondents come to the market each week. First-timers accounted for nearly 50% of those surveyed. Were the Fulton Street results similar, this pattern could reflect that fact that the surveys were administered earlier in the market season. What likely accounts for the gap is the difference between a well-known, long-established market and another struggling to build a vendor/customer base.

At West Side, as with any farmers’ market, vendors and consumers rely on each other. Manager Bartelmeier recruited sellers prior to this second year of operations, and placed newspaper ads to announce the opening of the market. Even if vendors come, they will only return the next market day if customers show up in sufficient numbers. If customers encounter a dearth of goods, in numbers and variety, they will be reluctant to return. The outcome is obvious – a steady decline in both vendors and customers.

11 See “A Local Greenhouse that is Truly Green.” <http://www.mlive.com/news/kzgazette/index.ssf?/base/columns-3/1205851826198890.xml&coll=7>

12 The image is from the Brikyat Neighborhood Area Specific Plan, Final Report 12/12/2006, p. 66. http://www.grand-rapids.mi.us/download_upload/binary_object_cache/planning_Brikyat_Plan_Optimized.pdf

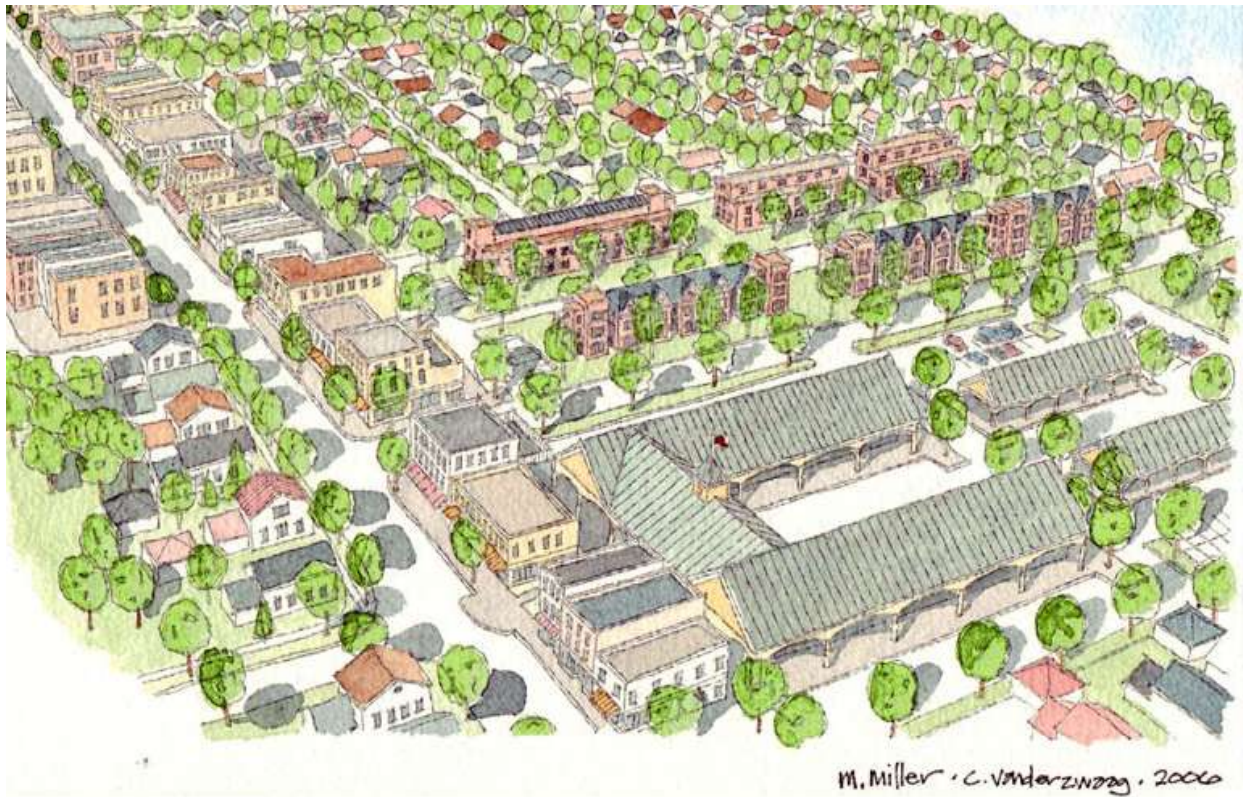


Figure 35: Changes to the Fulton Street Market as Proposed in the Brikyaat Plan, December 2006

In the case of a fledging market like West Side, a strategy of securing vendor commitment will yield positive results. Managers must offer incentives to vendors in exchange for a commitment to sell at the market for a length of time, regardless of the consumer side of things. Customers desire variety and choice, including value-added and nonfood items. If these are present, shoppers will return, and hopefully, spread the word. Sustaining a vendor base is the first step in buoying consumer satisfaction and enhancing the shopping experience. With infrequent turn over in vendors at market, customers can get to know the same vendors each week in a routine way. Our surveys evidenced the idea that customers expect consistency, and do not like the feeling of being “surprised” each time they come by the lack of vendors and goods. According to one woman’s complaint, “I come here to support this local market, but at times I wonder. Today I felt like I went out of my way to come and it’s almost a waste of my time.” In addition, with more vendors, customers are able to “compare shop” by evaluating duplicate products (e.g., tomatoes) by quality and price. Compare-shopping is part of the satisfaction of the purchasing experience at farmers’ markets (Nixon 2007:42). Finally, word of this positive reputation will spread and, together with effective advertising, the market will grow.

6) *Ties to the surrounding community:* According to Brown (2002b:169), “the most important factor in the composition of the customer base of a farmers' market is location: markets draw primarily from the neighborhoods where they are sited.” At West Side, this condition is limited by the location of the market site. First, the shopping connection between the market and downtown businesses is tenuous at West Side, compared to Fulton Street and Holland cases. These latter markets are strategically located relative to their respective business

districts and to the neighborhoods that support them. The West Side location may need to be reviewed to meet these conditions as well.

The zip code results from the surveys at West Side suggest over 75% of patrons live within four mile neighborhood. But this pattern does not address two important issues. First, what is the connection between the market and the business district? That is, how strategically located is the market in terms of building an interactive dynamic between local businesses and shopping at the farmers' market? One of the objectives defined by the Cool Cities grant was to use the farmers' market as a "pole" or magnet to attract shoppers into the area. Second, does the market draw primarily from the neighborhood where it is located? The West Side market was established by the West Grand Neighborhood Organization to serve its neighborhood and the Stockbridge Business district to the north (see next section). Presently, the market site sits on the southern edge of the neighborhood rather than in the center of the space it is designed to service. The neighborhood is very diverse ethnically but most of the residents are Latino. Yet, very few Latinos were witnessed at the market, as vendors or as customers. The local Spanish-speaking population must be reached and integrated into the market activities. Finally, it remains unclear as to how much coordination there is among the surrounding neighborhood associations, especially involving the adjacent neighborhood to the south, the South West Area Neighborhood (SWAN).

7) *Socializing*: Although socializing was not perceived by our respondents as a "very important" factor for shopping at the farmers' market, the general research on farmers' markets is full of evidence supporting the idea of socializing as an important aspect of the shopper's experience (Sommer 1989, Holloway and Kneafsey 2000, Baber and Frongillo 2003, Griffin and Frongillo 2003, Selfa and Qazi 2005, Kirwan 2006, Gillespie et al. 2007). Furthermore, farmers' markets should be interpreted as "sites of engagement" and value sharing among producers, consumers and local food "champions" (DeLind 2006, Smithers 2008). If these authors are to be believed, this "space" should be viewed fruitfully as a convenient laboratory by which to understand why groups of actors, including consumers, hold differing strategies with respect to their interests in alternative food systems such as the farmers' market (Smithers 2008:2).

Through social interactions, one can see how notions of local, quality, and authenticity find expression in communications and transactions around food. The student video production, "Field to Farmers; Market: Preserving the Rural Landscape," features interviews with shoppers at the Fulton Street. Consumers clearly express a desire for the experiences, knowledge, and service that comes as a byproduct of social interaction. Many shoppers have a vested interest in "preserving" rural life through the family farm. Vendors offer personal assistance, information on plants and gardening, and share stories about the farming "culture" and livelihood. It was observed in the student fieldnotes that the farmers' market is a good place to take children, for many families were observed, and the children of vendors often helped with stall and sales activities.

7) *The role of the market manager*: Related to socializing is the role the market manager plays in public relations with vendors and consumers. The market manager at West Side, Russ Lewis, understands this well as Nixon (2007:39) reports from an interview with Lewis, "a critical part of the market experience is a model based on social interaction and networking." Among other activities, Lewis explained that spending time with customers is a high priority:

I want to know who [customers] are, where they come from, why they're coming. And find out if they are enjoying their visit, what they need, what they would like to see that they don't now see, so that they can feel like someone is listening, somebody cares, somebody is watching. And when they leave, and they have had an interaction, that is reinforced. . . . I'm probably the most aggressive of anyone in the marketplace, and I'm willing to stop [and talk to] anyone.

Lewis' words reveal as much about the importance of socializing as seeking first-hand information from consumers. He desired to know more about the clientele and their needs. But Lewis and Bartelmeier both realized the necessity of systematizing these interactions and impressions into "data" that could be collected, organized and interpreted to help guide policy and adjust the market the expectations of both vendors and consumers.

The discussion above demonstrates how consumers view the farmers' market as an important local institution. Many shop at the market to buy fresh produce at reasonable prices, support the local farmers and businesses, and socialize with like-minded people. This section presented and discussed the findings from the consumer surveys and other sources of information gathered by multiple teams of researchers at two farmers' markets. It appears from the evidence that the "buy local" movement is strong in the Grand Rapids area.

In summary, for those studying farmers' markets it is important to think of the web of actors involved: vendors, farmers, consumers, managers, businesses, local residents, and activists. By documenting exchanges, interactions and networks, this web takes form and gives shape to the larger food system. The last piece of our puzzle is the neighborhood. The next section details its background and history, its assets, and its ties to the farmers' market.

SECTION VI: The West Grand Neighborhood

The following students made contributions to this section based on their field report written for the course: Michel Andreasen (Anthropology), Tiffany Cross (Anthropology), Ashley Kuehl (Anthropology/Film & Video), and Derek Reed (Communications).

In this section, the West Side market's ties to the surrounding community are explored. The concern here is the function of the market within the context of the community. One cannot be assured that the local residents benefits just because a farmers' market is up and running in the neighborhood. As the market manager explained: "The neighborhood will pretty much accept us or reject us based on their perceived need and the benefits that they see from having the market in their neighborhoods I mean you can't sell something to somebody that they don't want, and you can't sell something to somebody that they can't afford" (Russ Lewis, West Side market manager, as quoted from Nixon 2007). As Lewis is aware, to create a neighborhood farmers' market, at once sustainable and meeting local needs, the surrounding community will need to be assessed. Such a strategy might target demography and the availability of fresh food and services, including grocery stores and other types of local businesses.

The original West Side proposal had these ideas in mind. The aim to create a farmers' market emerged from a larger plan to provide fresh foods to residents and to stimulate social and economic activity in the West Grand neighborhood. Among the documented causes of food insecurity in urban neighborhoods are the absence of quality supermarkets, the growth of fast-food chains, and a lack of healthy foods at corner stores (Bolen and Hecht 2003, Los Angeles

Sentinel 2007). City planners, business owners, and activists also thought that the farmers' market would help grow economic activities and employment in the business district, especially the small-business type (Fischer 1999). As such, the farmers' market would play the role as a "magnet" in multiple ways – bringing people together, creating a lively public space for economic and social exchanges.

According to documentation, the idea for a neighborhood "open market" was initially proposed by Father Dick Host (St. Mary's) and Commissioner Dick Bulkowski (Steepletown).¹³ Both identified the need for a "Hispanic marketplace" for the West Grand neighborhood, where residents could buy and sell general products including used merchandise, crafts, tools, food, etc. Rick Chapala (The Right Place, Inc.) learned about the idea and contacted Leadership Grand Rapids with a Community Trustee Project proposal for "the establishment of a Hispanic marketplace to conduct commerce, art creation, workforce development and training and support business activities in a centralized location." Leadership Grand Rapids began preparing a feasibility report for a market in September 2005. Based on community interviews, the report favored a grassroots effort and a shift in the market concept from an "immigrant" market to one accessible to a broader population, namely, a farmers' market. This change in orientation took place suddenly, only one month before the market's scheduled opening. According to the Turner Gateway website, a marketing study found that the Grand Rapids area could support up to a dozen farmers' markets, yet none had been planned for the West Side.

The manager who helped establish the market was Andrea Bartelmeier. She helped write the Cool Cities Grant for Neighborhood Development (2005) that awarded the West Grand Neighborhood Organization (WGNO), a nonprofit 501(c)3, \$9,000 from the Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth and Michigan State Housing Development Authority. At the time, the WGNO was very active in "strengthening our neighborhood through community empowerment" (their official slogan). In addition to the farmers' market initiative, the neighborhood organization sponsored other campaigns such as a senior safety program, auto theft prevention, the Turner Gateway Beautification Project, and a neighborhood history project called "Looking Back."

The grant money was designed to improve economics and the overall health of the local community, and included funds set aside for the West Side Farmers' Market. It was believed that a farmers' market would benefit the nearby business district by bringing in more shoppers. This argument helped enlist the support of the Stockbridge Business Association, which joined as a farmers' market sponsor. At last, Bartelmeier launched the West Side farmers' market in June 2006.

The Role of the GVSU Anthropology Field School Project

As project director for the summer, ethnographic field school, Rhoads desired an experience for students described as course-based community research, or known as participatory action research (Strand et al. 2003). Bartelmeier also wanted the students to be involved in the market where they could volunteer, collect information first-hand, and report results back to the market manager. According to Hofman and Rosing (2006), course-based action anthropology (CBAA) engages community members with students and faculty in the course of their academic work. Unlike traditional research, CBAA is collaborative and change-

13 See the Leadership Grand Rapids Report (Leadership Grand Rapids 2005) and Nixon (2007:31-32).

oriented service learning, combining classroom learning with social action (Hofman and Rosing 2006, Rosing et al. 2007).¹⁴

Rhoads conducted a field school study in 2003 at the Holland farmers' market, and was eager to compare the results with other markets in Grand Rapids. Initially, he identified the Fulton Street market as comparable, but then learned of the West Side "experiment" from Bartelmeier. The prospect of exposing students to a grass-roots project administered by a neighborhood organization was exciting. During Winter 2007, one of Rhoads' field assistants, Autumn Shroyer, interned with the WGNO, and helped Bartelmeier prepare for the 2007 farmers' market season.

The idea was for students to gain a service-learning experience by volunteering at the market with publicity, set up, and other tasks. A main component would be our surveys and observations to collect information useful to the manager in running the market and as data to be integrated into her Cool Cities project report. Sommer and Nelson (1985:243) write that knowledge of consumer preferences and market dynamics can allow the market to adjust its policies to better serve its customers and neighborhood residents. In their study, they found that market managers can utilize research results for public relations and promotional activities, for making a case directly to local government and funding organizations. According to Lev, Stephenson and Brewer (2007:84-85), "Most individual [FMs] lack both the resources and the skills for documenting their role in the community and to make effective changes and improvements." These authors support participatory action research to help managers in need of data for self-monitoring the connections between the market and the community.

In collaboration with Bartelmeier, our project carried out surveys and observations at the market itself, and in the surrounding neighborhood. The project focused on several questions and issues related to the neighborhood:

1. Do the services provided by the farmers' market meet the needs and benefits desired by the neighborhood residents?
2. How are the residents of the neighborhood involved in the market?
3. Can the farmers' market stimulate economic activity in the nearby business district by bringing shoppers into the area?

Initially, the project involved all student teams in a neighborhood supermarket survey to document the availability of fresh food. Later, one student team was assigned to the neighborhood and collected a limited set of information. The team covered the neighborhood business district and took notes on the physical layout, including street and storefront conditions. The team conducted a business survey on employment patterns and on the types of goods provided. One objective was to provide a groundwork for interviews and focus groups that could be built into a future comprehensive study. Another objective was to better understand, within the limited scope of our neighborhood study, the relationship between the West Grand neighborhood and the market.

The remainder of this section describes the results of these surveys. One key finding is a significant need to increase the availability of fresh food in the neighborhood. We argue that the farmers' market has the potential benefit of attracting shoppers to other local businesses. However, the market does not yet interface well with the residents of the neighborhood, in spite of being a grass-roots project put into action by the neighborhood organization. Finally, the

14 See also J. Pretty 2002, and for a Michigan project, Karl Buck et al. (2007).

goods and services provided in the nearby business district may not compliment the kinds of goods desired by shoppers who would visit a farmers' market.

West Grand Neighborhood Boundaries

The neighborhood is located west of the Grand River and downtown Grand Rapids. The neighborhood's boundaries are circumscribed by Leonard Street to the north, John Ball Park on the west, Bridge Street to the south, and the Grand River on the east. The GVSU project focused mainly on the south half of the neighborhood (Figure 36), coinciding with an area called "Stockbridge" by Rapid Growth Media.¹⁵ The boundaries of this area extend west from the river along the unused, redeveloped Nason Street to an area occupied by several parks and cemeteries bordering on Bristol Avenue. The neighborhood extends south along Walker and Valley Avenues to Bridge Street NW at the southern boundary. Bridge Street runs east to the river. Two other streets are important to this study. Leonard Street NW is an east-west bisect running across the center of the neighborhood. Stocking Street begins at Bridge Street and runs diagonally northwest, connecting to Valley Avenue at 7th Street NW. The epicenter of this zone is Stocking Street NW. The Stockbridge Business Association represents the business districts in this zone. The farmers' market is located at the southern border of the neighborhood (Figure 36), adjacent to the SWAN neighborhood (South West Area Neighbors) to the south.

Neighborhood History

The West Grand neighborhood has a history as a working-class, immigrant enclave.¹⁶ Three major events shaped the history of the area: immigrants arriving for factory work, a major Grand River flood, and the destruction of a major swath of homes and businesses across the community to make way for the construction of several highways.

The neighborhood grew in the 1800s as furniture factories were erected along the river and railroad tracks. The workers homes spread west from the Grand River across the flood-prone lowlands. In 1842 the first bridge was build over the river connecting the west side to downtown Grand Rapids. Its former location is at Bridge Street, one of the main streets in the current West Grand neighborhood. In 1904, a major flood devastated the neighborhood, resulting in the displacement of half of the population and the temporary closure of furniture factories. In the subsequent years of rebuilding, vibrant business districts flourished on Bridge, Stocking and Leonard Streets, serving immigrant populations, then as they do today. During the 20th century, factories, small businesses, streetcars, workers, shoppers, and families filled the west side. It may be appropriate, too, that today's market location is at the St. James church, whose parish afforded aid to the Polish and Lithuanian immigrants who came in the last century, and continues to do so today for a growing Latino population.

¹⁵ Rapid Growth is a weekly e-magazine and web site devoted to showcasing the positive and sustained transformation of the greater Grand Rapids region. <http://www.rapidgrowthmedia.com/features/westmoving.aspx>.

¹⁶ The information in this section draws from two sources: Community Research Institute (2008a, 2008b) "West Grand: A Historical Sketch," Johnson Center, Grand Valley State University, Allendale, Michigan, http://cridata.org/hood_westgrand_history.aspx; Deborah Johnson Wood (2007) Rapid Growth, Grand Rapids, <http://www.rapidgrowthmedia.com/features/westvisit.aspxc>.

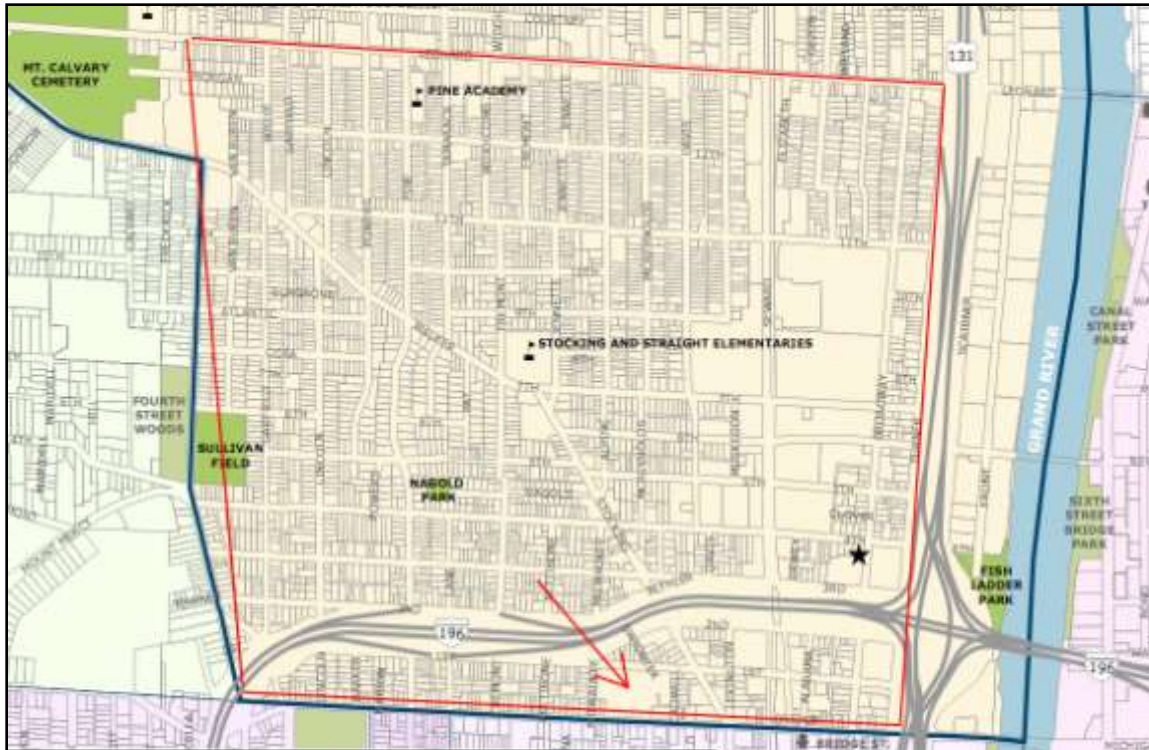


Figure 36: GVSU Neighborhood Study Area (arrow indicates the location of the farmers' market)

In 1955, construction began on a series of expressways (M-131 and I-96). One thousand homes and businesses were destroyed, effectively disrupting the waterfront center of the community. Even an existing farmers' market located on Leonard Street near the river was displaced at the time. Later in the early 1970s, another expressway (I-196) again cut through the west side community, displacing more family homes and businesses and dividing the southern part of the West Grand neighborhood (Figure 36). Over these decades, in spite of the many changes, the West Grand neighborhood remained an ethnically-diverse community. Today, the new immigrants are Latinos, and the area continues as a residential/business mix for working class families.

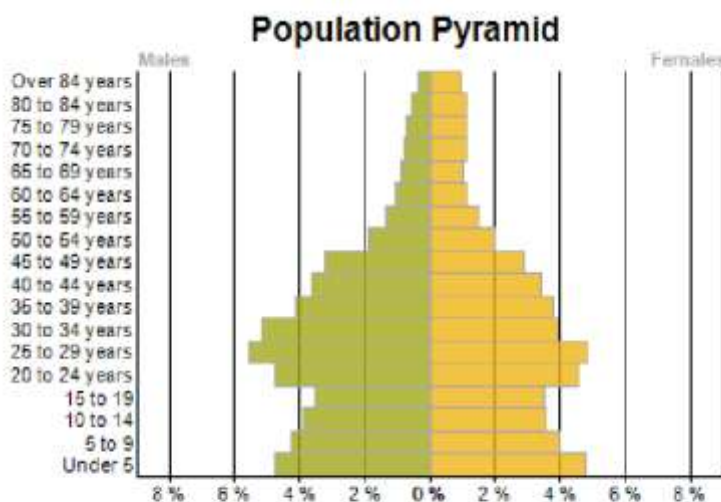
Neighborhood Assets: Demography

These working class characteristics are evident in the 2000 census data. A detailed census profile can be found elsewhere and will not be presented here (Community Research Institute 2008a and 2008b, Leadership Grand Rapids 2005). The characteristics worth noting are population, household composition, ethnicity and education. According to changes in the census data from 1990 to 2000, the West Grand neighborhood maintained a steady population of about 16,000 people. If disaggregated by age, however, one detects a precipitous drop in individuals 65 years of age and older during that decade - a nearly 27% decline. This is offset by an increase in the 18 to 65 group, which comprise 62% of the overall neighborhood population. Grand Rapids as a whole has similar proportion of age groups, though the decline among people 65 and over is only 7%.

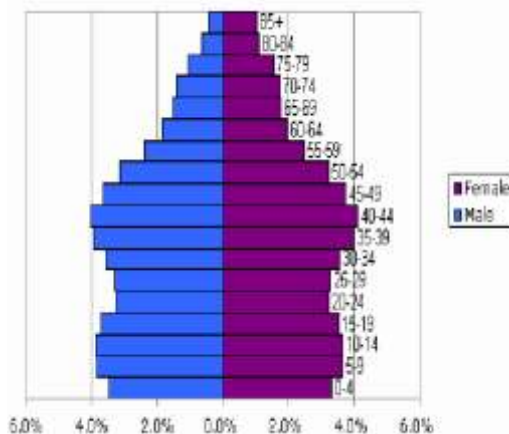
The sharp decline among the “seniors” of the neighborhood is likely due to a

demographic shift as longtime resident families are replaced by younger immigrants and new families in the making. Comparing population age distributions (Figure 37) for the neighborhood (top pyramid) and for Michigan as a whole (bottom pyramid), one sees a smaller percentage of elderly in the neighborhood. The comparison also draws attention to the fact that there is no age group larger than 4% in Michigan as a whole. In contrast, the neighborhood patterns shows percentages of men and women 20-29 years old and men 30-34 over 4%, as well as many more babies and toddlers – characteristics indicative of young immigrant families.

Figure 37: Population Age Distribution, West Grand Neighborhood (top) and Michigan (bottom) Compared, 2000



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1 (SF 1) P8 and Census 1990 Summary Tape File 1 (STF 1) P10



With respect to household composition, the West Grand neighborhood has 6,248 households (2000) (Table 4). Only 37% are “married-couple” households. About one quarter is male or female headed (one adult with children). Forty percent of the households are made up of only a single person or are comprised of unrelated individuals. In Michigan as a whole, over 50%

of the households consist of married couples. Thirty-two percent are made up of only a single person or are comprised of unrelated individuals. The rest (28%) are male-headed or female-headed families.

By education, nearly 30% of neighborhood residents 25 and over do not have a high school diploma. This compares to a rate of 22% for the city of Grand Rapids, and 16% for the state as a whole. Those with a college degree (associate, baccalaureate or post-graduate) in the state of Michigan make up 29% of the population. For Grand Rapids, the figure is similar though higher (31%), perhaps due to the many institutions of high learning in the area. In the neighborhood, however, only half as many people have such a degree (16%). Interestingly, this latter figure contrasts with the information that the project collected on consumer surveys for people at the West Side farmers' market. As presented in Table 2 in the Consumer section of this report, 8 in 10 people who completed the survey had completed some level of college (81%).

The consumer results, then, suggest two possibilities. The first is that the farmers' market attracted individuals from the neighborhood with more formal education. A second explanation is that the market attracts people from surrounding neighborhoods. The first is more likely. The farmers' market phenomenon in urban centers may be tied to social class. At the Holland and Fulton Street markets, for example, the percentage of people completing some level of college is 90% and 95%, respectively. While the West Side market does attract shoppers from beyond the local neighborhood, the SWAN neighborhood (South West Area Neighborhood) demonstrates similar education attainment patterns. The northern border of the SWAN neighborhood is located only one block from the farmers' market, south of Bridge Street. The census information on education shows that 42% of people 25 and older do not have at least a high school diploma, and only 14% have completed college. These rates are even lower than for the West Grand neighborhood.

As the neighborhood history reveals, ethnic diversity characterizes the West Grand neighborhood. While the census information for 2000 confirms this, one has only to take a walk along the neighborhood streets or visit the business district along Bridge Street to witness the ethnic diversity, especially the growing Latino population. Nearly every one in four individuals is a Latino (18%) or other/mixed "race" (6%), an increase of over 100% between 1990 and 2000. "Whites" comprise a majority 72% of the neighborhood population, but this represents a decline of over 20% during the same period. An additional 4% of the 2000 population is African-American.

The neighborhood business district is diverse as well and has the potential to interconnect with the farmers' market. According to Russ Lewis, the 2007 West Side market manager, "The

Table 4: Household Composition, 2000

	2000	West Grand Percent
Total Households	6,248	6,248
Married-couple family	2,293	36.7 %
Male-headed family	447	7.2 %
Female-headed family	1,027	16.4 %
One person	1,888	30.2 %
Unrelated persons	593	9.5 %

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1 (SF 1) P18

process of people coming to the market generates traffic into the neighborhood, driving through the local business districts. That contributes to the spin-off effect where stores are able to benefit from the additional traffic coming through their business quarters” (quoted from Nixon 2007:36). Lewis’ idea is consistent with the “multiplier effect” (Lyson 2007). But at this early stage in the market’s development, customers are primarily passersby in vehicles attracted by the street signage along Bridge Street. Until the market generates its own clientele, the “spin-off effect” is limited. Nevertheless, the market was established with a goal of eventually integrating itself into the economic and social activities of the neighborhood and nearby business districts.

To assess this potential for such integration, our project conducted two surveys. First, we wanted to know the sources of fresh fruit and vegetables in the neighborhood. Would the farmers' market fill a gap in provisioning local residents with the healthy foods they need and desired? A “Fresh Food” survey involved visiting five grocery markets to document the availability and quality of fruits and vegetables. The project also considered the business district an asset to the neighborhood and to the farmers' market. In another survey, students collected information on neighborhood businesses surrounding the farmers' market. They surveyed the types of businesses, employment, and the physical condition of the district contributing to a shopping “atmosphere.” The project anticipated that these surveys would become a first step to gaining a better understanding of the assets and status of the business district, and its potential connections with a long-term farmers' market. Finally, the project viewed the surveys as a way to serve the market manager, providing information that can be used as a basis for changes in market policies and direction, as well as data to support reports of accountability and proposal for grant funding.

Neighborhood Assets: Fresh Food Availability Study

The establishment of the West Side farmers’ market was designed to make available fresh food to the local residents. To assess fresh food availability,¹⁷ our project conducted a survey at surrounding neighborhood stores in order to understand a) where people, especially Latinos, obtain fresh food locally, and b) the need for a fresh food market (Table 5). We also conducted a survey of the local business along Bridge, Stocking and Leonard Streets as a way to measure one set of neighborhood assets.

Table 5: Food Sources: Grocery Stores Near the Farmers' Market

Grocery Stores Names and Locations	
Duthler's Family Food	648 Bridge St NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49504
Family Pantry	704 Stocking Ave NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49504
Bravo Supermarket	1000 W Fulton St, Grand Rapids, MI 49504
Parkside Foods	1153 W Fulton St, Grand Rapids, MI 49504
Ralph's Food Market	655 Leonard St NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49504

¹⁷ According to the USDA, food availability is the amount of food produced for the U.S. consumer (Wells and Buzby 2008:3). Food availability data do not directly measure actual consumption but rather serve as useful indicators of per capita food consumption trends based on available food supplies. In this study, we were interested the availability and consumption of a category of food – fresh fruits and vegetables.

The “Fresh Food” survey involved visiting five grocery markets within the West Grand and SWAN neighborhoods, and documenting the availability and quality of fruits and vegetables (Table 5).¹⁸ The project’s interest was to examine how availability and quality might influence purchasing behaviors. Students tallied up quantities of fruits and vegetables, and assessed their quality. To measure quality, students followed the method used by Durham, McFetridge, and Johnson (2005), which utilized a four-point scale based on bruising, markings, brilliance, and maturity. The findings of our survey, discussing each grocery store in turn, are presented.

Overall, the teams found that neighborhood residents had a limited access to nutritious foods from neighborhood stores, as well as from the farmers' market. However, the quantity, quality and prices of the food items were uneven and varied considerably from store to store. The

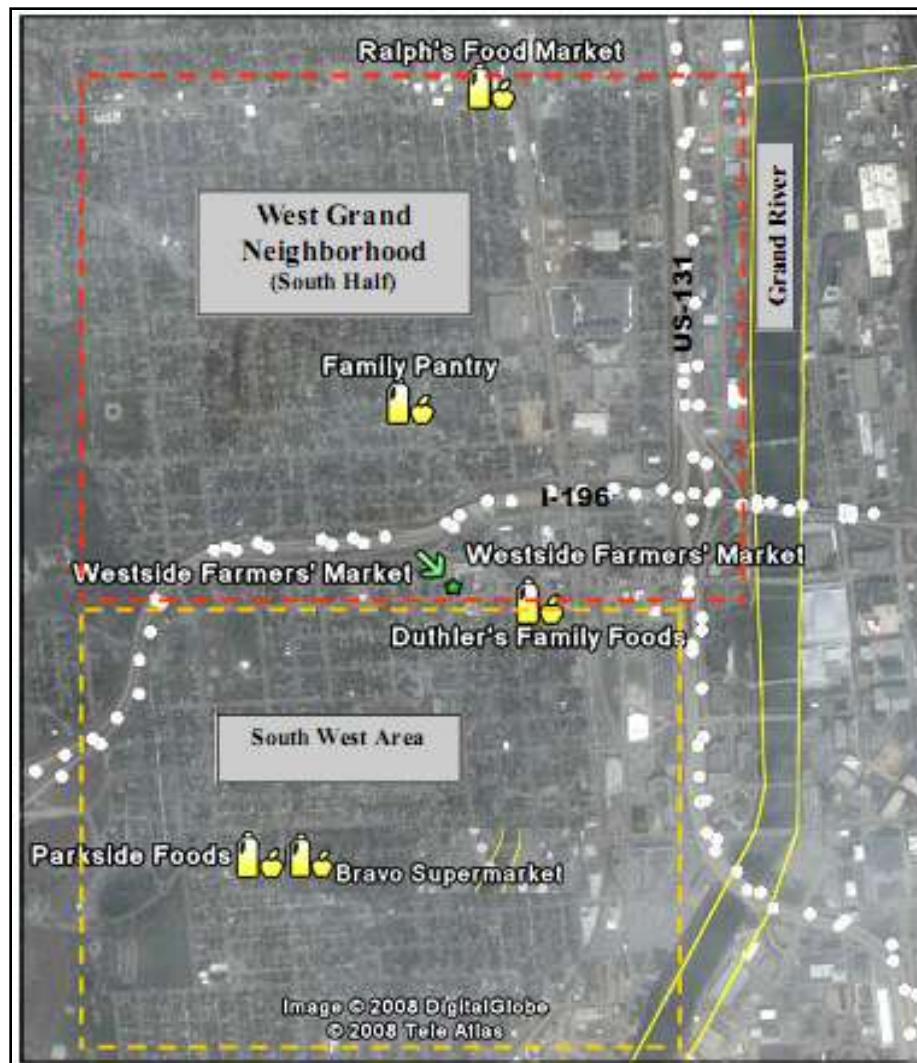


Figure 38: Grocery Store Locations

18 The logistical scope of the Fresh Food survey was limited to a one-time visit at each location during a three day survey in mid-May, 2007. We realize that a one-time survey does not capture the evolving fluctuations in quantity and quality of food items over a longer period of time.

grocery stores inventoried (starting with the closest to the farmers' market) were Duthler's Family Food, Family Pantry, Bravo Supermarket, Parkside Foods, and Ralph's Food Market (Figure 38).

Duthler's Family Foods is located near the intersection of Stocking and Bridge Street in the West Grand Neighborhood, within a half a mile of the West Side Farmers' market. Compared to the other markets described below, Duthler's had a noteworthy variety of fruits and vegetables available such as fresh corn, lettuce, apples, watermelon, oranges, etc. According to the store manager, about 80 percent of the produce was supplied by Spartan store distributors. As to the presentation and display of the produce, very few items were labeled and many were stacked in bins and sold in bulk.

The Family Pantry is located at 704 Stocking Ave. – just a short walk away from the West Side Farmers' market. Upon first impression, it fits the look of a “mom and pop” grocery store. The colorfully-painted facade is clean and orderly with ample advertisements. From inside, though, the store functions more as a liquor and convenience store. For example, lemons and limes were the only significant produce. These were from Mexico, purchased from local Latino supplier. Although there was no other produce at the store, local residents often purchased other food items, soda and snacks. The Family Pantry accepts EBT Bridge Cards, which allow food purchases on items authorized by the USDA's Food Stamp program. However, the few items available in the store were expensive and contribute less to the kind of healthy diet consistent with farmers' market goods.

Bravo Supermarket is located to the south at 1000 W. Fulton Street in the SWAN neighborhood. Their fresh food selection was plentiful and filled with variety. Many of the price signs or product name signs were hand-written in Spanish. Many of the products served as components of Latino diets and ingredients in recipes. The vegetable and fruit selections were located in the back of the store and displayed in cartons along the walls. Almost all of the products looked fresh and well kept. The only exception was bruised bananas piled in a crate. The prices were marked per pound or per unit depending on the product. Some of the prices were not clearly displayed or were unmarked, so they could not be identified. The survey did not find any of the items labeled as “organic.” The products were kept in plastic bags, paper bags, bundled together by rubber bands, or freely in boxes. Products came from other countries such as Chile, Costa Rica, Panama, Guatemala, Mexico, and Canada, as well as from California and Florida. A small number of goods were labeled as coming from Michigan, including potatoes (Durussels), radishes, squash, and apples. Finally, a few products were not labeled at all, so students could not identify their source. The companies that were identified are corporate brands for the most part, some from Mexico: ALG, Bolthouse Farms, Buttercup Superior, California Giant, Chiquita, Citomex, CMI, Coast Tropical, Color of the Rose, Dole, Frusan, Heller, Idaho Potatoes, Sunkist and Teofils.

Near the Bravo Supermarket, the Parkside market is located at 1153 Fulton Street. Our survey indicated that Parkside has a large selection of produce. The majority of the produce was of decent or good quality. Parkside had its own brand of produce in the store as well as fruits and vegetables from corporate distributors such as Andy Boy, Dole, Green Giant and Sunkist. The source of the Parkside produce was unknown, but is probably associated with Spartan distributors, which means that the produce could have come from anywhere. It is important to recognize that most of the produce, even those with labels, were not grown locally. Some of the Dole produce came from as far as Mexico, Argentina, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua. There were no

actual organic fruits or veggies, but some asparagus (from California) sold in the grocery store had a statement on the wrapper that it was pesticide free. Because a few items did not have wrappers or containers, it was difficult to determine if they were grown organically or locally.

Ralph's Market, located at 655 Leonard St., also carried a wide array of produce advertised as "fresh." However, many of the items were bruised, shriveled or under/over ripe. The produce was shipped from sources in the United States, from California to Pennsylvania. Some of the labels indicated only that the produce came from the "USA" but had little accompanying information. Surprisingly, with the large Latino population in the neighborhood, the project expected to find fruits and vegetables suited to Latino cuisine, shipped from Mexico or elsewhere in Latin America, as we found in other stores in the survey. While this was not the case, the store did offer local items from Grand Rapids and the region: Brussels sprouts, broccoli, yellow squash, zucchini, dried peppers, and spinach were said to be from west Michigan. Students documented yellow onions from Hudsonville, and apples came from Belding, Michigan. The apples must have come from cold storage because they were not in season locally until fall. Overall, the survey found that Ralph's Market supported local farm production, but did not provide specialty (ethnic) produce to the neighborhood Latino population.

Overall, the fresh food survey conducted in May 2007 found several sources of fresh produce available to West Grand neighborhood residents. The range of items offered and their quality were uneven, however. In addition, prices were higher than at larger supermarket chains, such as Meijer. As expected, the source of most items was through the corporate marketing stream. In addition, students were surprised by the general absence of "ethnic" produce that makes up the Latino cuisine and "food basket."

The project findings are consistent with the research literature on urban food systems, which report a disturbing trend. Among urban populations, people have the poorest nutrition because fresh produce is increasingly less available in the inner city. "Supermarket flight" to suburban peripheries often leaves urban consumers with limited options to purchase healthy foods.¹⁹ As a result, small convenience stores and fast food chains become primary sources of food. Goodman reports that urban residents in poor neighborhoods have limited options for fresh food so they often turn to the processed products and fast food, which is linked to obesity in inner cities (Goodman 2003). The nearest corporate grocery source is a Meijer store located at 2425 Alpine, north of the study area. The walking distance to the store from Leonard Street, the northern border of the West Grand neighborhood is 1.7 miles. The distance is 2.7 miles from the West Side Farmers' Market, and up to 4 miles at the southern border of the SWAN neighborhood. At these distances, residents would need to drive or take a bus in order to shop at the Meijer.

In summary, even in the absence of a large, corporate grocery store within the neighborhood, our study indicates that limited fresh foods *are* available in the West Grand neighborhood. Most of the stores in the survey carried a selection of fruits and vegetables, though its freshness and quality varied considerably across the stores. The presence of locally

19 The literature is clear on the reasons for supermarket divestment in the inner city and their relocation to the suburbs (Gottlieb & Fisher, 1996; Kolodinsky 2000, Marion 1982). Corporate, grocery store developers perceive urban, inner city areas as being deficient in profit generating, as inner city markets typically experience lower sales and profits because of lower amounts of disposable income available of low income residents and large elderly populations, characteristic of these areas. As a result suburban areas have three times as many grocery stores than urban areas (cited in Goodman 2003).

produced items also surprised us in the survey. This positive finding holds promise for viewing local markets as potential outlets for local products funneled through the farmers' market to grocery stores and restaurants.²⁰ If this were to happen, several obstacles will need to be addressed. According to Guptill and Wilkins (2002:47-48), grocery store professionals cite a lack of consistency in supply and quality with locally-sourced foods. In addition, concerns are expressed about retail-friendly packaging and products coming with bar codes. In terms of opportunities, product supply and quality issues can be resolved, the authors believe. Grocery stores are fast considering the growing importance of serving the demands of a more diverse consumer who desires, among other things, locally-produced foods. The authors conclude optimistically that collaboration between corporate grocery stores and suppliers of local fruits and vegetables signals “opportunities for local food flows that were undermined by the rise of mass-production and supermarkets in the first place” (Guptill and Wilkins 2002:49).

Neighborhood Assets: Business District Survey

A team of five students mapped and surveyed the West Grand business district. The team interviewed business owners on Bridge, Stocking, and Leonard streets over a three week period in May-June 2007. The mapping involved a description of the streets, buildings and structures, and business names. The survey required students to talk with business owners, managers and employees about the status of local businesses, such as types of products sold, number of employees, future employment plans, and the potential impact of the new farmers' market local businesses. These data were helpful to the West Grand Neighborhood Organization, providing baseline information, and would be integrated into the Cool Cities grant report.

Our findings point to a business district with potential to become a busy center of commerce and community, as it was in the past. The West Grand Neighborhood as whole is home to businesses from bakeries to banks, including pawnshops and liquor stores. The Stockbridge Business Association and the West Grand Neighborhood Organization have been at the forefront of efforts to reverse urban decline. Several initiatives are underway as strategies for revitalizing the business district and attracting more residents and other shoppers into the area. The farmers' market is one of these. Even so, there are still vacant stores and buildings. In addition, the district cannot yet be seen as a shopper “destination” attracting people from beyond the neighborhood, chiefly due to the types of businesses there.

The student team primarily surveyed the Bridge Street business district near the West Side market. Bridge Street is the main street in the neighborhood, located on the southern border of the West Grand Neighborhood and home to the West Side farmers' market. It would be expected that the impacts and benefits of the farmers' market would affect this area primarily. In general, the frequency and density of businesses increased as one heads east towards downtown Grand Rapids, and the establishments closest to the river and the downtown were newer and catered to the needs of the urban, downtown consumer. The traffic flow on Bridge Street (as described in students' fieldnotes) was “moderate with no visible backups or delays.” More importantly, Bridge Street had fair amount of pedestrian traffic flow. As observed, many people

20 One report describes Wilcox, a small-scale specialty farmer who primarily sells organic greens and other vegetables to restaurants in southwestern Michigan such as Food Dance Cafe and Zazios. Most recently, Bronson Methodist Hospital contracted to receive some of Wilcox's specialty produce: onions, radishes, garlic, arugula, mustard greens, and six varieties of lettuce. Wilcox picks about 200 pounds of greens a week (Wood 2008).

in the neighborhood either walked or rode their bicycles. These travelers were more likely to see the farmers' market signage as they passed along the Bridge Street businesses, and became potential market customers.

The mapping included forty-seven business establishments on Bridge Street. Seven storefronts (roughly 15%) were vacant. Bars and family-run restaurants were the most common establishment. Other types of businesses were bakeries; construction and repair services; auto services and maintenance; body care, such as hair salons, tattoo parlors, an optometrist, and fitness centers; specialty stores selling cell phone service and sporting goods; and professional services provided by three banks and an architect firm. These professional services and the bakeries had the most full-time employees, while the restaurants and bars hired the most part-time employees. Generally, Bridge Street businesses employ on average six full-time and four part-time employees. When asked about plans to expand business, only the banks indicating that they planned to do any expansion in the near future (3 months) by adding employees. However, one of the banks had plans to relocate.

The survey counted 20 business establishments in the Leonard district from the 600 to the 900 blocks. Leonard Street is located on the northern boundary of the West Grand Neighborhood, roughly two miles from the West Side Farmers' Market (Figure 36). The street had a higher vehicle traffic flow than Bridge Street, though fewer pedestrians and cyclists. Despite its distance to the market, Leonard Street's economy affected its own neighborhood as well as those residential areas closer to the farmers' market. According to the survey, several storefronts (roughly 15%) were vacant. As compared to Bridge Street, students noted that there were fewer restaurants and bars, and more "shopping" stores, such as a bakery, a flower shop, and shoe, furniture and jewelry/novelty stores. There were similar services such as a tattoo and piercing parlor, a bicycle repair shop, a video rental store, a pharmacy (Walgreens), an auto parts store, and a petrol station (Shell). A bank, marketing firm, and funeral home comprised the professional services. The bakery had hired over 100 employees. The shoe store, the flower shop, and Walgreens supported about 20 employees each. When asked about plans to expand business in the near future (3 months) by adding employees, only the shoe store and the flower shop responded in the affirmative.

Stocking Street is mostly a residential street, with many older homes converted into two unit duplexes. Along Stocking Street students mapped seven businesses: three restaurants, a bar, a petrol station (BP), a computer store, and a dollar discount store. This business district is located just north of the I-196 expressway, and connects to the Bridge Street district to the south (Figure 36). It can be considered an extension of the Bridge Street district. As compared to the Bridge Street and Leonard districts, there are fewer businesses and they do not benefit from the high traffic volume found elsewhere. All the same, the restaurants and bar each maintained from 15-25 full and part-time employees.

In conclusion, the results of the limited survey did not demonstrate substantive connections between the business districts and farmers' market. The market was intentionally located near the business districts to create a symbiosis between the two. At this early stage, it is only possible to speculate on the potential of such a "partnership" that can stimulate economic activity in the West Grand neighborhood. Current assets in the two main business districts (Bridge and Leonard) offer a diversity of services and eating/drinking establishments. The advantage is that people will come to these areas for many different reasons: to eat and drink, get things repaired and serviced, for personal health and fitness, and to shop for goods. Restaurants

and bars bring people in during the late afternoon and evening hours, but there is also a “lunch” crowd. Several of the current businesses attract Latino residents to the district, especially the ethnic restaurants and food stores (e.g., Maggie’s, Little Mexico Café, and Montezuma’s Mexican Market). On market days, farmers’ market shoppers are likely to shop nearby or take a meal at a local eatery. There is good potential, then, for a revitalized business district, with its farmers’ market, to attract people and families.

Together with the fresh food survey, the business survey reinforces the finding that a locale with fresh, good-quality food is needed in the neighborhood. Additional surveys of farmers’ market patrons will be necessary to document shopping patterns in and around the neighborhood, such as one sees occurring at the Fulton Street and the Holland farmers’ markets. At these locations, shoppers are attracted to the proximity of the farmers’ market to a plethora of specialty shops and boutiques that enhance the shopping experience and make a trip to the farmers’ market worthwhile. This two-way connection between local businesses and a farmers’ market likely benefits the market during the early stages of trying to establish a new farmers’ market. Once a market is established and thriving, such as at Fulton Street and Holland, local businesses begin to see the “spillover effect” as shoppers “make a day of it.” At this point it is unclear if the types of businesses on Bridge Street can provide the initial support that the farmers’ market needs.

These prospects yet contrast to the vacant buildings or the several storefronts in need of paint and repair. Student fieldnotes described instances of dirty windows, storefront disrepair, and litter around storefronts and in nearby streets. In our research of the neighborhood’s history, the project also learned that the west side was greatly affected by the construction of US 131 and I-196 which began in 1958. These freeways divided the neighborhood into different sections, created unsightly underpasses, and involved the razing of almost 1000 residential buildings. The street/pedestrian underpasses across I-196 leading to the Stocking Street businesses are symbolic of these traumatic events and the long road to recovery. The underpasses are littered with broken glass and emit foul odors. In one, the graffiti tags of two rival gangs were visible.

While the business districts surveyed may suffer aesthetically as they rebound from a period of urban transition, they show potential for future growth. This growth is witnessed in the new strip mall developments on Leonard Street and the façade development on Bridge Street. In addition, neighborhood activists and business owners are working hard to reintegrate the neighborhood economically and socially. The grant from the Turner Gateway foundation has allowed the West Grand Neighborhood Organization to make improvements to the community, including the establishment of the West Side Farmers’ Market. Our findings on fresh food availability, neighborhood’s history and demography, and the business survey attempt to understand the neighborhood context of the surrounding farmers’ market. Information like this is vital to market managers and vendors who desire to better integrate the market into the local neighborhood. This report is but a beginning; the project recommends that surveys and information gathering should be carried out periodically to update this baseline of information and to track changes in the neighborhood, at the market, and in shopping patterns. Collaborating with businesses that surround the farmers’ market should also prove beneficial in designing two-way partnerships and marketing strategies.

SECTION VII: Discussion and Recommendations

“Farmers' Markets: Linking Food to Community in Grand Rapids” is a project interested in the idea that local food is better food. People are attracted to the notion that food produced and distributed locally is fresher and more likely without preservatives or other chemicals used to preserve a fruit or vegetable over long distances. The growth of farmers' markets seems to support this idea, as people try to better control and change our food system at the grassroots level (Dawson 2002, Payne 2002, Smalley 2004, Robinson and Hartenfeld 2007). Since 1994, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has published the National Directory of Farmers Markets, which lists all farmers markets operating in the U.S. The number of farmers' markets grew from 1,755 to 4,685 (1994-2008). Over the past two years the number of farmers' markets increased by 7%, and by 18% between 2004 and 2006.²¹ The West Side farmers' market is part of this growing trend. But in spite of the popularity of farmers' markets, the West Side case illustrates the difficulty of establishing a neighborhood market, even with the best intentions – to provide sources of fresh food and health for local residents, and to create a fruitful dynamic between the market, the neighborhood, and the nearby business district. In this final section, the discussion turns to the four core issues explored in the research: establishing a new farmers' market, preserving the rural landscape, the motivations and needs of consumers, and the role of farmers' markets in urban neighborhoods.

Establishing a New Farmers' Market

Research on farmers' markets suggests that there are phases each market goes through. According to estimates, it generally takes four years to have a consistent customer base to sustain a market (Andreatta and Wickliffe 2002:196; Lloyd, Nelson and Tilley 1987). Lloyd, Nelson, and Tilley (1987) provide a useful framework for thinking about how farmers' markets develop, and how size impacts viability. New markets, such as West Side, typically experience an unstable period that generally lasts the first couple of years. Farmers find it too great a risk to sell at the market regularly. Consumers are reluctant to support the market if they find few farmers and limited fresh farm products. The West Side market finds itself under these conditions. In the next stage, a mix of part-time and full-time commercial farmers and home gardeners supply the majority of fruits and vegetables at the market. The presence of the larger producers at the market aids in lowering the chance of market failure. The final stage is achieved when “regular customers shop at the farmers' market weekly, and the market supplies a substantial amount of produce” (1987:1). At the West Side market, a shift to stage two requires a strategy of attracting committed large producers. The market manager needs to work closely with larger vendors, such as Visser Farms, which can serve as “anchors” that sell at the market on a daily basis. Anchors ensure that there is always something for consumers to buy. This may mean negotiating with larger vendors, such as preferential stall location or offering discounts on stall fees.

The West Side market should reinforce the positive features and assets that make up its current structure. Encouraging more farmers as vendors will create a stable group of vendors, as well as attract consumers who desire the direct farm connection. As this report documents, farmers already make up roughly 60% of the current vending community at West Side. Likewise,

²¹ USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service, Farmers Market Growth: 1994-2008:
<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRDC5072472&acct=fmrdirnkt>

at West Side our study finds that farmers' market vendors rely significantly on market sales for much, if not all, of their yearly income. Vendors are very committed to what they do, highlighting the benefits of self-employment, the ability to continue farming, selling their own products directly, having flexible work hours, working close to home, offering fresh and healthy products to the consumer, and engaging in networking opportunities. An additional strength is the local source of goods – the products sold to consumers are predominantly Michigan in origin or locally hand-crafted.

Attracting shoppers is another strategy to consider. At West Side, both vendors and buyers express a sense of concern about the isolation of the market. The stalls could not be seen from Bridge Street, or any other street with high traffic flow. Furthermore, a major, elevated highway separates the market from the West Grand neighborhood to the north. At one point in late summer 2007, a student spoke to Russ Lewis, the market director at the time, about the status of the market and possible improvements he could make to attract consumers. He suggested putting an arch as an addition to the Bridge Street entrance, as well as purchasing a large, decorative, wooden sign like that at Fulton Street. Landscaping might be improved; Lewis indicated areas alongside the curb where he wished to grow flowers, for example. Coordinating the market hours with both lunch and dinner for the business people in the area was also a possibility. Lewis suggested creating a formal group of market "friends," who would donate money and/or time, and help with market planning. As a more radical measure, our project suggests that the neighborhood organization consider relocating the market to a more visible site, centrally-located in the West Grand neighborhood, such as on Leonard Street.

At the West Side market, the project found weak connections between the market and the neighborhood residents. Our project recommends the gradual shift of time, energy and resources to the work of volunteers. Community outreach in neighborhood is sorely needed. A steering committee should be established to direct the market and facilitate its role in the community. The membership for such a committee might consist of the market manager, the neighborhood association, local volunteers, stall holders, and business owners. This would expand the role and function of the market manager, as Fulton Street has accomplished with its "Market Committee." Among other tasks, one objective of the committee would be to formulate a well-established set of policies and procedures for the operation at the market. The committee could be responsible for grant-writing and outreach, which would be necessary for funding and encouraging the participation of the neighborhood residents, especially Latinos, which make up the majority population.

It might be useful to view the steering committee as a network by which its members are linked to a range of resources and interests in the community (Allen 2004). Stevenson (2007 et al.:44-46) argues that successful projects require the participation of different people who work as "warriors, builders, and weavers." Warriors are political activists who challenge and contest local manifestations of the agro-industrial food system (see Belasco 1989). Builders work "to reconstruct the economic sector" by supporting alternative institutions such as the farmers' market. Weavers go about mobilizing "civic" society and seek to change public policy at local and state levels. For a project to take root, builder activities need to be extended and widened through the work of weavers. According to Stevenson, local groups must "scale out" and "scale up" beyond immediate neighborhood projects using the lessons learned there for broader applications (2007:56).

At the West Side market, one of the weakest links to the community involved the Latino

residents. The market needs to find ways to increase the participation of the majority population. In other words, viability may depend on becoming a “niche market.” This does not necessarily mean a return to the ideas expressed in the 2005 Leadership Grand Rapids (2005) Marketplace Report, arguing for an immigrant “Hispanic Market.” But more can be done to reach out to Latinos as volunteers, vendors, and members of the steering committee. The market manager should speak Spanish. Advertising should be presented in Spanish and disseminated through Spanish-speaking media outlets.

The range of goods and activities at the West Side farmers’ market might be expanded. Currently, the market offers fruits and vegetables, locally -made processed and value-added goods and a few handicrafts. In addition, the market needs to think about hosting community activities. The GVSU farmers’ market is a good example of how food exchange can be tied to health education activities, making the market a “community event” (Sommer 1989). At GVSU, a “health and wellness” orientation features music, educational displays, recipes, and even “tastings” of a free, healthy dish prepared for shoppers, made from food items donated by vendors.²²

Our project recommends that vendors provide information to customers in the form of handouts, poster and displays, describing their farm, the nature of their farming activities, and the source of their goods as “local.” Given the appeal of locally produced “specialty” foods to certain social groups, farmers as vendors would do well to position their goods in contexts of symbols tied to supporting rural life and to authentic consumption.

Vendors would like to participate more in government food service programs, such as WIC and Project Fresh. Unlike the Fulton Street market, West Side does not participate in either. While vendors express reservations about time-consuming red-tape and paperwork, they are sympathetic to such food service programs. The market manager can organize volunteers in creative ways to help vendors negotiate the daily tasks required to make such programs work at the “stall” level. The manager can facilitate collaboration between the vendors and neighborhood grocery stores and restaurants as outlets for their vendor goods and produce.

Unlike the West Side farmers’ market, Fulton Street has a permanent space and stall facilities, as well as an office and restroom on the premises. At West Side, there are no bathrooms, except for the porta-potty. There are no signs indicating where the restroom is located. An absence of benches or chairs for consumers is noticeable, and the market lacks trash receptacles and recycling bins. While having a permanent facility is a ways down the road, vendors at West Side would at least like the market to supply awnings, which would create a sense of uniformity and would reduce the time it takes the vendor to set up the stall.

Preserving the Rural Landscape

While farmers’ markets attract attention to urban spaces, they may have an even greater effect on nearby farms and their preservation. Direct marketing to consumers, and farmers’ markets specifically, are viewed as ways to restructure the family farm by growing a variety of “high value” crops for local distribution. This restructuring of small farms represents a new paradigm challenging global agriculture (Haan de L 2000, Hines and Shiva 2002, Lyson, Thomas, Torres and Welsh 2001, Norberg-Hodge, Merrifield and Gorelick 2002). According to Lyson (2007:23), changes represent an opportunity to return viability to “small-scale”

²² See for example “Promoting the Market,” Corum, Rosenzweig and Gibson (2001: 150-195).

production, and to focus as much on social processes as on economics. The key features of redirecting small-scale production are: preservation of farm land; farm production oriented to local demand; integration of farming into urban communities; competition based on quality; contextual, site-specific knowledge shared across the social groups; and direct marketing to consumers to avoid corporate marketing (2007:25).

Our study presents a case study of a farm family redirecting production to sell at the region's farmers' markets. This redirection generates a new range of value-added crops and the use of new technology and methods, such as greenhouse agriculture and hydroponic irrigation, in order to extend the growing season and produce a greater variety of value-added crops. Redirecting production requires a re-education on the farmer's part regarding marketing strategies (Andreatta 2000). The farmer/vendor must gain a skill set related to face-to-face communication with the customers and other vendors. Direct marketing facilitates the exchange and flow of information between farm and customer, giving farmers the ability to adjust production to suit the demands of the marketplace.

The case of Visser Farms illustrates the importance of scale to the constraints of organic farming on West Michigan farms. While direct marketing helps farmers become sensitive to chemical use, health, and environmental care, they may be reluctant to "go organic." More than one third of consumers surveyed considered buying organic goods "very important." However, Casey Visser explained to us why he and Visser Farms do not farm organically. In the vendor surveys and interviews, farmers explained to us that growing organic produce is difficult in Michigan due to the weather, the certification process, and the costs of controlling weeds and pests. The National Organic Program (NOP) rules, established in 2002, made it easier for corporations and large-scale enterprises to "go organic" and saturate marketing outlets at the local level (DeLind 2006, Pollan 2006). While individual farmers have found success, it remains an open question if farmers' market sales can sustain small-scale organic production, given the infrastructure required for growing organic foods (Wood 2008). All the same, a strong consumer interest should stimulate local farmers to experiment with growing value-added organics, such as arugula and other greens, under greenhouse conditions, where diseases and weather can be better controlled.

A final issue is the distinction between vendors ("merchants") and farmers as vendors. A local farmer's produce, sold at the farmers' market, is assigned a special value by both seller and buyer. This value is absent when selling through a retail outlet or through a (resale) merchant. A farmer's own goods can be considered symbols of genuineness made by the person selling them. In this sense, the farmers' market supplies niche commodities attractive to urban shoppers (DeLind 1993). At the same time, this pits farmers against non-local "merchants" who may be viewed as a polluted presence at the market.

In conclusion, farmers' markets provide a small but important opening within the spaces of the dominant agro-industrial food system (Feenstra 2002, Hendrickson and Heffernan 2002). As Hamm (2007) argues, Michigan is well-positioned to take advantage of direct marketing opportunities due to the number and type of small farms, variety of fruits and vegetable grown, and consumer demand for fresh produce found here. Involvement in farmers' markets can "invigorate" the family farm sector, he claims. Such opportunities emerge because of the "place-based" nature of food production and consumption – the effects of local history, farming, culture and cuisine. Even within the context of globalization, the unique expressions of farming and marketing, locally-based, amount to a "relocalization" of food, bringing together place and

human agency within emerging food networks (Buttel 2001, Foster 2006, Phillips 2006). Phillips (2006:45) reviews the ways that constructions of the local and the global nourish each other:

Anthropological studies that stay attuned to the role of food in localizing processes can register a “traffic in meaning” Foodways may be “deterritorialized” by global projects, but at the same time re-embedded in some place, as changing ideas about food and the world are reinscribed by people. The lesson here is to attend analytically both to how people are being mobilized in new ways through globalization processes and how they produce new meanings as they undertake their food-related practices.

Consumer Motivations and Needs

The new meanings that consumers assign are spurred in part by the attractiveness of direct marketing and by the failings of the agro-corporate food system. A pervasive feeling is growing among the public, critical of fast-food and globalization. Never before have people left so much of food and cooking to entities that can care less about their health (Ritzer 1993, Schlosser 2001). Today, local economies are undermined by a global economy that “has no respect for what works in a locality. Worse, the global economy is built on the principle that one place can be exploited, even destroyed, for the sake of another place” (Berry 1990). This disconnect between what people eat and where they live – between food and community – cause people to feel removed and distanced from food treated as a “commodity.” The public today feels out-of-touch with the sources of their food. While scholars have tackled the social aspects of commodity chains, it has become difficult, if not impossible, to know whose hands food has passed through, and what chemicals have been added along the way – from seeding to cultivation to processing (Mintz 1983, Appadurai 1986, Barndt 2004, Foster 2006, Gewertz and Errington 2007).

In response, there is a growing curiosity about food, culture and cuisine. Academic studies have illuminated broad societal processes such as political-economic value-creation, symbolic value-creation, and the social construction of food identity (Mintz and Du Bois 2002). In the popular media, recent books like Kingsolver's *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life* (2007), “aim to fill a hole in the soul” (Maslin 2007). Kingsolver moved her family to a Virginia farm where they would work and live on local or home-grown food for a full calendar year. In their book, *The Splendid Table*, Kasper and Swift (2008:xi) demonstrate the connection between cooking and larger issues such as supporting local organic and sustainable growers, the environment, building community, and promoting the ethical treatment of people and animals. There is a renewed sense that, “food is controllable while most of life is not” (2008:332).

Farmers’ markets are one way for people to control what they grow and eat. According to Hamm (2007:217-218), the growth of farmers’ markets is stimulated in part by popular beliefs and values: local food is healthier, local food supports farmers and the ecosystem, and local food maintains the agrarian life way. The prominence of such values forces us to pay attention to food exchange as a holistic system connecting the economic to other domains important to consumers. Bringing together farmers, vendors, consumers, neighbors, and activists, a market is a complex space where notions of local, quality, and authenticity find expression in communications and transactions around food, especially between producers and consumers:

Manifestly, the interaction between producers and consumers is at the core of FMs [farmers’ markets], and it is reasonable to postulate that FMs represent the purposive re-embedding of the exchange process for food in localised social relationships as a

societal response to the disembedding tendencies of the 'conventional' agro-food system" (Kirwin 2004:407).

Consumer attitudes towards the benefits of social and economic exchanges are well-documented in the farmers' market literature (Archer et al. 2003, Baber and Frongillo 2003, Brumfield, Adelaja and Lininger 1993, Lockretz 1986, Selfa and Qazi 2005, Szmigin, Maddock and Carrigan 2003). Little is known, however, about the potential for food itself to change our understanding of consumption. As Holloway and associates explain,

Food itself is both material, with particular sensory and physical qualities, and is embedded with significance for both producers and consumers, symbolising, for example, a particular locality, a particular way of growing food, and/or particular producer-consumer relationships (Holloway et al. 2005:15)

These symbolic spaces are best studied as "sites of engagement" (Smithers 2008). Giddens (1984) stresses the importance of concepts such as space and time in studying social relations. He proposes that it is neither the person's individual agency nor a deterministic social structure that shapes social practices. Rather, social practices are self-reproducing generated in part by what he defines as *locales*. These places "refer to the use of space to provide the settings of interaction, the settings of interaction in turn being essential to specifying its contextuality" (Giddens 1984: 118). For Giddens, social actions intersect with place and context. Following Giddens, then, the physical space, or *locale*, of a farmers' market – such as the parking lot at St. James church – is transformed by context into the West Side farmers' market.

Our study documented how people were "engaged" in the localized food exchanges and in social interactions. Consumers indicate that they are explicitly aware of what attracts them to the market – the intrinsic quality of the produce, the locally-produced goods, finding a good value, and the desire to support local farmers and businesses. Similarly, engaging other like-minded people through socializing and sharing is appealing, but not stated as the *raison d'être* for attending the market. In fact, when consumers were asked to give reasons for attending the market, "socializing" scored generally lower. Yet interviews with shoppers suggest otherwise. For example, when asked if she enjoys the social aspect of the market, one woman declared, "Oh, I love it. You always run into someone you know, and I end up spending a longer time here than I planned I've always considered myself a people person and I just love the interaction here, and just watch people as they're going through the market." Another consumer confessed that while his wife does all the shopping, he talks to people, especially the vendors.

As DeLind (2006:137) explains, symbolic and sensual experiences built into market engagement, though less visible, are equally as important for the long-term success of the local food movement as economic exchanges:

It should also be clear that without the connective threads of meaning, tradition, and physical engagement, we risk not knowing (or sustaining) our individual and collective selves. These are the threads that when woven together into fabrics of memory and purpose anchor us to real places and keep us from being swept away by the relentless undertow of the marketplace. We need to study and secure them with the same deliberation and ceaseless dedication that we now give to extending seasons, identifying market niches, and investing in business incubators.

For the West Side farmers' market, attracting a regular clientele of consumers will be just as important as securing sources of fresh, local products. As the number of shoppers grow, so too

will the intensity of social experiences – the threads and fabrics of memory and purpose. Compared to Fulton Street, social intensity is modest at the West Side market, indicated by shopper descriptions of the market as “quiet,” “laid-back” and “relaxed.” If engagement is to be considered a positive asset, the Fulton Street experience reaches the limit. During the fieldwork stage of the project one Saturday, a project student who is blind sat and recorded the smells and sounds of the market at Fulton Street. Vicariously, the student experienced the excitement and thrill of social exchange all around him, without making a single economic transaction. Markets and vendors would do well to expand the “meeting points” within producer/consumer networks by using more displays, exhibits, cooking demonstrations, membership schemes, and emails and newsletters.

While consumer experiences are important to document, our farmers’ market study finds their experiences to be uneven across social groups at different markets. The surveys found significant differences in the populations with respect to gender, education, and yearly household income. This report stresses the importance of these factors, which influence consumer behavior and, by extension, the success of any specific market. For example, the Fulton Street and the Holland farmers’ markets had a high percentage of shoppers with a post-graduate education, 37% and 42%, respectively. However, the number of customers at the West Side market claiming a post-graduate education was a third less. At West Side, the percentage of people who had only attained a high school diploma was 20%. Clearly, farmers’ market customers at these three venues have generally attained high levels of formal education, but the West Side market caters to a less affluent population with nearly 50% of the customers having a family income of less than \$40,000 – consistent with the working-class status of the West Grand neighborhood. At West Side, vendors complained of having to lower their prices (compared to other farmers’ markets) to maintain sales volume.

These patterns of social class will have implications for the relocalization of food. The case of North Carolina, described by Andreatta and Wickliffe (2002:169-171), suggests that a preference for local foods “transcend educational, income, and ethnic differences.” However, our comparison of farmers’ markets points to the appeal of specialty or niche products, affordable only to middle-to-upper middle classes. Produce (“right off the farm”) becomes a symbol for authentic foods, attracting such authentic fare as brown eggs, home-made cheese, breads, and even beef jerky. These symbols can be understood in terms of taste, an idea borrowed from Bourdieu, who states, “nothing is more distinctive, more distinguished, than the capacity to confer aesthetic status on objects that are banal or even common” (1984:5, quoted from Otto 2004).

In conclusion, given the “colonization of global surfaces” by a pervasive corporate food system, consumers are actively responding with their pocketbooks, supporting direct marketing and other alternatives in their local communities (Bonanno et al. 1994, Whatmore and Thorne 1997:287, Friedmann 1999, Barker 2002). The farmers’ markets in this study are opening spaces for people to become better consumers or producers of local food. But such roles, according to DeLind, are “too mechanical, too superficial, and the relationships they describe too insular” (2006: 143). She adds,

We need to move beyond political and environmental correctness (i.e., eating locally because it is important, progressive, and trendy). Our challenge, as academics and practitioners, as people engaged in relocalizing the food system, will be to find ways to stretch our experiences and sensibilities to a point where ‘the local’ as food, as

farmland, as the culture and ecology of real places, starts to “be” us and define us wherever we are. We need to move beyond the creation of lifestyles through consumption and challenge ourselves to create places through acts of physical engagement and cultural identification (2006:143-144).

Farmers’ Markets and Neighborhoods

Among the causes of food insecurity in urban neighborhoods are the absence of quality supermarkets, the growth of fast-food chains, and a lack of healthy foods at corner stores. The idea behind creating the West Side farmers’ market was to give residents access to fresh food they would not otherwise have, provide a direct market for local farmers, and create a sense of unity and community pride. Moreover, the farmers’ market provided an initiative to foster economic activities and employment in the business district, especially bridging different economic domains within one neighborhood (Gillespie, Lyson, and Hilchey 1995).

Our findings point to a business district with potential to become a busy center of commerce and community, as it was in the past. The West Grand neighborhood has a history as a working-class, ethnically-diverse, immigrant enclave. But since 1990, the neighborhood has experienced a sharp decline in the population of elderly as a demographic shift has replaced longtime resident families with younger immigrant ones, primarily of Latino ethnicities. A grant from the Turner Gateway foundation allowed the neighborhood organization to make improvements to the community, including the establishment of the West Side farmers’ market. However, our limited study of the neighborhood did not demonstrate substantive connections between the business districts and farmers’ market. Manager Bartelmeier engaged in significant collaboration, it is true, with the Stockbridge Business Association and the West Grand Neighborhood Organization, both of which have been at the forefront of efforts to revitalize the neighborhood. At this early stage, however, it is only possible to speculate on the potential of such “partnerships” for stimulating economic activity in the West Grand neighborhood.

Lyson (2007:29) describes the “economic multiplier effect” that accompanies sites of alternative economic activity, such as a farmers’ market. The economics of agriculture can enhance networks of diverse groups who building human capacity at the local level (Lyson 2004, 2007). The Fulton Street and Holland farmers’ markets are good examples of this process, creating links between the markets and the nearby business districts. Evidence of farmers markets as extensions of downtown specialty shopping is supported elsewhere in the literature. Cantrell (2003) describes how the market draws shoppers who then spend their money at nearby stores and restaurants, supporting downtown business. Shoppers are known to “stick around” downtown and enjoy the sense of community that the bustle around markets can create. Unlike the area around the West Side market, the districts near the Fulton Street and Holland markets have become shopper “destinations” by attracting people from beyond the neighborhood (Green and Hilchey 2002, Gillespie 2007).

Gillespie (2007:66) refers to farmers’ market as a “keystone” – a nexus for connecting “social and economic building blocks” among producers, consumers and the community. For producers, local food products and the vendors themselves become visible in the public setting; producers diversify their farming “portfolio”; small businesses are incubated; and the one-on-one contact with customers gives the producer immediate feedback in testing a “product line.” For consumers, the household and family are connected to the farmers’ market through the food and goods obtained. For the neighborhood, the farmers’ market assists in reaching community

development goals: business growth, added employment, and general public health. The West Side farmers' market, as was imagined, would become a "keystone" institution. In its first two years, one witnessed a growing momentum towards bringing people together, creating a lively public space, and facilitating economic and social exchanges. This momentum must be sustained by continued community and business support for the experiment to be successful in the long-run.

In the remainder of this section, two issues will be discussed bearing upon the market's long term viability: providing the neighborhood with a source of fresh food, and outreach to the residents of the West Grand neighborhood. To address the first issue, the project learned about the sources of fresh fruit and vegetables in the neighborhood. The research literature on urban food systems reports a disturbing trend in which urban populations have the poorest nutrition because of the unavailability of fresh produce in the inner city. As reported earlier, supermarket flight to suburban peripheries leaves urban residents with limited options to purchase healthy foods. As a result, small convenience stores and fast food chains become primary sources of food (Goodman 2003). To survey fresh food assets, project teams conducted a "Fresh Food Availability" study, visiting five grocery markets within the West Grand and SWAN neighborhoods. In the absence of a large, corporate grocery store within the neighborhood, our food survey indicates a limited supply of fresh foods available in the West Grand neighborhood. Most of the stores in the survey carry selections of fruits and vegetables, though freshness and quality are uneven, and vary considerably across the stores. This situation opens the door for the long-term establishment of a farmers' market to meet neighborhood demand for fresh food on a seasonal basis.

Turning to the issue of outreach, can the farmers' market do more to integrate into the surrounding neighborhood? How did residents become involved? In its second year, the West Side farmers' market was created to address the needs of low-income residents (Ford Foundation 2003, Kantor 2001, Kellogg Foundation 2003). As reported above, the neighborhood history shows substantial ethnic diversity in the West Grand neighborhood, especially the growing Latino population. Nearly every one in four individuals is a Latino (18%) or other/mixed "race" (6%), both representing an increase of over 100% between 1990 and 2000. When the idea first emerged for a neighborhood market, the community stressed the importance of embracing the ethnic populations. One community leader, who was interviewed for the Leadership Grand Rapids Marketplace Report in late 2004, insisted that any potential market needed to be diverse and have a wide variety of products (2005: 83). Another respondent stressed the need to draw in local residents as shoppers and volunteers (2005:85). It was subsequently decided that a market targeting Latinos would potentially alienate other residents and business owners, so the current "farmers' market" strategy was adopted.

At the West Side market, a shift of emphasis to community outreach, especially among Latino populations, should become an urgent priority. Aside from the neighborhood association, local residents were little involved at the market, as vendors, consumers, or volunteers. The recruitment of volunteers, in particular, can lower operating costs for the local community, and invest people in a community venture. As recommended in a previous section, a steering committee should be established to direct the market and facilitate its role in the community. Manager Lewis envisions a market that will eventually be community operated by neighborhood residents. At the same time, farmers' markets are economic enterprises and when this is not met, markets fail. Markets are especially vulnerable to problems of economic sustainability in low-

income neighborhoods (Kellogg Foundation 2003:39). But a deficit in economic capital can be mitigated in part by social capital.

According to social theory, “social capital” consists of durable networks of relationships through which individuals can mobilize power and resources. Social capital is defined as “the sum of resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or group by virtue of possessing a durable network of . . . institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu 2001, Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:119). Such relationships are maintained through exchanges based on trust. Time and energy is invested creating obligations that tap into guaranteed institutional rights (e.g., kinship) or other social networks. Social capital can be converted into economic capital (money, possession, and wealth) and vice versa (Sallaz and Zavisca 2007:23-24). Yang (2007:19) focuses on “individual social capital” rather than trying to measure social capital as applied at collective level. Social capital, then, in Yang’s view, becomes the features of social groups that each individual member can access and use for obtaining benefits. The farmers’ market should reach out to West Grand Latinos, building upon such social capital as reciprocity, participation in organizations, social networks, trust, how well residents know neighbors, civic participation, perceptions of the local area, and length of residence.

While social capital can be mobilized as a set of assets for community-building, ignoring these resources can lead to mistrust and miscommunication between residents of the neighborhood and the farmers’ market. This may have acted to constraint people’s interests and participation in this community initiative (Nixon 2007). If the West Side market is to grow, it will need to embrace neighborhood residents. Community organizers will need to find ways to tap into neighborhood resources and involve residents in committed and trusting ways.

A final concern is raised about the location of the market relative to the West Grand neighborhood boundaries. The West Grand neighborhood is located west of the Grand River and downtown Grand Rapids. The neighborhood’s boundaries are circumscribed by Leonard Street to the north, John Ball Park on the west, Bridge Street to the south, and the Grand River on the east (see Figure 6). The West Side market is located at the south border of the neighborhood. Nixon (2007:30-31) even suggests that by popular definitions, the market location falls outside neighborhood boundaries. Manager Bardelmeier explained to us the limited choices she faced when planning the market location. She wanted to locate the market on a busy street in one of the business districts, either on Bridge Street or further north on Leonard Street. She encountered difficulty in finding a parking lot location in both these areas – a place that lead to a permanent site for the market. In contrast, Manager Lewis expressed less concerned about the current location near Bridge Street. He views Bridge Street as a busy highway with potential cadres of customers waiting to be shown the way to the market. The concern is more to target people through advertising and signage, diverting passersby from Bridge Street. As a more radical measure, this report encourages the neighborhood organization to consider relocating the market to a more visible site, centrally-located in the West Grand neighborhood, such as at Leonard Street.

Final Thoughts

Assisting the market managers at farmers’ markets is an important goal of conducting community-based research on local food systems. Our project monitored the economic and social dynamics at the farmers’ markets and the links between the West Side market, the

surrounding neighborhood, and other nearby farmers' markets. Students collected information on neighborhood history, the surrounding business district, employment, and fresh food availability within the wider neighborhood. In the future, a long-term study of the markets and neighborhood is beneficial as a way to assess vendor/consumer expectations, neighborhood outreach, the availability of fresh produce, and business ties in the neighborhood. Additional surveys of farmers' market patrons would be beneficial to document shopping patterns in and around the neighborhood, such as one sees occurring at the Fulton Street and the Holland farmers' markets. A strong, two-way connection between local businesses and the farmers' market will likely benefit the market during its stages of development. Neighborhood studies can serve the market manager with information that can be used as a basis for changes in market policies and direction, as well as data to support reports of accountability and proposal for grant funding.

The continuing need to monitor market dynamics is clear. New data can help align the expectations and needs expressed across various stakeholder groups. The market manager and steering committee can use the findings to bolster public relations and for garnering support and funding. Lev, Stephenson and Brewer (2007) offer several useful techniques such as counting customers, using "dot surveys," and Rapid Market Assessments (RMA). The latter is an excellent way to form a team of market managers and community members. The team schedules visits at farmers' markets, documenting the physical setting, atmosphere, and exchanges. Team members talk to shoppers and vendors, and even explore the local neighborhood. RMAs emphasize that "learning is two-way" and such collaboration helps market managers disseminate new methods and ideas across markets (2007:92). To this end, interest groups like the Grand Rapids Food Systems Council (GRFSC), West Michigan Environmental Action Council (WMEAC), Fair Food Matters (Kalamazoo, Michigan), Michigan Land Use Institute (Traverse City), the Michigan Food and Farming Systems (MIFFS) serve as clearing houses for ideas and best practices, a way to become aware of regulations, and a source of grant funding and other resources.

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APPENDIX A: Project Personnel

Project Coordinators:

- Dr. Russell Rhoads, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, GVSU Dr. Russell Rhoads teaches anthropology and has a research interest in changes in family farming.
- Autumn Shroyer and Melissa Harrington serve as the project graduate assistants and field coordinators.

Community Partners:

- Andrea Bardelmeier was the manager of the West Side Farmers' Market (WSFM). Ms. Bardelmeier is the Turner Gateway/Cool Cities Project Manager and an active member of the West Grand Neighborhood Organization (WGNO).
- Jayson Otto was the manager of the Fulton Street Farmers' Market and an active member of the Midtown Neighborhood Association.

Project Support:

- The project is supported in part by the Department of Anthropology and the Johnson Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership (GVSU).
- Department of Anthropology, Grand Valley State University
- Anthropology Laboratory, 248 Lake Michigan Hall, Allendale Campus, GVSU

Student Researchers and Study Majors:

Ryan Ames, Sociology
Michel Andreasen, Anthropology
Brian Crandall, Anthropology/Film
and Video
Tiffany Cross, Anthropology
Jack Davis, Anthropology
Brad DiBenedetto, Art
Tim Elrod, Anthropology/Philosophy
Ty Falk, Anthropology
Elizabeth Grabowski, Anthropology
Emilie Korpi, Anthropology

Ashley Kuehl, Anthropology/Film and
Video
Kate Monahan,
Anthropology/Psychology
Derek Moore, Anthropology
Sarah Munoz, Liberal Studies
Katrina Peshka, Anthropology/Classics
Derek Reed, Communications
Hannah Rodgers,
Anthropology/History
Erin Skidmore, Anthropology
Kristyn Stankiewicz, Anthropology

Post – Course Student Research Assistants:

Ashley Kuehl, GVSU
Hannah Rodgers, GVSU
Amanda Forsythe, Department of Anthropology and Sociology, Kalamazoo College

APPENDIX B: Course Syllabus, ANT 307

ANT 307: FIELD TECHNIQUES AND LABORATORY METHODS
"ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELD SCHOOL"

PROJECT: “Farmers Markets: Linking Food to Community in Grand Rapids.”

First Summer Session: May 7-June 20, 2007
Lab 01 (3 credits) or Lab 02 (6 credits)

Project Directors:

Russell Rhoads, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Anthropology

Field Coordinators:

Autumn Shroyer, GVSU graduate and assistant at the West Side Farmers Market
Melissa Harrington, GVSU alum and graduate student at WMU

Required Readings: CD and a packet of readings made available by the instructor.

General Description:

In this course, you will learn research techniques by being involved in a community-based “action research” project. The techniques you will learn as your primary sources of data are ethnography, surveys, interviews, mapping, collecting community-based resources, and secondary literature review. Students will learn methods in systematic observation, interviewing, note-taking, computer software programs of use in ethnographic research, data analysis and report writing. Other training focuses on field work, research design, ethics, resourcefulness, interpersonal skills, and working in a cross-cultural, institutional context.

The hands-on experience will provide valuable information to community-based organizations concerned with access to fresh food, neighborhood vitality, and local food and farm systems. The project is called “Farmers Markets: Linking Food to Community in Grand Rapids.” The 6 week study will be conducted between May 9 and June 20, 2007 in collaboration with the West Side Farmers Market and the Fulton Street Farmers Market. Students will learn about local food systems, assist the managers of the West Side Farmers Market, and gain skills in monitoring the links between the farmers market and the surrounding West Grand neighborhood. In its second year, the West Side farmers market was created as a “magnet” to help stimulate economic and social activities in the neighborhood, and to provide local, fresh, affordable food to low-income residents.

Course Organization:

As you might imagine, this course is not a regular class. There will be lots of individual and group work involved. We will meet as a class three times a week. On Wednesdays we will meet at the Anthropology Lab (248 ASH) and other days will be divided between the markets, field trips and again at the Lab during the last week of class. Individually, you are responsible for participation, readings, discussion, field work, and writing field notes. In your team work, you will be responsible for actively contributing to the project by conducting research, participating in analytical discussions and data processing, and being involved in writing the team report.

Objectives for GVSU Students:

- Learning about the methods of anthropological research
- Hands-on experience conducting field research, interviewing, and analyzing data
- Learning to work with other students and community members as part of a cooperative team
- Collaborating with regional community partners
- Gaining an understanding of the organization and culture of local farmers' markets
- Learning to work with a qualitative computer research data bank
- Presenting the opportunity for students to display their research contributions, not only in the larger long-term project, but within the context of their personal academic achievement through academic papers, presentations and workshops.

Weekly Time Allocation:

- During the first two weeks, the course will introduce food systems, farmers' markets and research methodology. All students will meet W-F from 9-11:15 AM. A schedule of meetings will be circulated to students on the first day of class.
- Activity highlights include: A farm visit (5/17), a farmers market tour (5/18), three weeks of field work at two farmers markets in Grand Rapids (Weeks 3 -5)
- During the course you are expected to devote 18 hours per week to class activities (that is, 6 hours in class and 12 hours outside of class). Work outside of class might include writing field notes, completing assignments, processing data, reading, attending neighborhood meetings, etc. Students taking the course for 6 credits must devote twice the hours to the course, including additional hours at the markets and work on special projects, such as the "Visual Documentation Project."
- Generally, there will be no required activities in the afternoons and evenings.
- During the final week of the course, all students will meet W-Th-F at the Lab. The final week is devoted report writing and preparations for oral presentations.
- The "final exam period" is devoted to the oral presentations, a group reflection of the field school, and a discussion of "what comes next" for the project.

Course Requirements: Evaluating your learning and skill development is a monumental task. For the purposes of this course, we will rely on various individual and group level measures. Your final course grade will be derived from your work in three areas: 1) attendance to all class sessions and active class participation; 2) completion of assignments, including field notes, the Fresh Food Survey, Farmers Market Mapping activity, 100 Mile Diet and the Reflection Essay; and 3) field work activities including the writing of the final team report.

Teamwork:

Approximately four peers will form your research team. Throughout the course, the research team will be responsible for accomplishing specific tasks related to one of four arenas connected to the farmers market: farmers and venders, consumers, market organization, and the neighborhood. You are responsible to your team peers and for making yourself available to meet with team members and to complete all tasks. Most importantly, you are responsible to the farmers market and to the community at large, which will benefit from our combined efforts.

Attendance:

Attendance to class and class activities is mandatory. You will be expected to attend regularly and be

on time, especially on market days. You will be allowed to miss one Lab class. After that, points will be deducted for unexcused absences. You must provide written evidence that your failure to attend class or the market day activity is due to legitimate circumstances.

Required Readings:

Readings are required throughout the semester, but especially during the first two weeks of instruction. Most of the readings you can access from the CD or the reading packet. Students will submit a “Reading Review” for each of the four sets of readings. See below for a list of required reading sets.

Field Notes:

Each student is responsible for weekly field notes. You will need to document all your field activities and interviews. The field notes are **VERY IMPORTANT** as they are the primary source of data from your observations at the farmers market and involvement in the community, and will be used to help teams write their project reports. Field notes will be graded on both quantity and quality. It is mandatory that you post your field notes electronically each Monday by 5 p.m. on BB.

Activities: In addition to in-the-field activities, you will complete four homework assignments:

- Fresh Food Survey
- Farmers Market Mapping Activity
- Data Analysis Activity
- 100 Mile Diet Activity

Team Report:

During the last two weeks of class, students will focus on integrating data with report writing. The final report synthesizes the findings and the educational experience into a collective effort of writing and reporting. Each team will submit a report and present their findings orally. All written work must be submitted type-written in 12pt Times Roman font with 1 inch margins in Word document format.

Reflective Paper:

Each student will write an individual paper on the field work and research experience. Guidelines will be provided by the instructor.

Course Evaluation: During the final week of class, students will fill out course and peer evaluations on the educational and practical merits of the instruction and of the field school in general.

Activity	Points
Readings (15 points ea.)	4 sets = 60 points
Field notes (25 points ea.)	4 sets = 100 points
Activities (25 points ea.)	4 = 100 points
Participation	40 points
Team Report - final	100 points
Reflective Essay	50 points
TOTAL	450 points

Critical Incident Report (optional):

During the project you may encounter a problem, a misunderstanding, or a delicate situation that may have challenged your expectations in some way. A *Critical Incident Report* allows you to record the incident in detail in essay form. The incident will be discussed privately with the instructor.

Professional Options:

Although not required for the field school, students may wish to participate in professional activities and events. Students can work with the project coordinators in many ways: (1) present the results of your research on Student Scholarship Day 2008, and for a student presentation at GVSU or in the community, (2) present a paper or poster at an academic conference, such as the Central States Anthropological Society annual conference, (3) use your experience to set up an internship or a service learning experience for the coming academic year, (4) write an article for submission to the *Lanthorn* and the *GR* press, and (5) activism regarding local food production and sustainability.

Office Hours:

The "office" will be located at the project headquarters – the anthropology lab. The instructors will be able to talk to you on class meeting days. On Fridays, the instructor, or the field coordinators, will be available for student consultation. Times will be announced.

Equipment Policy:

You will have access to several items of equipment (tape recorders, cameras, etc.). Equipment will be checked out and you will have the responsibility for the care and upkeep of the equipment. Loss of or other problems regarding equipment should be reported immediately to the field coordinators.

Logistical Compensation:

When students incur a project-related expense during the logistics of interviewing and field work (e.g., buying film), a request for compensation can be submitted. Be sure to save the relevant receipts.

Anthropology Lab Hours (LMH 248):

Monday, Wednesday: 8:30 – 4:00 (Tim)

Tuesday and Thursday: 8:30 – 2:30 (Nate will be around)

Friday: 8:30 – 3:30

Lab Assistant: Tim Kratt, 331-3395

If in doubt, ask!

Not everyone will learn the same way or at the same rate. Others may have personal problems or issues that hinder their learning and work. There may be concepts and activities that you do not understand at first. If you are experiencing difficulty with the class for any reason, please inform me as soon as possible and I will see what assistance can be provided.

Project Calendar:

Date		Topic/Activities	Items Due
Week 1: Global and Local Food Systems			
5/9		Intro: syllabus, readings, teams, and logistics Apple Sauce Tasting activity	Read for 5/11: Set #1 (see reading list below)
5/10		Introduction to Food Systems; Video: "The Future of Food"	
5/11		Local Food Systems; Video: "What Will We Eat?: The Search for Healthy Local Food" Fresh Foods Survey Introduction	Reading Review #1
Week 2: Local Farms and Farmers Markets			
5/14		Think about and submit possible questions for project	Questions due on BB, 5 p.m.
5/16		Discussion of Fresh Food Survey; field notes; survey questions reviewed; Project Design	Fresh Food Survey Reading Review #2
5/17		Producing Food: Your of the Visser Farm, Zeeland	Field Trip
5/18		Go to the Fulton St. FM: Mapping and Survey Pretest	Mapping Activity
Week 3: Designing and Conducting Research			
5/21		Field notes #1 from farm and the market field trips	Field notes #1 due on the farm and the market, BB b y 5 p.m.
5/23		Debriefing; Ethics of conducting research and IRB; Finalize Survey; Field Preparation and Assignments	Reading Review #3
5/24		West Side Farmers' Market (11-2)	
5/26		West Side and Fulton St. Farmers Market (9-12)	
Week 4: Field Research			
5/28		Field notes #2	Field notes #2 due on the farm and the market, BB b y 5 p.m.
5/30		Debriefing; Qualitative Data Entry (ATLAS.ti); Field preparations	
5/31		West Side Farmers Market (11-2)	
6/2		West Side and Fulton St. Farmers Market (9-12)	
Week 5: Field Research			
6/4		Field notes #3	Field notes #3 due on the farm and the market, BB b y 5 p.m.
6/6		Debriefing; Quantitative Data Entry (SPSS); Field preparations	Reading Review #4
6/7		West Side Farmers Market (11-2)	
6/9		West Side and Fulton St. Farmers Market (9-12)	
Week 6: Organizing Data and Interpreting Food Systems			
6/11		Field notes #4	Field notes #4 due on the farm and the market, BB by 5 p.m.
6/13		Debriefing; data entry	
6/14		Analysis and report writing	
6/15		Farmers Markets: From Field to Plate Feast !	Reflection Essays due 100 Mile Meal Activity due
Week 7: Representing Multiple Perspectives			
6/18		Final Team Report	Report posted on BB by 5 p.m.
6/20		Final Exam Presentations	Oral Presentations Final reports submitted

REQUIRED READINGS

Reading Review #1:

Required of all students:

1. Mintz, S. (2006) Food at Moderate Speeds, p. 3. IN Fast Food/Slow Food, R. Wilk ed. (handout)
2. Pollan, Michael (2006) "Big Organic" from Omnivore's Dilemma (2006) Penguin Press, New York (handout)
3. Grey, Mark (2002) Industrial food stream and its alternatives in the United States: An introduction. Human Organization. (CD)

6 Credit students:

4. McIlvaine-Newsad, Heather et al. (2004) Direct from Farm to Table: Community Supported Agriculture in Western Illinois, Culture and Agriculture, Vol. 26, No. 1 & 2 (2004).
5. Brown, Allison (2002) Farmers Market Research: An Inventory and Review, p. 167. American Journal of Alternative Agriculture, Vol. 17 (4). (CD)
6. Pollan, M (2007) "Elephant in the Room" section of the NYT article, "Unhappy Meals," Jan 28, 2007. (CD)

Reading Review #2:

Required of all students:

1. Andreatta & Wickliffe reading (CD)
2. Goodman, L. (2003) A Rotten Deal. Self Magazine, Dec 2003. (handout)
3. Hamby, Jessica E. (2004) A Study of Southwest Virginia Farmers Markets, IN The Social and Economic World of Farmers Markets, p 57. Mary B. LaLone, Editor, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Radford University. (CD)
4. Farmers Market: Face to Face with your Farmer (a packet of several flyers, handout)
5. Tom Carey interview on the Catalyst (mp3 file on CD)

Reading Review #3: The reading set review is due on May 23.

READ *Ethnographic Methods* By Karen O'Reilly, Chapter 1-4, on doing ethnography, ethics and participant-observation.

APPENDIX C: Informed Consent Form
“Farmers Markets: Linking Food to Community in Grand Rapids”
Grand Valley State University
Anthropology 307 Field School Project

INSTRUCTOR: Russell Rhoads, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Anthropology, Grand Valley State University, 1162 ASH, (616) 331-3018, rhoadsr@gvsu.edu. ANT 307 students and the West Side Farmers Market will conduct the study in the community between May 20 and June 9, 2007.

ABOUT THE PROJECT: Thank you for your interest in our project. Grand Valley Students will learn about local food systems, assist the managers of the West Side Farmers Market, and gain skills in monitoring the links between the farmers market and the surrounding West Grand neighborhood. In its second year, the West Side farmers market was created as a “magnet” to help stimulate economic and social activities in the neighborhood, and to provide local, fresh, affordable food to low-income residents. By analyzing and sharing the knowledge gained from this project, people can better understand the role played by the farmers market in making available fresh foods to neighborhood residents.

This project is a collaboration between the Grand Valley anthropology department and the manager of the West Side Farmers Market (WSFM), who requested the help of the students in the a) designing and conducting of a needs assessment of the market and b) monitoring of the links between the market and the neighborhood.

ABOUT YOUR PARTICIPATION AND YOUR RIGHTS - This project counts on the cooperation of people like you. The project seeks the voluntary participation of vendors, market consumer, and business owners in the West Grand Neighborhood. If you choose to participate, you have the right to ask questions at any time and express concerns about your participation in the project. The investigators will respond in a timely way. The study is designed to protect the identity of those who participate as subjects. Though a remote chance exists that your identity could be linked to comments made in the study, you are encouraged to participate openly. Should you prefer to have your identity disguised in some way, such as through the use of a false name, you need only request this right. If your participation involves an interview, it may be recorded **ONLY** with your permission. After transcription, the tapes will be erased, and the information will be held confidential at GVSU, and added to a database of information used for analysis of topic related to the aims of this project. You have a right to receive copies of any reports using information you supplied. At any time, you are free to decide not to participate in this study without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigators or with GVSU.

INFORMED CONSENT - GVSU requires these safeguards to be in place when gathering information from individuals. Obtaining your consent to be a participant in research is standard practice in the professional social sciences. *By signing below, this tells us that you understand your role in the research, have volunteered willingly to be interviewed, and are aware of the uses of the information gathered.* If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, whom the investigator cannot answer, you may contact the Grand Valley State University Human Subjects Review Committee Chair at 301C DeVos Center, Grand Rapids, MI 49504, (616) 331-2281.



This research proposal 07-240-H has been approved by the Human Research Review Committee at GVSU. Expiration Date: 5/13/2008

Signed: _____

APPENDIX D: Consumer Survey

“Farmers Markets: Linking Food to Community in Grand Rapids”: Consumer Survey

We invite you to participate in this survey. The knowledge gained from this study will be made available for community and educational purposes. By analyzing and sharing this knowledge, people can better understand the role played by farm families and the farmers market in providing fresh food and a vibrant market center in an urban neighborhood.

PROJECT BACKGROUND: Investigator - Russell Rhoads, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Anthropology, Grand Valley State University, 1162 ASH, (616) 331-3018, rhoadsr@gvsu.edu. As part of the Anthropology summer “field school,” GVSU students will conduct the study in the community between May 20 and June 9, 2007. For more information on your rights as a participant, see the “Informed Consent” information sheet.

Please respond to the following questions. This survey should take about five minutes to complete.

- 1. What is your age?** ___16-24 ___25-34 ___35-44 ___45-54 ___55-64 ___65-74 ___75+
- 2. What is your gender?** ___ (M/F)
- 3. Where do you currently reside?** (enter your Zip Code): _____
- 4. How many people currently live in your home** (household size)? _____
- 5. What is the primary language spoken in your home?** _____
- 6. What is your highest level of education?** (check one): ___Some High School ___High School Diploma
 ___Some College ___Bachelors Degree ___Post-graduate
- 7. Concerning your residence, do you** ___ own, ___ rent, or ___ other?
- 8. What is your yearly household income?**
___ Less than \$10,000 ___\$11,000-\$19,000 ___\$20,000-\$29,000 ___\$30,000-\$39,000
___\$40,000-\$49,000 ___\$50,000-\$59,000 ___ more than \$59,000 ___Prefer not to answer
- 9. How often do you visit this farmers market?** ___Every Week; which day(s)? _____
 ___Twice a month ___Once a month ___First time visitor
- 10 . Did you visit any farmers markets last year?** ___No ___Yes; if so, which ones: _____
- 11. During the farmers market season, approximately what percentage of your weekly household produce purchases come from farmers market sources?**
 ___Less than 10% ___11- 25% ___26- 50% ___51- 75% ___More than 76%
- 12. On average, approximately how many vendors do you purchase from?** _____
- 13. If a fruit or vegetable cost \$1.00 at the supermarket,how much would you be willing to spend on the same item at the farmers market?** ___\$0.75 ___\$1.00 (same) ___\$1.10 ___\$1.25 ___\$1.50
- 14. “My primary purchases today at the market will be...”**
 ___fruits ___plants/flowers ___vegetables ___other (please specify):_____

(Continue on back of page)

15. Rank each of the following reasons for coming to the market: (Check one space in each row)

<u>Reason</u>	<u>Very Important</u> (4)	<u>Important</u> (3)	<u>Somewhat Important</u> (2)	<u>Not Important</u> (1)
a) buy local food	_____	_____	_____	_____
b) buy fresh food	_____	_____	_____	_____
c) buy inexpensive food	_____	_____	_____	_____
d) buy organic food	_____	_____	_____	_____
e) to socialize	_____	_____	_____	_____
f) to support local farmers	_____	_____	_____	_____
g) to support local economy	_____	_____	_____	_____
h) product quality	_____	_____	_____	_____
i) product variety	_____	_____	_____	_____
j) to shop downtown	_____	_____	_____	_____
k) buy from a specific vender	_____	_____	_____	_____
l) convenient location	_____	_____	_____	_____
m) other (please specify): _____				

16. Was the farmers market your main reason for going out today? _____ yes _____ no

17. Are you more likely to shop at other businesses in the neighborhood when you visit the farmers market?
 _____ yes _____ no; If yes, what products do you buy? _____

18. What kind of transportation did you use to get to today's market? _____ public transit; _____ car;
 _____ walk/bike

19. How did you hear about this farmers' market?

20. Which features do you think should be a higher priority for market planners?

(Check all that apply as high priorities):

- ____ Information board (map of location/products at stands)
- ____ Verification and documentation of farmers products (organic, locally grown, etc.)
- ____ Prices (clearly displayed)
- ____ Flyers distributed in nearby neighborhoods
- ____ "Project Fresh" or "Mixed Greens" information
- ____ Other (specify): _____

21. What products you would like see that are not currently sold at the farmers market?

22. What improvements would you like to see at the market?

23. Do you have questions that you would like to ask us?

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey, if you have any questions please feel free to ask us.

Staff use: Date: _____ ID#: _____ Market: _____

APPENDIX E: Vendor Survey

Vendor Survey: "Farmers Markets: Linking Food to Community in Grand Rapids"

We invite you to participate in this survey. The knowledge gained from this study will be made available to the market and to the community in order to improve the market organization and educational. By analyzing and sharing this knowledge, people can better understand the role played by farm families and the farmers market in providing fresh food and a vibrant market center in an urban neighborhood.

PROJECT BACKGROUND: Director- Russell Rhoads, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Grand Valley State University, 1162 ASH, (616) 331-3018, rhoadsr@gvsu.edu. GVSU students will conduct the study at the market between May 20 and June 9, 2007. For more information on your rights as a participant, see the "Informed Consent" information sheet. All responses will remain anonymous. This survey should take about five minutes to complete.

Upon completing the survey, return it to one of the GVSU students, or mail it back in the envelope provided. We would like to have them collected by June 9, 2007.

1. What is your age? ___16-24 ___25-34 ___35-44 ___45-54 ___55-64 ___65-74 ___75+
2. What is your gender? ___ (M/F)
3. Where do you currently reside? (enter your Zip Code): _____
4. How many people currently live in your home (household size)? _____
5. What is the primary language spoken in your home? _____
6. What is your highest level of education? (check one): ___Some High School ___High School Diploma
 ___Some College ___Bachelors Degree ___Post-graduate
7. How many years have you been selling at farmers markets?
8. How often do you sell at this farmers market? ___Every Week; which day(s)? _____
 ___Twice a month ___Once a month ___First time vendor
9. Do you sell at other farmers markets? ___No ___Yes; if so, which ones: _____
10. What types of products do you sell, and what products do you sell the most?
11. How many family members work with you while vending at the farmers market?
12. How many non-family employees do you hire for vending at the farmers market?
13. Is farming your primary occupation? ___ Yes ___ No; If not, what other occupations do you have?

14. What percentage of your income comes from farmers markets? _____ %
15. Of the products you sell, what percent do you produce yourself? _____ %
16. If you are a grower, what percentage of your products do you sell at the farmers market? _____ %

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17. What are the benefits of selling at farmers markets?

18. What are strategies that you use to increase sales to consumers? (e.g., stall location, displays, marked prices, product information provided to consumers, etc.)

19. List three reasons why you think the farmers market is appealing to consumers.

20. As a vendor, how do you see your role in supporting the local economy?

21. What methods of advertising would help attract more people in the greater Grand Rapids community to attend the market?

22. As a vendor, does the organization of this farmers market meet your needs? What improvements would you like to see at the market?

23. Any other comments?

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey, if you are interested in volunteering for an interview, please provide contact information below. Also, if you have any questions please feel free to ask us.

Staff use: Date: _____ ID#: _____ Market: _____