Local Food and Diversity in Public Space: A Study of the Perceptions and Practices of Minneapolis Farmers' Market Customers

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Markets have always been meeting places of goods and people. The diverse public space of the Minneapolis Farmers' Market (hereafter the Market) lies at the crossroads of transformations in agriculture, immigration patterns, and urban growth. Curiosity about particular foods, the economic difficulties of smaller farming operations, and the realities of strained food budgets intersect in this space. In current times, farmers' markets embody many different, potentially conflicting desires: the wishes of vendors to keep farming, to make a living, and to create wealth; the hopes of sustainable farming advocates for a different food future; the longing of new immigrants for greens available in their country of origin; the demands of consumers for affordable food and the possibility to get one's shopping done in fewer trips; and the interest of municipal leaders in attractions that will draw people to the city.

This article reports on the results from our 2008 survey of 200 Minneapolis Farmers' Market customers. Through this survey, we sought to determine customers' understanding of local food; customers' food desires that are met and unmet by the Market; and relationships among food, public space, and identity. Our survey is part of an ongoing ethnography of the Market conducted by the lead author that seeks to understand race as one part of the geography of food, using the Market as a prism through which to explore these relations. This larger study proposes that inequalities in opportunities to grow, sell, and consume food are institutionalized through a racialized economy, persistent differences in property ownership, and racial segregation, among other factors. However, the Market also enables progressive interracial engagement. In short, the Market is a crucial site to explore food and justice in urban and rural communities. Our study seeks to provide insights of value to scholars, policy makers, advocates for alternative food systems, and the Market itself.

Photo courtesy of Rachel Slocum

The Minneapolis Farmer's Market

Data from our 2008 survey and the larger study have revealed the importance of the Market to the regional food system. Although we can measure the Market's economic benefit to growers, customers, and the economy, "importance" here refers to something not necessarily quantifiable. For example, the customers we surveyed cited the particular types of foods available, the vendors themselves, the atmosphere of the place, and the diversity of customers as the aspects they like best about this Market. Because Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak, through the Homegrown Minneapolis initiative,[1] has recently requested recommendations to enable farmers' markets in the area to flourish, we conclude this article with a list of recommendations that emerged from our survey and the larger study. The data we report here represent preliminary results. The research upon which this article is based was supported through a grant from CURA's New Initiatives program.

The Minneapolis Farmers' Market

Opening in 1876 as a wholesale market with more than 400 growers, the Minneapolis Farmers' Market initially supplied area supermarkets with flowers and produce. As food was increasingly brought into Minnesota from states with longer growing seasons, stored in warehouses, and purchased by supermarkets, its wholesale business declined. The Market is now a retail enterprise scaled back to 220 members and run by the Central Minnesota Vegetable Growers Association (CMVGA), which rents its space on Lyndale Avenue North and Third Avenue North (hereafter referred to as the North Lyndale location) from the city of Minneapolis (Figure 1). All local producers who sell at the Market are members of this association. The Market's vendors who sell plants, soap, ready-to-eat foods, plums,

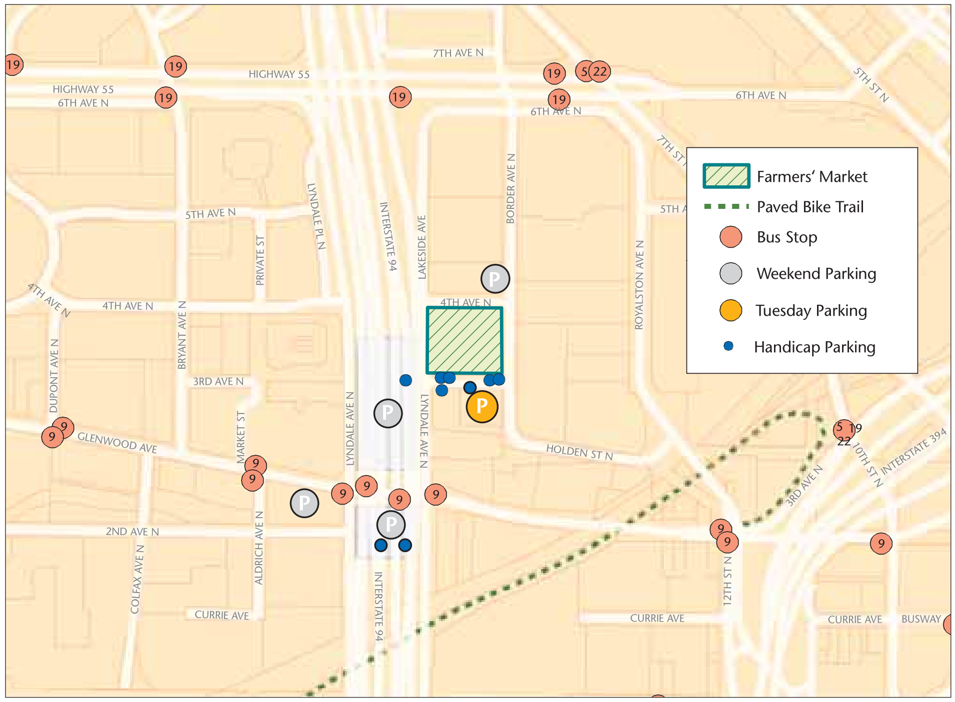
[1] Visit www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/dhfs/homegrown-home.asp for more information.

flowers, herbs, eggs, ice cream, Hmong handicrafts, and a vast array of vegetables use most of the 175 stalls in three long sheds from the third week in April to the end of November, between the hours of 6 AM and 1 PM daily. Three meat vendors continue to sell in the Market every other week during the winter months. Its recently updated website (www.mplsfarmersmarket.com) advertises the availability of these goods, among other information.

The Market provides space for vendors through permanent places, some of which have been handed down through generations. "Dailies," vendors without a permanent spot, are assigned different locations depending on the availability of temporarily unused stalls. The market manager answers to a board, which currently consists of 10 men and 2 women who govern the CMVGA. Most of the vendors are local producers, but the Market also includes 17 dealers who resell goods such as strawberries, mushrooms, flowers, and grapes purchased wholesale. Of these vendors, 11 are growers with some resold items, 2 resell shipped-in flowers, and 4 are produce resellers. These 17 vendors have 41 stalls covering 23% of available space when the Market is full on weekends. When the Market relocates to Nicollet Mall on Thursdays (6 AM–6 PM), resellers use 8 of the 60 stalls. Dealers pay more per year for their stalls than do vendors, and, unlike vendors, do not have voting privileges in the CMVGA's annual meeting. The availability of resold goods allows people to do more of their shopping in one location. The Market distinguishes itself from most farmers' markets in that it allows the sale of goods bought from wholesale distributors and resold, which increases the range of produce available.

The Market stands out in the renaissance of farmers' markets that has occurred in recent years because of its age, size, location, goods sold, and the demographic characteristics of its vendors and customers. It is not part of new urbanist embellishments to old city space, but rather stands in a barren place, confusing and difficult to reach from within the city and located almost directly under the intersection of multiple highways. To some, the Market is too crowded and bustling during the weekends, but many enjoy this exciting atmosphere. In this sense, it differs from the St. Paul and Mill City farmers' markets, which are smaller scale, more sedate operations. For customers, a

Figure 1. Location of the Minneapolis Farmers' Market



market's location is embodied in its physical place in the city, its ease of access, and its feel. These elements will result in different clientele. For example, the Mill City Market, which is adjacent to the new Guthrie Theater and next to downtown condominiums on the waterfront, will attract a different group of shoppers than the Midtown Market on Lake Street.

On the south side of Third Avenue North lies the privately owned Farmers' Market Annex, a for-profit space not affiliated with the Market and not a member-run business. Customers do not know that the two are separate entities and the Annex's website suggests a closer connection than actually exists. In one sense, the variety of goods sold at the Annex enhances the carnival atmosphere of the Market. Appreciative customers told us they bought goods like oil and clothes at the Annex. But farmers' markets in the city wish to distinguish between their efforts—which are aimed at supporting local growers, enhancing food security, and building public space—and places like the Annex. Farmers' markets tend to be nonprofit entities organized by growers who hire managerial staff.

Unlike the St. Paul Farmers' Market and markets organized to promote local-only food systems, nonlocal food is sold at the Market. Alternative food consumers in the Twin Cities concerned about "buying local" vote with their feet, sometimes traveling from their homes in Minneapolis to the St. Paul or Mill City markets because they are not sure how local the food is at the Minneapolis Farmers' Market. These local food advocates either like the commitment of the St. Paul and Mill City markets to a different food system, or they like the size and atmosphere of these markets. We do not mean to suggest that the people who shop at the Minneapolis Farmers' Market are not concerned about the quality of their food, the viability of area farmers, or the sustainability of the farming methods. The majority of the food sold at the Market *is* in fact local and its local produce is of the same quality as that sold at other farmers' markets.

Particularly in the last 15 years, the Market has hosted an increasingly diverse population of vendors and customers. The Twin Cities are home to newer immigrant communities, arriving under different terms, including peoples from Laos, Somalia, Nigeria, Kenya, and Mexico. Hmong people, who arrived from refugee camps in Thailand in the 1970s, began to sell produce at the Market in the 1980s, augmenting what had been for generations a market of somewhat ethnically diverse European American vendors. Interestingly, Hmong people currently constitute only 1% of the Minnesota population, but they account for approximately 40% of the Market vendors and 2 of the 12 CMVGA board members. Hence, different publics encounter each other's vegetables at the Market, making it an important nonsegregated public space. Both resold and local produce prices are quite low compared with grocery store prices, although heirloom produce, meat, and eggs are more expensive. Although the low prices of both local and nonlocal foods are a benefit to customers, they are a concern to some growers. Because of the low produce prices, the Market attracts people who might not come were the market to sell only local or organic foods. Furthermore, the local goods sold are not only broccoli and tomatoes, but also bitter green, sweet potato leaves, and bitter melon, which attract different publics.

Compared with other spaces for buying and eating food, the Market is perhaps the most diverse public space in the Twin Cities. As in any public space, customers have particular expectations of interactions with others at the Market. These expectations range from the desire to speak to the person who grows your food and the anticipation of getting a good deal, to less conscious ideas of what food is and who ought to sell it. Unlike a supermarket or other retail outlet, the Market is open-air and located on public land. Unlike other public spaces or shopping venues for which surveillance, location, or marketing make them less open to diversity, the Market encourages a variety of people who differ in terms of race, class, age, sexual, and gender identities. Unlike the ethnic markets, such as those established by Hmong American merchants in St. Paul or Somali American businesspeople in South Minneapolis, the Market is a place comprehensible to many. However, unlike other markets, it does not cater to only well-off customers or alternative food consumers.

Survey Methods

After obtaining permission from the CMVGA board to conduct our survey, we gathered data from 200 Minneapolis Farmers' Market customers using an instrument with 30 questions and an incentive of a $10 gift certificate to the Market. The board and market manager requested that these certificates could only be used at the Market (not at the Annex) with vendors selling locally produced goods. As a consequence, part of the survey interview required that we explain the difference between the Annex and the Market and between a local grower and a reseller. We conducted these 10- to 15-minute, mostly face-to-face interviews across the hours and days that the market is open (officially 6 AM–1 PM, all days of the week) from July to October 2008 at the North Lyndale location. We collected customer responses ourselves through note-taking, and attempted to capture the answers verbatim, rather than electronically record the interviews. Surveys done with Latino respondents were conducted in Spanish. We surveyed customers on all days of the week; however, on Thursdays we did not survey customers at the Nicollet Mall location, where most vendors relocate on that day.

To administer the surveys, we purposefully selected respondents, ensuring as much as possible that the survey reflected the diversity of ethnic/racial, gender, age, and class categories—all of which are somewhat visually discernible (Table 1). Of those we surveyed, slightly more than half were women. The age groups between 30 and 59 (30–39, 40–49 and 50-59) were more or less equally represented among our survey respondents. Thirty percent of the survey respondents had blue-collar occupations, 22% had white-collar jobs, 32% were professionals, 7% said they were retired, and the remaining respondents were unemployed, students, or self-employed. Ninety percent of Latinos were blue collar, most East Asians were either professionals (40%) or blue collar (40%), and White respondents were mostly professional (40%), as were South Asians (79%). African Americans and African respondents were split more or less evenly among blue collar, white collar,

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Survey Respondents

Demographic Category	Number	Pct.
Race/ethnicity		
White	48	24.0%
South Asian	24	12.0%
East Asian	18	9.0%
African American	27	13.5%
West African	30	15.0%
East African	14	7.0%
American Indian	1	0.5%
Latino	30	15.0%
Arab American	3	1.5%
Eastern European	2	1.0%
No answer/other	3	1.5%
Gender		
Female	108	54.0%
Male	92	46.0%
Age		
20–29	17	8.5%
30–39	66	33.0%
40–49	38	19.0%
50–59	47	23.5%
60–69	24	12.0%
70 and over	8	4.0%

Note: In some instances, values may not sum to 200 respondents due to missing data.

and professional occupations. Given the type of sample we used, our data are not strictly generalizable, but they do allow us to draw broad conclusions from within the sample about who comes to the Market, for what reasons, and what practices they employ.

Table 1 shows the representation of racial/ethnic groups[2] in our survey sample. When selecting customers to survey, we did not attempt to obtain percentages of particular groups to reflect their representation in the general Twin Cities metropolitan area population, as determined by the U.S. Census. Instead, we made some effort to gather data from newer immigrant populations and people of color. Respondents self-identified their racial or ethnic group, choosing from the options listed in Table 1. In the statistical analyses of the data based on the race of the respondent, we collapsed some categories (e.g., East and West African; White and Eastern European); in addition, for one analysis, we grouped all respondents into two racial categories, either white or people of color.

Results

This section presents results from our survey of 200 Market customers.

Traveling to the Minneapolis Farmers' Market. The customers we surveyed arrived at the Market from 73 different Minnesota zip codes, but also included an alternative food tourist from New York and a couple who come regularly from North Dakota (Figure 2). The majority of our survey respondents came from the neighborhoods closest to the Market—Near North (55411) and Camden (55412, 55430)—but the Northeast (55418) and Brooklyn Park (55428) were also well represented. Equal numbers (five customers each) came from the Southwest (55419), Nokomis (55423), University (55413), and Calhoun Isle (55416) neighborhoods. In answer to the question, "Why do you come to *this* Market?," respondents most often mentioned proximity. The vast majority (83.5%) of respondents stated that they arrived by car. The remaining respondents took the bus (4.5%), biked (2.5%), walked (2.5%), used some other means of transportation (2%), or carpooled with others who drove (5%). Those respondents who took the bus identified themselves as Latino, African American, African, and South Asian, and came from the neighborhoods of Calhoun Isle (55408), Near North (55411), Central (55402), and Camden (55412), respectively. Figure 2 shows that more respondents in the survey came from Census tracts that are in the $25,000 to $50,000 income bracket and that are more than 25% nonwhite.

Customer Attendance and Purchasing Practices. Although the Market brings its share of "basket-kickers" (a vendor term for people who look but do not buy), most customers we surveyed said that they come to the Market primarily to buy food (72%). The remaining respondents mentioned visiting for both buying food and the social experience (5.5%), for buying food and plants or flowers (18.5%), or for buying food and prepared snacks (3.5%), with one respondent (0.5%) coming mainly to support the growers. One West African woman told us that she buys, freezes, and ships greens on request from friends whose markets (in Rhode Island) do not provide the goods they seek.

Nearly all (95%) of survey respondents identified the Market as their primary market. Of those surveyed, 70% said they come only on the weekends, 11.5% come only during the week (Monday through Friday), and 18.5% visit on both weekends and weekdays. Most of the survey respondents said that they come to the Market at least twice a month, and that they stay for at least an hour (Table 2). Our respondents indicated that 10 AM is the most popular arrival time at the Market; however, 46.5% of respondents said that they prefer the hours of 6 to 8 AM.

When asked how many years they had been coming to the Market, 40% of survey respondents indicated that they have been coming for 5 to 10 years, 32.5% had been coming for less than 5 years, and 27.5% had been coming for more than 10 years. Eight percent of respondents said that it was their first year attending the Market. As we expected, most of those customers we surveyed responded that they come to the Market in the months of July, August, and September (Table 2).

Almost three-fourths (73.5%) of survey respondents said they do not attempt to go to the same vendor each time, but instead look for the best product at the best price (Table 3). However, more than one-fourth (26.5%) of survey respondents indicated that they do have some vendors to whom they are loyal. In addition to asking respondents about vendor loyalty, we also asked survey respondents, "Are there some vendors you avoid?" Overall, 23% of our respondents said that they did avoid some vendors. When we differentiated between white respondents and respondents of color on this question, 42% of white respondents indicated that they avoided some vendors, but only 16.6% of respondents of color did so. The mix of food cultures at the Market, both among vendors and customers, means that many goods are available that are unknown to the various constituencies. Many customers (58%) we surveyed told us they are not willing to try vegetables that they are unfamiliar with either in terms of taste or cooking method. White respondents indicated that they were more apt to buy unfamiliar vegetables (60%) compared with respondents of color (34.7%).

Only 8.5% of survey respondents said that they typically spend $100 or more in a single outing at the Market (Table 3). More than half (66%) of the customers we surveyed reported that they spend somewhere between $20 and $60 each time that they shop at the Market. When we examined spending habits by grouping respondents into the categories "white" and "non-white," we found that 10.3% of respondents of color (predominantly those from East or West Africa) compared with 2% of white respondents said that they spend $100 or more. Of those survey respondents identifying themselves as White, Latino, South Asian, or African American, the majority said that they spend between $20 and $39 during a visit. The majority of African and East Asian respondents reported spending between $40 to $59.99. Comparing the spending means among racial groups, African new immigrants spend the most ($62 on average) and white people spend the least ($33 on average). Almost all (99%) of our survey respondents said that the food sold at the Market is a "good value," the term we used in the survey, with 57% strongly agreeing and 42% agreeing.

Atmosphere. As noted earlier, the Market's characteristics bring a flavor to its space that its customers greatly enjoy. One man told us:

> It feels good here. . .what a great way to look at your food [pointing down the shed]. . .people are

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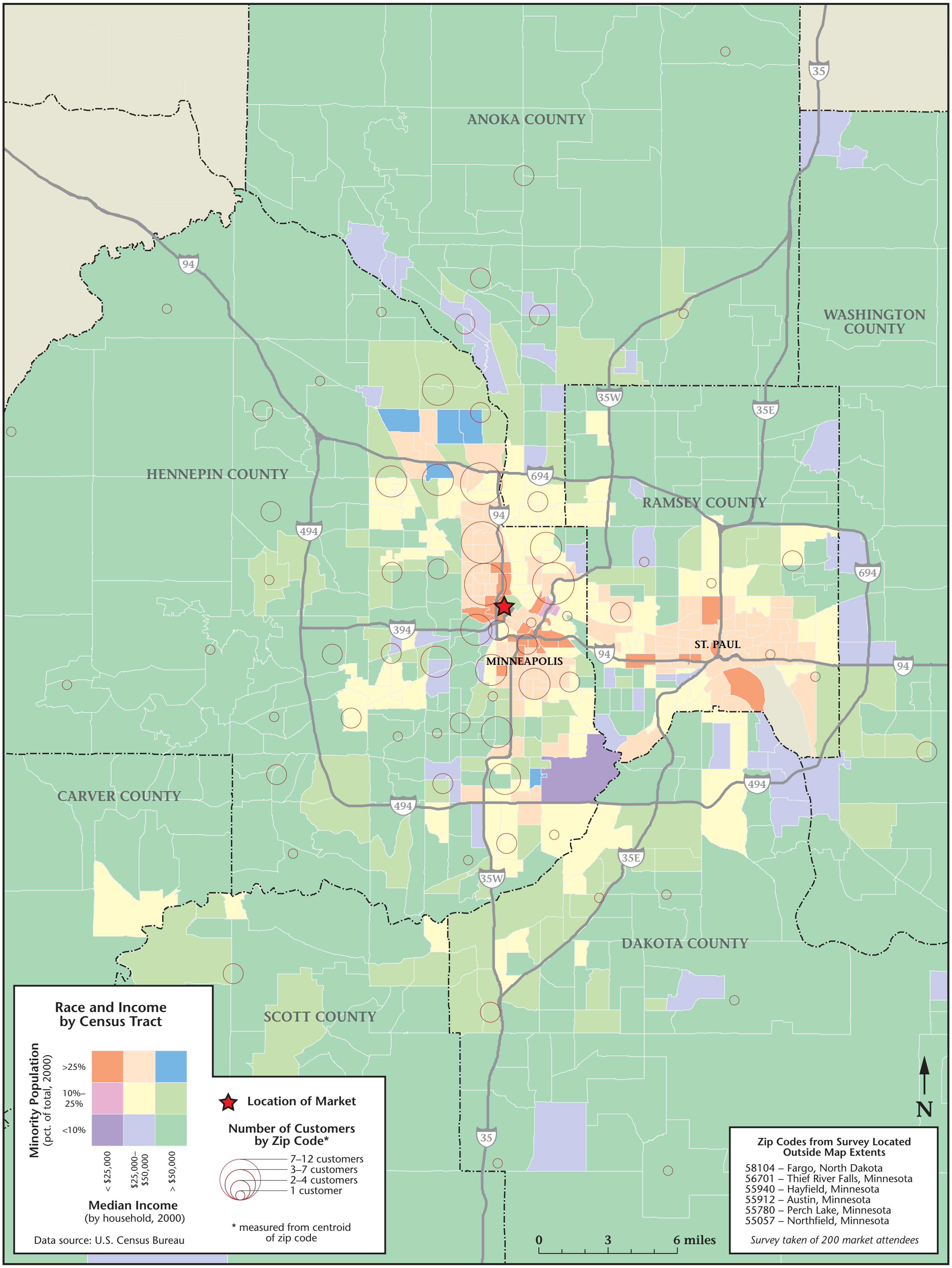
[2] *Race* and *racial* are terms we use to refer to groups, recognizing that these categories are socially produced.

Figure 2. Distribution of Survey Respondents in the Seven-County Twin Cities Metropolitan Area by Home Zip Code



> walking around and it's a much more social experience than a grocery store.

That social experience is highly valued, as one immigrant from Zambia told us.

> It's a very interesting, humane meeting of people. This place is very calm, peaceful. When you come here you really appreciate the beauty of people. Different races come and eat and nobody is looking at anyone in a particular way. It's a very powerful spot in the city. It brings people together. It's a beautiful place of this city. Hopefully America will not destroy and derail this [market] into a bigger commercial project that will not benefit the average person.

Providing something that is "like home" was another response of customers when we asked them what they liked best. The Market, according to one respondent,

> Reminds [me] of home [because of the] fresh foods, [the] people from all walks of life, and because it's open-air.

People also indicated a nostalgia for a past time that the Market satisfies. One customer said:

> I like the idea of it—it's open air, it's old world, from an older time.

Similarly, another noted:

> I love the atmosphere. We come in the morning, early—there are all those fragrances. [The Market's] atmosphere is of days gone by. The pickles are the best here. But the atmosphere may bring me here more than the pickles. It's the people coming and going, interacting and not interacting.

Echoing ideas that markets promote community, one white woman remarked:

> [We're] really, really glad [the Market's] here. It adds to the reason we love the Cities so much. We come for the whole experience. We grew up in a rural area—the Market really helps foster a sense of community. It helps you connect with people around you and helps city people see that farming isn't

Table 2. Survey Respondents' Attendance Practices at the Minneapolis Farmers' Market

	Number	Pct.
Number of visits to the Market per month		
One	21	10.5%
Two	47	23.5%
Three	36	18.0%
Four	30	15.0%
More than four	66	33.0%
Time spent at the Market per visit		
Under one hour	39	19.5%
About one hour	75	37.5%
About two hours	60	30.0%
About three hours	24	12.0%
Four hours	2	1.0%
Years coming to the Market		
Fewer than 5 years	65	32.5%
5–10 years	80	40.0%
11–19 years	29	14.5%
20 years or more	26	13.0%
Months during which respondents attend the Market		
April	52	26.0%
May	89	44.5%
June	132	66.0%
July	171	85.5%
August	190	95.0%
September	170	85.0%
October	125	62.5%
November	72	36.0%
Days respondents attend the Market		
Monday	18	9.0%
Tuesday	22	11.0%
Wednesday	30	15.0%
Thursday	20	10.0%
Friday	31	15.5%
Saturday	147	73.5%
Sunday	111	55.5%

Note: In some instances, values may not sum to 200 respondents due to missing data.

completely lost on them. It's good to have the newer generation see that it comes from somewhere—that everything isn't mass produced, that farmers still work the land. We don't like co-ops. If you spend 30 seconds in a co-op, you see that co-ops are snotty. They look at you like you have a third arm coming out of your head if you ask questions. The farmers' market is common people doing what they do. One of the great things about it is the human factor, [which] is to exchange, be involved, invested—we have a lot of respect for that.

These respondents voice themes found in the larger study and in the literature about the sentiments that some farmers' markets inspire.

Another much-loved aspect of farmers' markets is the opportunity to converse with the producers. In answer to our question "Is the opportunity to talk with vendors important to you?" one shopper told us:

It's very important to me to be able to talk [to vendors]. We live in a society that makes us distant from food and growers. The opportunity to switch up that dynamic is good—and they're nice people too.

Although we found that only slightly more survey respondents (56%) speak with vendors/producers (other than to ask about prices) than do not (Table 3), we found a difference in customer behavior when we differentiated among respondents by race. White respondents (82%) engaged in speaking with or questioning the vendor to a greater extent than did people of color (48.6%) (Table 4). The difference was statistically significant even when controlling for sex.

Views on Local, Sustainable, and Nonlocal Food. The alternative food movement[3] promotes the purchase of food produced locally, arguing that it is more fresh and therefore healthier, that it supports the regional economy rather than sending food dollars to faraway producers, and that it lowers the number of food miles our meals travel. Some advocates have made unfavorable comparisons between the St. Paul Farmers' Market, whose vendors must

Table 3. Survey Respondents' Purchasing Practices at the Minneapolis Farmers' Market

Question	Number	Pct.
Avoid some vendors?		
Yes	46	23%
No	154	77%
Patronize the same vendors each time?		
Yes	53	26.5%
No	147	73.5%
Buy vegetables that are unfamiliar?		
Yes	83	41.7%
No	116	58.3%
Ask vendors questions other than "how much"?		
Yes	112	56.3%
No	87	43.7%
Amount spent per visit		
\$0–\$9.99	9	4.5%
\$10.00–\$19.99	19	9.5%
\$20.00–\$39.99	76	38.0%
\$40.00–\$59.99	56	28.0%
\$60.00–\$99.99	23	11.5%
\$100 or more	17	8.5%

Note: In some instances, values may not sum to 200 respondents due to missing data.

Photo courtesy of Rachel Slocum

Amaranth leaves are purchased out of curiosity by some groups and sought actively by immigrants from Africa and South Asia.

[3] The academic literature refers to groups and individuals who support local, sustainable food systems in this way.

come from within a 50-mile radius, and the Minneapolis Farmers' Market, which allows the sale of nonlocal foods. When we asked our survey respondents, "Do you buy fruits and vegetables from resellers at the Market?" nearly three-quarters (72%) said that they bought fruits and vegetables that were grown outside the region and resold at the Market (Table 5). When we differentiated the responses by race of the respondent, we found that 42.8% of white respondents and 82.8% of respondents of color indicated that they did buy from resellers. Specifically, we found that 90.9% of African respondents, 42.8% of White respondents, 55.6% of East Asian respondents, 93.1% of Latino respondents, 75% of South Asian respondents, and 85.2% of African American respondents said that they bought from resellers (Table 5). There is strong evidence that race and buying from resellers are statistically correlated even when controlling for sex. [4]

We also asked whether the presence of resold food added to or detracted from the Market. A majority (64%) of the customers we surveyed responded that they added to the Market, 9.5% said that they detracted, 12% were unsure, and 14.5% had no opinion. When we analyzed the data by race of the respondent, Latinos and Africans were the most likely to indicate that resellers add to the Market, and customers who were White or of European descent were most likely to say that they detract. An African American man said that years ago he would buy from resellers,

> But since I've been educated about local I prefer local.... [Even so, the resellers are] like having a grocery store here. Because of the variety, it's a plus because you have all of this produce.

When we clustered the responses by race of the respondent, 72.4% of respondents of color stated that resellers enhance the market compared with 42% of white respondents. One respondent told us:

> The resellers neither add nor detract from the Market. I know that a lot [of people] come for [resellers' goods] so they serve that need, they bring people here.

Resellers' pricing policy of three trays for $5.00 is very affordable; in addition,

[4] Chi square was statistically significant at 0.001.

Table 4. Survey Respondents' Answer to the Question: "Do You Ask Vendors Questions Other Than 'How Much'?"

Respondent	Yes	No
All respondents	112 (56.3%)	87 (43.7%)
African	22 (51.2%)	21 (48.8%)
African American	18 (66.7%)	9 (33.3%)
White	41 (82.0%)	9 (18.0%)
East Asian	5 (27.8%)	13 (72.2%)
South Asian	14 (58.3%)	10 (41.7%)
Latino	10 (33.3%)	20 (66.7%)
Other	2 (28.6 %)	5 (71.4%)
Female	66 (61.7%)	41 (38.3%)
Male	46 (50.0%)	46 (50.0%)

Note: In some instances, values may not sum to 200 respondents due to missing data.

Table 5. Survey Respondents' Answer to the Question: "Do You Purchase Fruit and/or Vegetables from Resellers at the Market?"

Respondent	Yes	No
All respondents	144 (72.0%)	54 (27.0%)
African	40 (90.9%)	4 (9.1%)
African American	23 (85.2%)	4 (14.8%)
White	21 (42.8%)	28 (57.2%)
East Asian	10 (55.6%)	8 (44.4%)
South Asian	18 (75.0%)	6 (25.0%)
Latino	27 (93.1%)	2 (6.9%)
Other	5 (71.4%)	2 (28.6%)
Female	84 (77.8%)	22 (20.4%)
Male	60 (65.2%)	32 (34.8%)

Note: In some instances, values may not sum to 200 respondents due to missing data.

they sell mangos and plantains, for instance, which are necessities for some customers. From the evidence about purchasing practices presented above as well as data from the larger study, we can say that the presence of dealers encourages a race- and class-diverse customer base, as do those vendors selling products sought by groups other than white Minnesotans.

We next wanted to examine whether customers made an effort to buy the local goods available (Table 6), if they thought the Market was a good place to do so, and why this was important to them. The vast majority (82.9%) of our survey respondents claimed to buy locally grown food. Within this group, 100% of White respondents said they tried to buy local foods at the Market, compared with 76.4% of respondents of color (specifically, 84% of African respondents, 83% of East Asian respondents, 79% of South Asian respondents, 70% of African American respondents, and 63% of Latino respondents). This breakdown indicates that, although the idea of locally grown appears to be recognized as important by most shoppers, it resonates somewhat more with a white demographic. We then asked the respondents who had stated that they tried to buy local whether the Market is a good place to purchase locally grown products. Nearly all (99%) agreed that it is. To follow up, we asked the respondents to explain the basis for their response. Many signaled that their experiences with products' freshness indicated that they were clearly local. Others told us they looked for signage or they asked growers about the location of their land.

We were also interested in customers' perspectives on sustainably grown food. The term "sustainable" covers a range of possibilities, from livestock that are raised without added hormones or antibiotics to the reduced use of pesticides or certified organically grown foods. Roughly half (53%) of our respondents indicated that they try to buy such foods (Table 6). We found that 60% of white respondents and 50.7% of respondents of color stated that they try to purchase these foods (Table 7). Slight majorities of White, African, East

Asian, and African American respondents said they try to buy sustainably grown foods. However, when we asked our survey respondents about actual purchases, our data indicated that clear majorities do not purchase meat, eggs, or fruit produced using more sustainable methods (Table 6). No certified organic vendors sell at the Market, but the Market does have vendors who are uncertified organic producers and who advertise low-pesticide use, free-range goods, and antibiotic- and hormone-free meat and eggs.

Because the answers to the general question about sustainable foods did not align well with the answers to the questions about the purchase of specific sustainable products, we sought to determine what kind of understanding customers had of the broad concept of "sustainably grown." We found that 26% of our respondents were not sure of its meaning. Many respondents (43%) thought about sustainable foods in terms of the effects that growing methods have on personal or family health. Another 7% of respondents worried about the environmental impact of growing methods, and 9% of respondents discussed both health and environmental effects of sustainable foods. An additional 9% of respondents were skeptical about the benefits of sustainably grown products or stated that they were too expensive. Finally, 6% referred to practices from their home countries that they understood to be better, more "natural," and tastier, and thought that these practices might also be used here as well.

Four conclusions concerning race can be drawn from the responses we obtained from those surveyed. First, the importance of sustainability and buying local food may be understood differently across racial groups, with white customers being more attuned to these concepts in the way they are celebrated by the alternative food movement. However, in making this claim we do not mean that people of color need to be educated to understand an idea that white customers understand in a particular way. On the contrary, we suggest that alternative food, a largely white movement, might use claims such as ours to rethink its approach. Second, different racial groups may be supportive of the Market in different ways. For instance, in our survey we found that white respondents are more likely to buy local, try new vegetables, and be somewhat more loyal to vendors, but that respondents in some other racial groups spend more, do not tend to have vendors they avoid, and are less likely to ask questions (other than regarding price) of vendors. Third, some communities of color in Minnesota, particularly African Americans, Latinos, and American Indians, experience greater economic inequality and therefore are less able to afford expensive food. The Market promotes food security for these populations by being affordable and by enabling people to do more shopping in one place. Fourth, many similarities exist among the diverse populations who visit the Market—notably the agreement that the Market offers a good value, has very fresh produce, and provides an alluring atmosphere.

Signs of Change

The Minneapolis Farmers' Market is situated within efforts to change the food system. Last fall, the city launched a program called Homegrown Minneapolis which, through four subcommittees and a series of meetings, seeks to determine how the city could support the local food system. It was clear to some participants that the subcommittees lacked representation from people of color and lower income residents. A different approach, including different ways of gathering comments, different meeting spaces and times, and other mechanisms to enable participation, might have yielded a more diverse and inclusive process. However, the Subcommittee on Farmers' Markets, in which the lead author participated, did bring together people involved with

Table 6. Survey Respondents' Preferences and Buying Practices for Local and Sustainable Foods

Question	Yes	No
Try to buy locally grown food?	165 (82.9%)	34 (17.1%)
[For those who do try to buy locally grown:] Is the Market a good place to buy local?	164 (99%)	1 (1.0%)
Try to buy low pesticide, hormone-free, or organic foods at the Market?	106 (53.0%)	94 (47.0%)
Try to buy sustainable meat at the Market?	16 (8.0%)	183 (92.0%)
Try to buy sustainable eggs at the Market?	14 (7.1%)	184 (92.9%)
Try to buy sustainable vegetables at the Market?	92 (46.5%)	106 (53.5%)
Try to buy sustainable fruit at the Market?	44 (22.2%)	154 (77.8%)

Note: In some instances, values may not sum to 200 respondents due to missing data.

Table 7. Survey Respondents' Answer to the Question: "Do You Try to Buy Low Pesticide, Hormone-Free or Organic Food Grown Food at the Market?"

Respondent	Yes	No
All respondents	106 (53.0%)	94 (47.0%)
African	26 (59.1%)	18 (40.9%)
African American	14 (51.8%)	13 (48.2%)
White	30 (60.0%)	20 (40.0%)
East Asian	10 (55.6%)	8 (44.4%)
South Asian	9 (37.5%)	15 (62.5%)
Latino	15 (50.0%)	15 (50.0%)
Other	2 (28.6%)	5 (71.4%)
Female	57 (52.8%)	51 (47.2%)
Male	49 (53.3%)	43 (46.7%)

Note: In some instances, columns may not sum to 200 respondents due to missing data.

markets and, in so doing, provided the impetus for them to work collectively in the future. This group recommended that the city actively recognize its farmers' markets as a vital part of the urban-rural economy and as providing valuable public space. It argued that public funding must be allocated for this initiative to have a greater impact. Market managers, vendors, and advocates requested that the city hire a coordinator to enable the smooth and successful functioning of markets as part of a comprehensive approach to food. This city staff member would coordinate with a Farmers' Market Working Group. Other issues raised were the need to ensure that land was made permanently available for markets and market parking, to enable the use of electronic benefit transfer cards to make purchases at all markets, and to budget for regulatory changes associated with supporting markets.

Another welcome initiative of relevance to farmers' markets concerns the issues of food and justice. The Twin Cities Food and Justice Alliance has been meeting for more than a year to carefully and deliberately craft its identity and aims. Members are antiracist activists and staff of nonprofits working to change the food system by supporting community gardens, new immigrant farming, and locally grown food.[5]

Last but not least, the Minneapolis Farmers' Market has begun to institute changes that are very encouraging. First, its new contract with vendors stipulates that resellers cannot sell an item when that fruit or vegetable is in season in Minnesota (e.g., strawberries in late June, asparagus in May). Second, the board is opening the Market on one afternoon a week beginning in July (3–7 PM), recognizing that the 6 AM–1 PM timeframe may not serve people who work during those hours. Third, the CMVGA will be adding members for the first time in years, with the aim of bringing in a greater variety of foods. Fourth, in May 2009, the Market began its own radio show, Fresh and Local, (950 AM, 8–9 AM Saturdays through October), featuring area growers and hosted by Susan Berkson and local producer Bonnie Dehn. Changes to the Market's website are also planned, including new vendor pages and tweets about the Market from area residents. Finally, the Market will start donating leftover produce to Second Harvest.

Recommendations to Support the Minneapolis Farmers' Market

We make the following recommendations to support the Minneapolis Farmers' Market, based on the survey we have reported on here and the lead author's ongoing study of the Market. Most of our suggestions fall under the issue of access, by which we mean, can people easily get to the Market and, once there, is it equally accessible to those who use cash, coupons, or food stamps to buy their food? The remaining recommendations pertain to the issue of local food.

Access

Assess and expand public transportation service to the Market. One form of inaccessibility is the literal difficulty one has getting to a food source. That physical barrier could result from a physical or emotional disability, advanced age, or it could be due to a lack of adequate transport. The Market is hard to get to if one does not drive. Most of our survey respondents said that they do not use the bus to get to the Market. According to Metro Transit, traveling from the East Lake Street–Hiawatha Avenue intersection or from the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood for a Saturday trip to the Market requires three transfers and takes an hour and ten minutes. Customers find the Market's produce a very good value—in other words, affordable. By determining whether its bus routes help people from all parts of the city get to the Market, the City would not only invest in its Market by augmenting its customer base, but would also encourage food security and diverse groups' access to public space. The City might even consider providing frequent shuttle buses to the Market on the weekends from places that have insufficient bus service.

Improve service to the Market for seniors and people with disabilities. By relocating to Nicollet Mall on Thursdays, the Market provides important access to seniors living downtown. However, to reach the Market in its North Lyndale location, some seniors and people with disabilities must use Metro Mobility. Its usefulness to these groups is important to this public space as well as to their food security. One older woman we interviewed has repeatedly tried to get the Metro Mobility van to stop on Lyndale Avenue North, next to the bathroom and the phone, located in the center shed, rather than on the south side of Third Avenue North. Using her walker to get from the Market to this location is difficult for her. Relocating the stop would improve service for Metro Mobility riders. Additional handicapped parking would also improve the Market. Alternatively, a proposal raised in the course of Homegrown Minneapolis initiative meetings was for the city to run a van that takes food baskets to people who cannot easily leave their homes. Such a service could emerge from a partnership between the CMVGA and the City. However, it is important that this be a public, as opposed to for-profit or nonprofit, program, because the government is responsible for enabling the health and well-being of residents.

Provide options for vendors to accept electronic benefit transfer (EBT) payments. Some Market vendors accept the Women, Infants, and Children Farmers' Market Nutrition Program coupons, but the Market does not accept food stamps. The Federal Food Stamp Program, now called the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, currently serves 1 in 20 Minnesotans—far fewer than the number who are eligible. When the U.S. Department of Agriculture switched food stamps from paper form to EBT cards in 2004, farmers' markets were excluded from receiving this flow of funds, and food stamp recipients were blocked from making food purchases at farmers' markets. Farmers' markets across the country are struggling with the fact that EBT-reading machines require costly and cumbersome infrastructure as well as oversight. The Midtown Market obtained grant support to purchase a wireless EBT card machine but to date it is the only farmers' market in the state to enable the use of EBT.[6] Although EBT is lauded for removing stigma (because no one can tell if the card is an EBT or a debit card), an implicit stigma remains if the geography of food procurement is restricted for those who are poor. Public space and the food security of the less well-off are undermined by this practice. The City should subsidize the purchase of EBT card machines for all farmers' markets. Once this infrastructure is in place, the City should work with markets to advertise this new

[5] For more information, contact Tom Guettler at thomasguettler@msn.com or Melvin Giles at peaceful@mninter.net.

[6] C Kaiser. *Food Stamps, Food Security and Public Health: Lessons from Minnesota*. Minneapolis: Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, 2008.

accessibility. The Market, finally, should encourage all vendors to accept Farmers' Market Nutrition Program coupons.

Improve Market attendance through innovative approaches. Proximity appears to be one of the stronger motivators for coming to the Market. We have yet to determine what is meant by proximity, but it is clear that a few zip codes were more heavily represented among our survey respondents (Figure 2). Focusing attention on those areas first through neighborhood association publicity, shuttles, or advertising might yield additional customers. The CMVGA could consider allowing community-supported agriculture operations of CMVGA members to use the site as a drop point or it could promote the purchase of goods wholesale at the Market by individual growers or by developing its own brand.

Improve bicycle access to the Market. The journey by bike from Lyndale Avenue South to the Market is dangerous and grim, particularly the route back, which requires traveling on roads connecting the highway to Lyndale and Hennepin Avenues. Although bike trails are well represented around the lakes, the Market, as an important public space, is not yet linked into this network. Adding direct bus lanes and trails and installing bike racks at the Market would encourage this mode of access.

Provide cleaner and more bathroom facilities for Market customers and vendors. Customers find that the bathrooms at the Market are not particularly clean and, for women, certainly not sufficient to their needs. For example, every weekend that we attended the Market, a line of about 10 women extended out the door of the bathroom. Adding and cleaning bathrooms would greatly benefit both customers and vendors.

Local food

Review the role of resellers. The data suggest that resellers add to the Market by providing less expensive goods and the opportunity to do more shopping in one place. Alternative food advocates and policy makers might use this information to rethink the relationships between food security and farmers' markets and between racial identity and the ideals of alternative food. Resellers might consider catering in more ways to the newer immigrant communities that are more apt to patronize their stalls by hiring Spanish-speaking staff or selling different fruits and vegetables, thereby strengthening the entire Market. This is certainly not an argument for more reseller stalls, but instead a caution against eliminating them.

Clarify the provenance of Market goods. The "localness" of the Market is a question in the minds of some. Respondents described techniques they use to guess what is resold and what is local. Some also surmise that much of the produce is organic. It does not help the Market that such guessing is necessary. The place of production could be made very clear in some format whether as a handout, on the website, or at individual vendors' stalls (both for resellers or local producers). Additionally, the Market and the vendors could make more of an effort to let customers know that the goods sold are safely produced, whether through advertising the minimal use of pesticides or the health standards to which the Market is held.

Establish a Farmers' Market Working Group and a city-funded Minneapolis Food Policy Council. Farmers' market supporters might consider convening a group that would advocate on behalf of all area markets and assist with their coordination. Those wishing to start new markets would approach this working group first and city policy would be made in dialogue with it. However, this body should be part of a food policy council located within city government that will connect farmers' markets into comprehensive strategies for a socially just, economically viable, and environmentally sustainable food system.

Truly public space is crucial to the life of the city; it is where we must negotiate with different people, goods, and ideas. The public space of the Market must be supported not only by city and state policies to ensure its existence, but by a host of other enabling elements such as mass transit, the preservation and availability of farmland, and living wages. The way food is located, marketed, and priced can exclude the poor, people with disabilities, and people of color, but in places like the Minneapolis Farmers' Market, it can also enable health, awareness of the local food system, and the mixing of diverse groups. Awareness of the important dimension of race in geographies of food is critical to building public spaces that promote meaningful interaction among all social groups via food consumption and to ensuring fair opportunities for everyone to farm and market their produce.

Because of its unique attributes, the Minneapolis Farmers' Market significantly contributes toward providing the access to all groups that we have argued must be present for space to be public. But it can be more accessible, hospitable, and beneficial to both vendors and customers. Continued effort on the part of the CMVGA and greater support by the City and the alternative food community would ensure these goals are met.

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