

Possibilities of Place: The Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market

Developing a Market Vision – FINAL REPORT

August 22, 2014



Overview & Acknowledgements

This report summarizes the results of a research and visioning project conducted by Avenue ISR in the Spring and Summer of 2014. The study was intended to define a vision for the Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market space.

Market vendors and shoppers, in addition to owners of business in downtown Traverse City, weighed in with both current attitudes toward the Farmers Market and visions for what the ideal Farmers Market should be. This data was used to generate a Vision Statement which can be used by designers and decision makers to adapt and improve the market space.



The study was commissioned by the Traverse City Downtown Development Authority.

The study authors gratefully acknowledge the help, support and leadership demonstrated by staff members Rob Bacigalupi, Colleen Pavegio, and Nick Viox and by DDA Board Members Jan Chapman and Leah Bagdon-McCallum. These five individuals comprised the Advisory Committee for the project.

In addition, we would like to thank the Board of Directors of the Downtown Development Authority and every person who offered input to the process.

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Avenue ISR is a business strategy and research consulting firm serving an international client base from Traverse City, Michigan. Avenue ISR has conducted consulting engagements for multi-national corporations as well as Northern Michigan businesses, governments and NGOs.

Table of Contents

Vision for the Market Space	3
Study Methodology	5
Summary of Key Research Findings	6
Shopper Behaviors, Attitudes and Characteristics	7
Priorities and Performance	13
Downtown Business Owner Survey Results	23

Vision for the Market Space

Overall Vision

It is May 2017 and the Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market is opening for the season after a winter break. Even though it is early in the growing season, a wide variety of fresh and preserved produce, plants, value added products, baked goods and soap are available for sale. Later in the season, a full array of nearly every fruit, vegetable, mushroom and flower grown in Northern Michigan will be available to shoppers. The market is a thriving seasonal growers market.

There is an easy and natural flow between the market (which is still in its traditional home adjoining and amidst Parking Lot B) and downtown Traverse City. Shoppers begin and end their trips to the farmers market by having breakfast or lunch in downtown restaurants, purchasing complementary ingredients (e.g. vinegar, spices) from downtown merchants and shopping in other downtown retail stores.

Shoppers have arrived at the market using a variety of transportation options. Those who have driven private automobiles have easily found their way (through signage and other information tools) to parking in a variety of lots in the downtown area and are able to walk to the market safely and easily. Those who have ridden bicycles continue to find ample bike parking. Public transit is a convenient option for those who choose to ride the bus.

Although Parking Lot B continues to function during the rest of the week as a parking lot, on market days it feels like a thriving open air market and community meeting place. Shoppers move easily down the generously spaced aisles, pausing to greet each other, admire babies and take in the views of the Boardman River and Grand Traverse Bay without impeding the shopping experience of those who are more focused on shopping. Those who wish to truly linger and relax are able to do so around the periphery of the market where musicians play and benches are provided for the footsore.

Those with particular questions or needs are able to have these addressed easily. Signage to nearby restroom facilities is clear and easy to navigate. The Farmers Market Office serves as an information center for the market and for downtown in general.

A light rain picks up, but shoppers are protected from much of the precipitation by walkways that cover them and vendor booths. These covers or awnings are aesthetically pleasing and allow shoppers to continue to enjoy the pleasant setting by river and bay.

The market is seen as the resource that it truly is. Downtown merchants continue to benefit both directly and indirectly from the positive influence the market has on downtown Traverse City. City residents love shopping at the market, both to enjoy the wonderful fresh produce and to rekindle a connection to the source of their food. Those who are inconvenienced by a temporary loss in parking are able to quickly find other alternatives.

While understanding that all improvements are geared toward improving the Farmers Market experience, event promoters and organizers who use the market space have been included in design discussions so that they may plan for infrastructure changes. They have been provided some accommodations (e.g. tent tie downs) that make the space more useful for events. Improvements to the market space have created new opportunities for additional events to support downtown Traverse City.

Ultimately, the market and downtown Traverse City continue to thrive.

Specific Design/Development Criteria

High Priorities

- Maintain the current location.
- Improve booth and aisle configuration to relieve congestion and allow for better pedestrian flow.
- Overall, expand the market area to the North, further into the parking lot; keep shopper aisles wide.
- Provide expanded covered structures for shoppers and vendor booths; ensure that these do not block sight lines to the natural surroundings that are a positive for shoppers.
- Provide a clearer/safer means to cross Union Street for those parking in Lots Z and X.
- Provide signage and other information tools (e.g. app, handouts) to show layout of market, location of convenient parking, access to existing public restrooms, etc.

Lower/Medium Priorities

- If meeting/resting areas are provided, make them available at the edges of the Market and definitely away from any congested areas.
- If music is offered, similarly place it at the edge of the Market.
- Consider using signage or other means to improve traffic flow through Lot T to relieve vehicle congestion.
- Ensure that bike parking continues to be available to meet demand.

Study Methodology

The market vision was compiled based substantially on research conducted with key Farmers Market stakeholders. The details of how this data was collected are summarized below.

Downtown Business Owner Survey

Participation was triggered by an email invitation sent in April to 181 business owners. 77 unique responses were collected for a response rate of 42.5%. Participants were promised that individual responses would be anonymous.

Vendor Survey

Every vendor for whom the DDA had a current email address (80 vendors) was sent an email invitation. 45 of these vendors replied for a response rate of 56%. In addition, Avenue ISR telephoned nine vendors for whom the DDA did not have current email addresses. Three of these vendors participated for a total vendor respondent pool of 48. Participants were promised that individual responses would be anonymous.

Shopper Survey

Multiple methods were used to collect the perspective of those who shop at the market. The DDA made a link to the online survey available through the Downtown Traverse City Facebook page and Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market Facebook page. The DDA further sent emails to the Taste of Traverse City email list and to a proprietary list of Market shoppers accumulated by the DDA Board. Oryana Natural Foods Market in Traverse City promoted the survey through social media. The Taste the Local Difference program sent an email invitation to its email distribution list. In addition, 500 email invitations were sent to members of the Ticker Bench, a Traverse City based online research panel that is thought to be broadly representative of the Traverse City area. In all, 368 individuals responded to the shopper survey. The vendor and shopper surveys were fielded concurrently and the results from these surveys are in many cases reported together in this report for contrast and insight.

Stakeholder Interviews

The study authors conducted interviews with the Market Manager and with representatives of the National Cherry Festival, Traverse City Film Festival and Porterhouse Productions in order to test key assumptions and discuss implications of the survey research.

Summary of Key Research Findings

The following pages (7-33) contain detailed research results from the three surveys. The following key findings are offered for easy reference.

- Downtown business owners see direct and indirect benefits from the Farmers Market. 38% experience increased sales because of the Market. 48% see indirect benefits from the Farmers Market, such as increased visibility for their businesses or improved vitality of downtown Traverse City.
- About a quarter (26%) of downtown business owners see challenges or drawbacks as a result of the Farmers Market, mostly because the Market impacts the availability of parking for employees or patrons.
- A significant majority (65%) of downtown business owners would like to see the Market stay in its current location; the 35% who would generically like the Market to move were generally not able to suggest a specific location that they think would work better than the current Market space.
- The features of the current site and configuration that both vendors and shoppers appreciate are the beautiful setting and centralized location close to downtown Traverse City.
- The highest priority that is common to both vendors and shoppers of the Market is to provide better freedom of movement and relief from crowding and congestion.
- A strong secondary priority of shoppers is to provide some enhanced shelter from the elements.
- Shoppers who drive to the Market are willing to consider a range of parking options and generally do not need to park right next to the Market. Only 8% of shoppers believe they must be able to park in the Lots T and B; 50% are willing to park within a radius of about 2-3 blocks from the Market.
- Vendors would like better/easier access to bathrooms close to the market. However, although 44% of vendors would like to see portable toilets offered at the market, 47% of shoppers are generally opposed.
- A strong majority of both vendors and shoppers would like to see an additional overhead structure to provide covered market space.
- Support for a year round market is relatively weak. In particular, only 21% of vendors indicate they are Very or Extremely likely to participate in such a market.
- Some verbatim comments show that shoppers are relatively unaware of existing options for restrooms and parking.

Shopper Behaviors, Attitudes and Characteristics

The following results summarize responses to questions asked in the Shopper Survey and are provided as a backdrop against which to understand priorities for the Farmers Market space from the customer perspective.

Table 1 shows that 87% of those who shop at the Downtown Farmers Market are from the Traverse City area. Of these, more than half live within the city limits.

Table 1 – Residence

Where do you live?

Response	%
Traverse City, within city limits	45.4%
Traverse City Area, outside city limits	41.8%
Northwest Lower Michigan	11.5%
Elsewhere in Michigan	1.4%

Table 2 shows that close to half of shoppers visit the Market between six and 20 times over the course of a season. The average shopper attends the market 13 times over the course of a market season.

Table 2 – Frequency of Shopping

Over the course of a particular season, how often (if at all) do you shop at the Farmers Market?

Response	%
Not at all	1.9%
Once per season	4.6%
2-3 times	13.9%
4-5 times	12.5%
6-10 times	23.9%
11-20 times	25.3%
21-30 times	10.9%
31-40 times	4.3%
More than 40 times	2.7%

Chart 1 shows the months and days during which attendees come to the Farmers Market. Very few respondents attend on Wednesdays only in any given month. By implication, most Wednesday shoppers are also Saturday shoppers.

Chart 1 – Months and Days Attending

In which months and on which days do you tend to visit the Farmers Market?

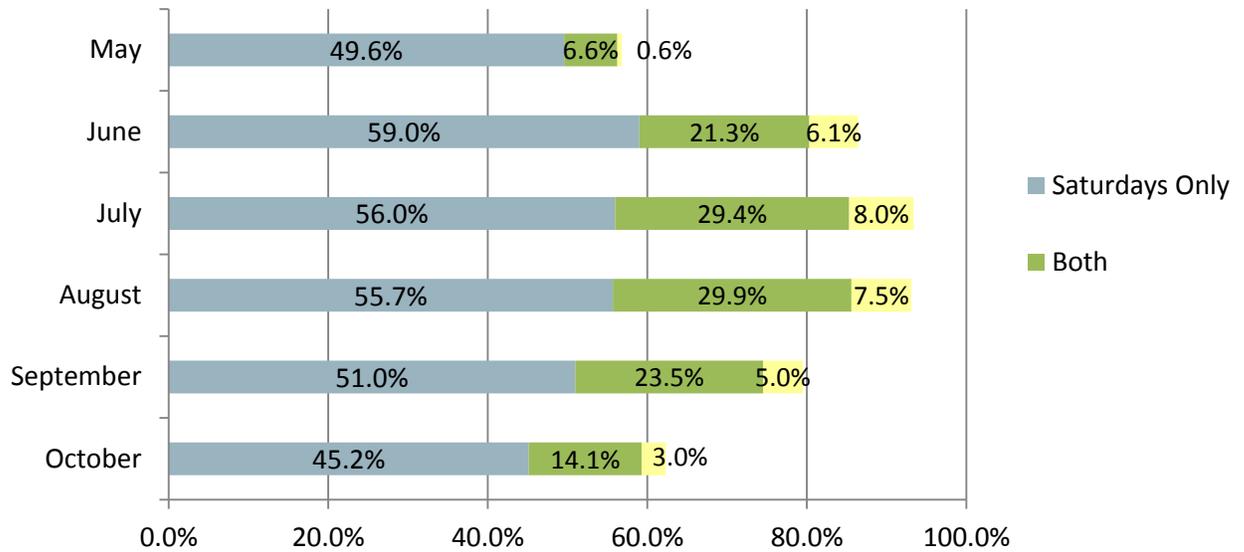


Table 3 details the times when shoppers typically visit the Farmers Market. According to these data, the peak attendance/arrival time tends to be 10 am.

Table 3 – Time of Day

At which time do you tend to visit the Farmers Market?

Response	%
7:30 am	6.4%
8:00 am	12.7%
8:30 am	11.4%
9:00 am	16.6%
9:30 am	9.4%
10:00 am	22.7%
10:30 am	6.4%
11:00 am	7.8%
11:30 am	2.8%
12:00 Noon	1.9%

Charts 2 and 3 show the extent to which shoppers at the Farmers market also shop in downtown Traverse City. These data show that nearly half (48.8%) of respondents report shopping or dining in downtown Traverse City at least half the time when they visit the Farmers Market. Typical spending is between \$1 and \$49.

Charts 2 and 3 – Frequency of Shopping

Do you shop or dine in downtown Traverse City before or after visiting the Farmers Market?
AND *When you do shop or dine in downtown Traverse City before or after visiting the Farmers Market, how much do you spend on average?*

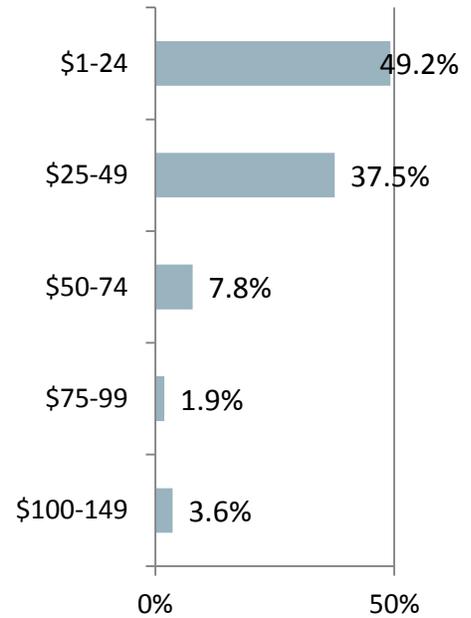
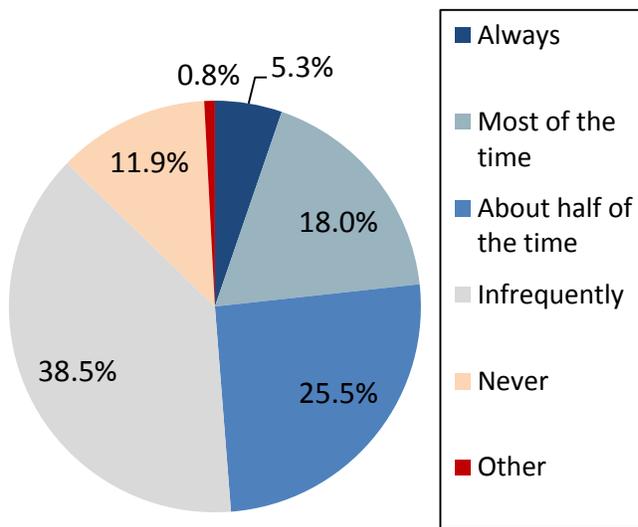


Table 4 indicates the modes of transport that shoppers use to go to and from the Farmers Market. Although private car/truck travel is the most widespread form of transportation, 31% ride bicycles, at least some of the time, to shop at the Farmers Market.



Table 4 – Mode of Transportation

Over the course of a typical season, how do you tend to travel to the Farmers Market? (select all that apply)

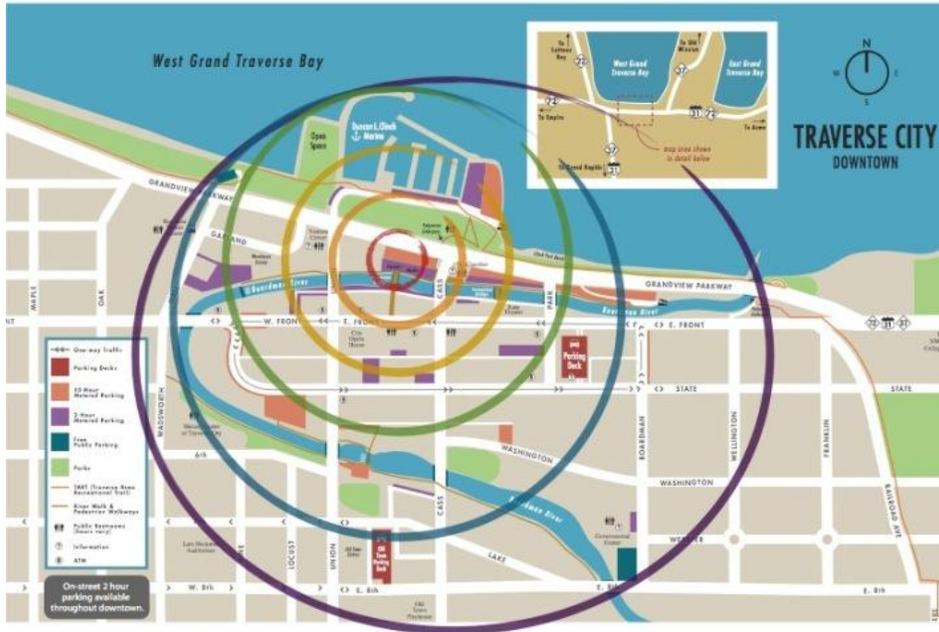
Response	%
Car or truck	81.2%
Motorcycle, scooter or similar	1.7%
Bicycle	31.0%
Walk	19.1%
Bus	0.6%
Other	0.6%



Table 5 provides information – for those who report using a car, truck, motorcycle, scooter or similar to attend the Farmers Market – about the greatest distance they are willing to park a vehicle and walk to the Farmers Market.

Table 5 – Vehicle Parking Distance

The map (below) shows downtown Traverse City. Please choose the colored circle that approximately shows the farthest that you are willing to park a vehicle and walk to the Farmers Market.



Response	%
Red circle - right in the parking lot next to the vendors	8.1%
Orange circle - across the bridge, etc.	22.2%
Gold circle	19.4%
Green circle	27.5%
Blue circle	12.3%
Purple circle	10.6%

Based on the data in Table 5, only 8% of shoppers believe they must be able to park in the Lots T and B. 50% are willing to park within the green circle shown on the map. 22.9% would be willing to park in the parking structure or similar distant area in the blue circle.

Tables 6, 7 and 8 show that the typical Farmers Market shopper is female. Between the ages of 35 and 54, with a total household income of between \$50K and \$75K.

Table 6 – Gender

What is your gender?

Response	%
Female	67.3%
Male	32.1%
Other	0.5%

Table 7 – Age

What is your age?

Response	%
Under 25	2.2%
25-34	21.6%
35-44	24.7%
45-54	22.8%
55-64	19.1%
65-74	8.4%
75 +	1.1%

Table 8 – Income

Which best describes your total household income before taxes in 2013?

Response	%
Less than \$35,000	14.0%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	11.9%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	26.6%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	18.9%
\$100,000-\$149,999	18.5%
\$150,000-\$199,999	3.8%
\$200,000 or more	6.3%

Priorities and Performance

Vendor and Shopper Priorities – Qualitative Results

Vendors and shoppers were asked to provide open-ended comments concerning the aspects of the current market space that they like the best and that they like the least.

The features of the current site and configuration that vendors like the best are the beautiful setting, high visibility and traffic, centralized downtown location and relative ease of loading and unloading.

What do you like best about the Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market in Traverse City?

- *“Access to lots of shoppers. Great location. Easy to load/unload.”*
- *“The location is great! It is easy to find.”*
- *“Brings people out I think the setting is excellent or I wouldn't be going there 21 years.”*
- *“Lots of customers. Centralized downtown location”*
- *“Setting by the river with trees, setting with character”*
- *“That parking for vendors is directly behind the table.”*

The biggest challenges for vendors with the current physical location and configuration (there were many comments about vendor policies) have to do with congestion and constrained spaces, availability of parking and access to restrooms. Hours of operation as an issue is not directly related to the physical space, but some respondents appeared to believe that extending the market hours to 1 or 2 pm would relieve some congestion during peak times.

What do you like least about the Farmers Market?

- *“Aisles are too narrow. Spaces are too tight. I wish there was a bathroom close at hand. The posts and parking meters inhibit setup.”*
- *“CONGESTION, Tight parking and narrow market walkways make market shopping prohibitive.”*
- *“I dislike the narrowness of the walkway in some spots under the canopy.”*
- *“Lack of restroom for vendors and customers affects sales.”*
- *“Parking is sometimes difficult”*
- *“Sidewalk east of the bridge is too narrow and crowded”*

The features of the current site and configuration that shoppers like the best generally center on the beautiful and convenient location of the market along with the breadth and variety of products sold.

What do you like best about the Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market in Traverse City?

- *“Location - near the Bay and the river, makes it a special walking trip, to look for fish in the river and take a walk over to the marina, park, etc.”*
- *“The setting by the river and with the view of the bay. A very pleasant start to our Saturday.”*
- *“Like the downtown/bay front location -- it adds to the experience.”*
- *“Casual, open, easy access location with charm of nearby waterfront and downtown as bonus”*
- *“Diversity of products & vendors; beautiful location by the river; walkable & bikeable from my home”*
- *“Great variety of everything”*

The biggest challenges for shoppers with the current physical location and configuration are also congestion and constrained spaces both for shoppers who are in the market and for the flow of vehicles in and out of Lots T and B. Availability of parking close to the market was also mentioned, though far less frequently than issues of congestion. Availability of restrooms was mentioned by few.

What do you like least about the Farmers Market?

- *“Aisles are too narrow”*
- *“Allowing parking in the area. The market needs more space. It's too tight and stressful to even attempt a second lap through. Farmers/vendors are losing sales because of this.”*
- *“Can get too crowded at times. Even though I like the busy feeling, it is sometimes hard to move because there are so many people.”*
- *“Congestion on side closest to river. We go right before closing to try and catch a slower time. Wish it was in a more open area with wider walkways.”*
- *“Congestion. Stressful environment. Doesn't cultivate sense of place or convening. Would love to relax in the space of the market... Enjoy coffee, music, people”*
- *“Crowded sidewalk and vendors too close to each other.”*
- *“Crowds at times, particularly those parking or attempting to do so”*

Some former shoppers of the market report no longer attending because of issues with congestion and access.

Vendor and Shopper Priorities – Quantitative Results

Vendors were asked to rate the importance of 13 attributes to the ideal experience at any farmers market. Chart 4 shows these results. Using the “Top 2 Box” rating (the percentage of respondents indicating the attribute is “Extremely important” or “Very important” on a 5-point scale) the vast majority of vendors indicate they want a market space that is clean and safe to access, offers a wide variety of products, has easily accessible vehicle parking, has a pleasant setting, has access to nearby bathrooms and is free of crowding. Much less important to vendors are entertainment, seating and proximity to downtown merchants. Of moderate importance are bicycle parking, shelter from the elements and a loading zone.

Chart 4 – Ideal Vendor Experience

Think about your ideal experience of working at any given farmers market, in Traverse City or elsewhere. In this ideal experience, how important are the following? (Top Two Box Score-Extremely/Very Important)

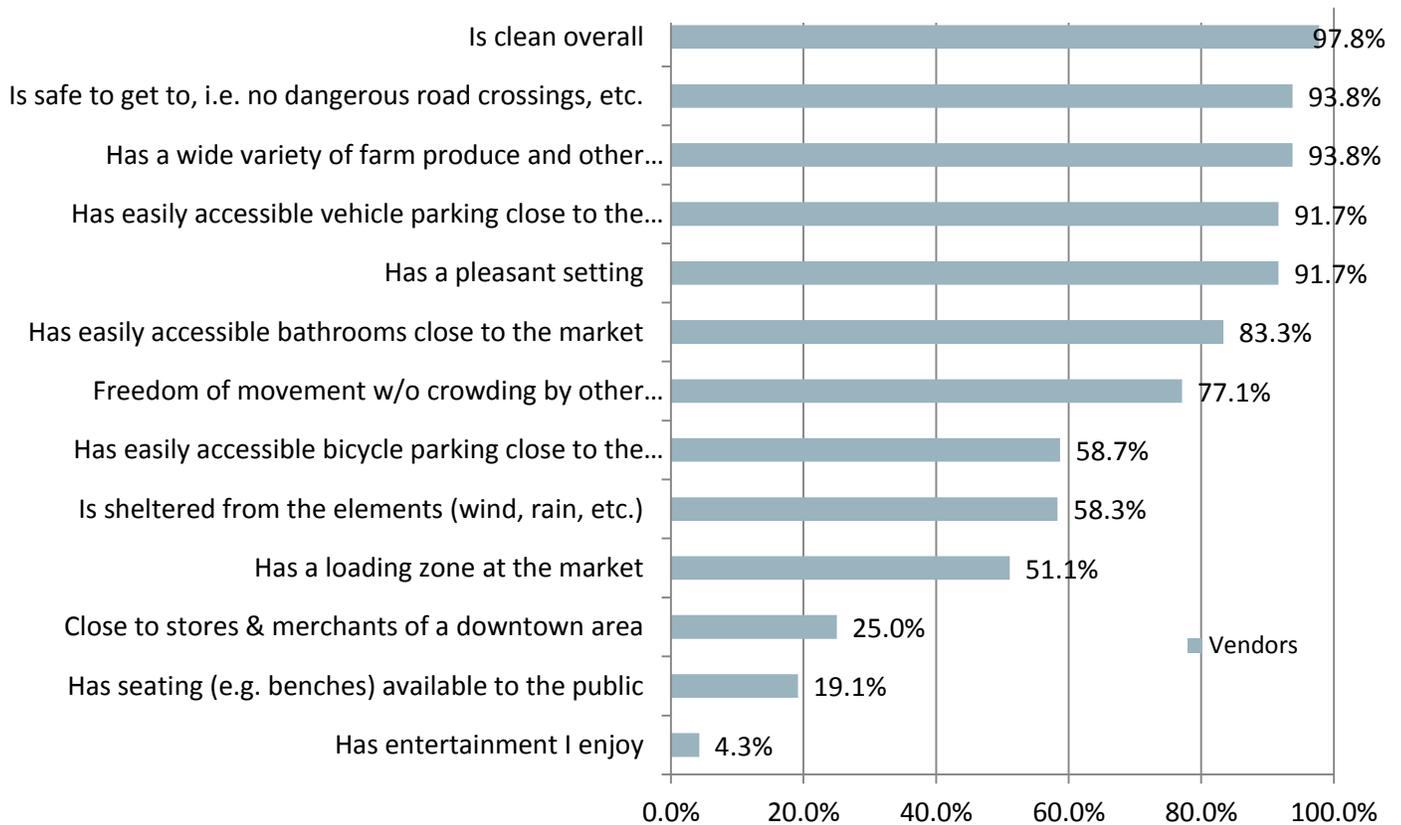
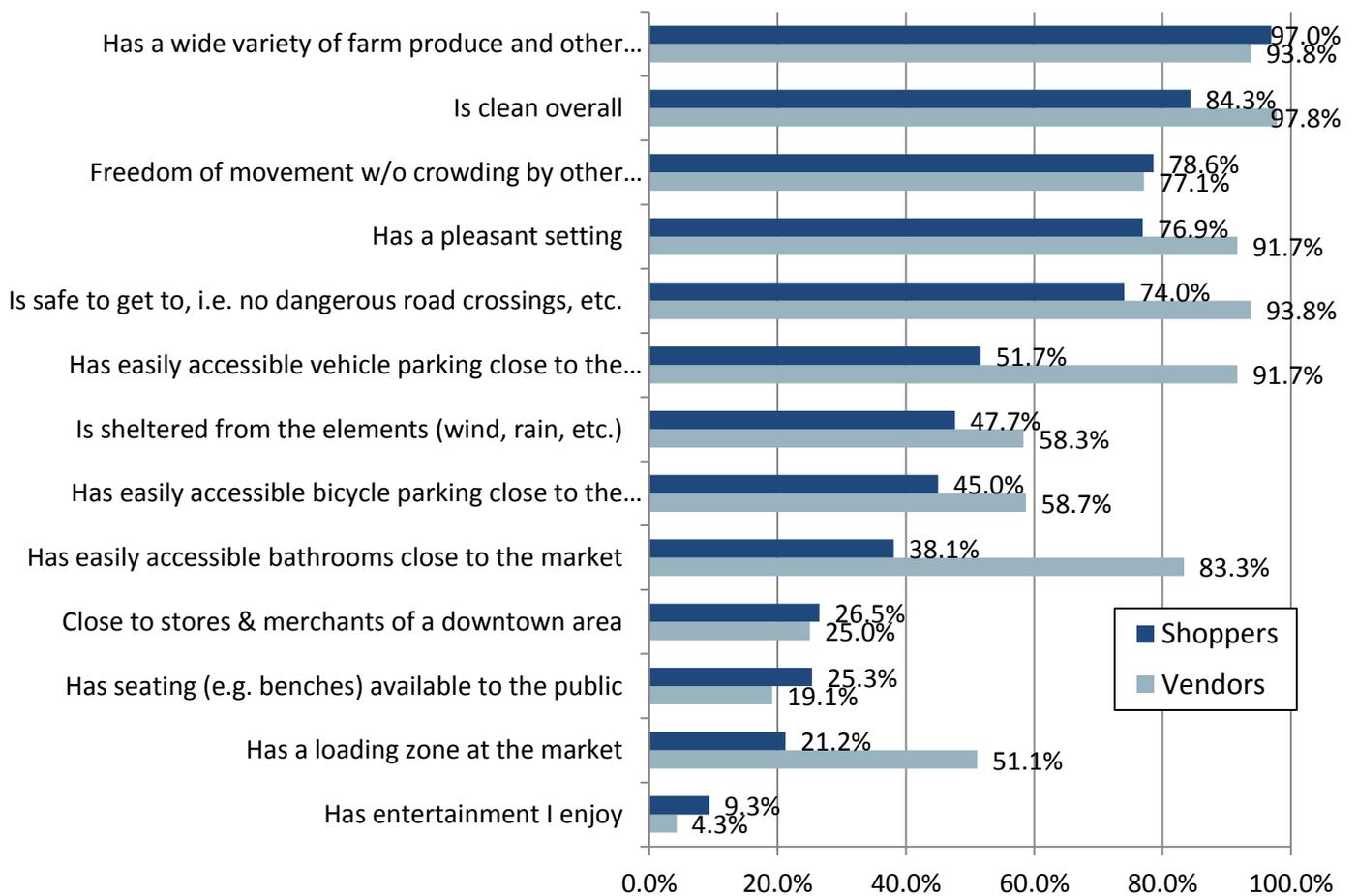


Chart 5 shows a comparison of vendor and shopper priorities. Some shopper priorities are closely aligned with vendor priorities. On the same scale and responding to the same question, the vast majority of shoppers also indicate that a wide variety of products, overall cleanliness, freedom from crowding, a pleasant setting and safe access are important. Two attributes that are of widespread importance to vendors – nearby vehicle parking and nearby bathrooms – are of more moderate importance to shoppers. Those attributes least important to vendors (a designated loading zone, proximity to downtown merchants, public seating and entertainment) were also least important to shoppers. Shelter from the elements and bicycle parking are of moderate importance to both vendors and shoppers.

Chart 5– Ideal Vendor Experience v. Ideal Shopper Experience

Think about your ideal experience of working at any given farmers market, in Traverse City or elsewhere. In this ideal experience, how important are the following? (Top Two Box Score- Extremely/Very Important)



Performance Against Vendor and Shopper Priorities

Vendors and Shoppers were also asked to rate the performance of the Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market against each of the 13 attributes.

Chart 6 shows a comparison between Vendors' importance ratings (see above) and "Top 2 Box" ratings of performance (the percentage of respondents indicating a statement is "Extremely accurate" or "Very accurate" in describing the Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market). The chart also shows "perception gaps" (the difference between the Top 2 Box importance rating and the Top 2 Box performance rating). A large perception gap generally indicates the Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market is underperforming in an area of high importance to vendors. A small or negative perception gap indicates the Farmers Market is over-performing relative to the importance of the attribute.

Based on these perception gaps, the areas in which vendors would most like to see improvement to the Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market space are:

- Better/Easier access to bathrooms close to the market
- Better freedom of movement with less crowding by other shoppers
- Improved shelter from the elements (wind, rain, etc.)
- Better access to vehicle parking close to the market

In other areas the market space either scores well for current performance or the attributes are of lesser importance to vendors.



Chart 6 – Performance versus Importance - Vendors

Think about your ideal experience of working at any given farmers market, in Traverse City or elsewhere. In this ideal experience, how important are the following? **AND** Now how accurate would you say the following statements are at describing the Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market in Traverse City? (Top Two Box Scores)

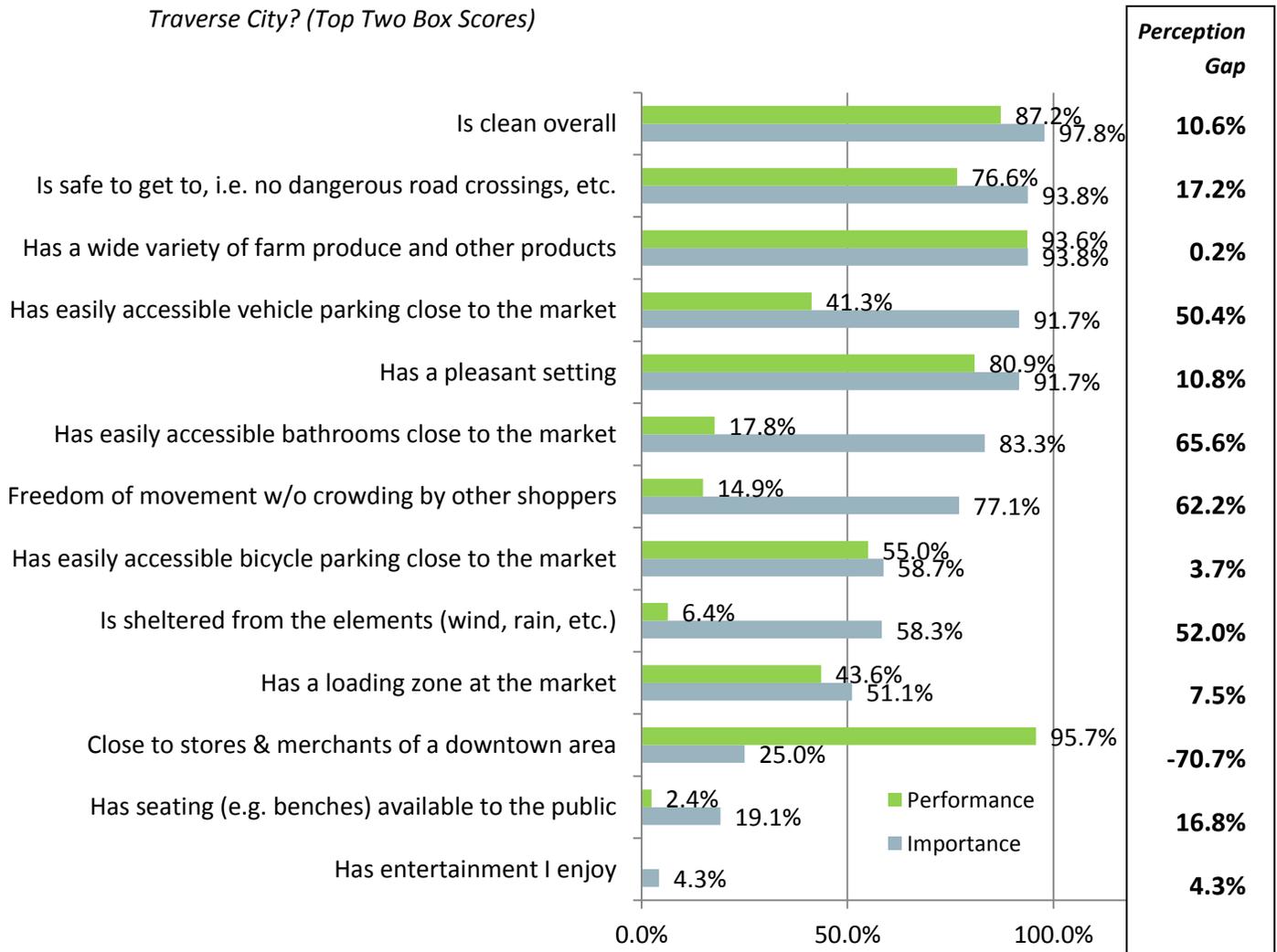


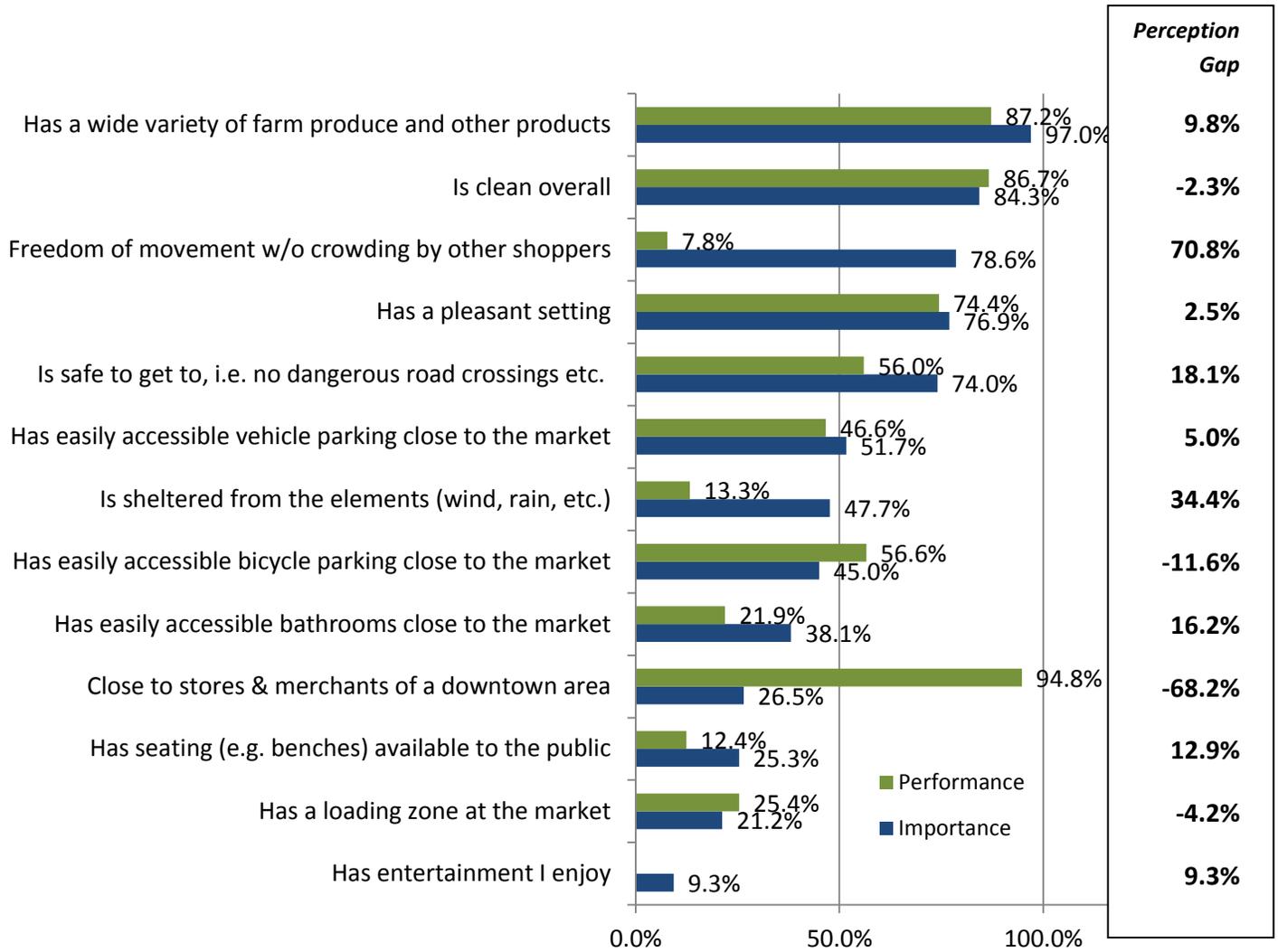
Chart 7 shows a comparable comparison between shoppers’ importance ratings and performance ratings. Based on perception gaps for shoppers, the biggest areas of desired improvement are:

- Better freedom of movement with less crowding by other shoppers
- Improved shelter from the elements (wind, rain, etc.)

In other areas the market space performs well or attributes are of lesser importance to shoppers.

Chart 7 – Performance versus Importance – Shoppers

Think about your ideal experience of attending any given farmers market, in Traverse City or elsewhere. In this ideal experience, how important are the following? **AND** Now how accurate would you say the following statements are at describing the Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market in Traverse City?



Specific Investments/Changes

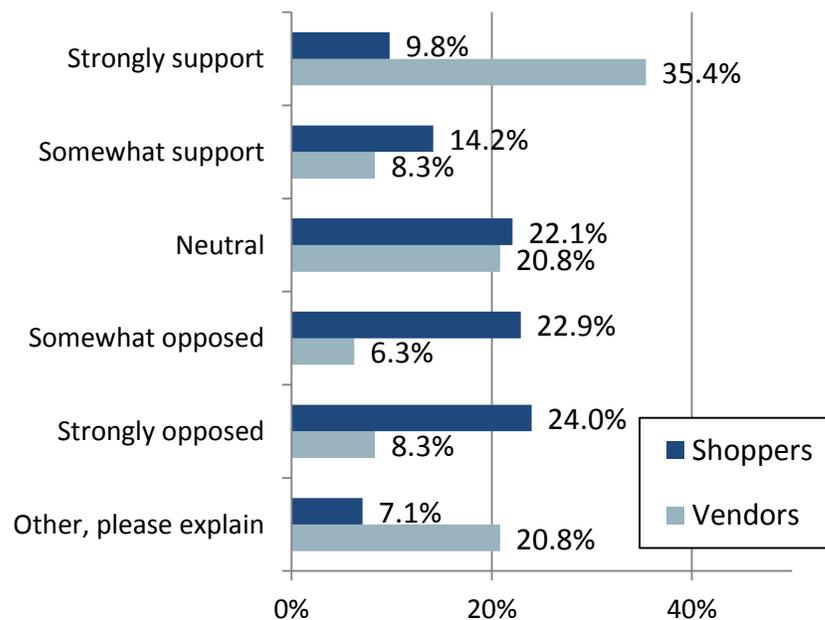
Vendors and shoppers were asked to rate their support or opposition to the installation of portable toilets at the market. Chart 8 summarizes the responses.

43.7% of vendors support providing portable toilets, with more than a third (35.4%) strongly supporting. Only 14.6% of vendors are opposed to providing portable toilets. Of those who indicate “Other,” a number would like to see portable toilets but only if they are aesthetically pleasing and well-maintained. One vendor emphasized that there must be a hand-washing station for portable toilets to be operated.

A much smaller percentage of shoppers (24%) support portable toilets while 46.9% are opposed.

Chart 8- Bathroom Facilities

Some have suggested that providing portable toilets (port-a-potties) at the Farmers Market on market days would be a valuable service to shoppers and farmers/vendors; others believe these would be unsightly and would negatively impact the shopping experience. What’s your opinion about adding



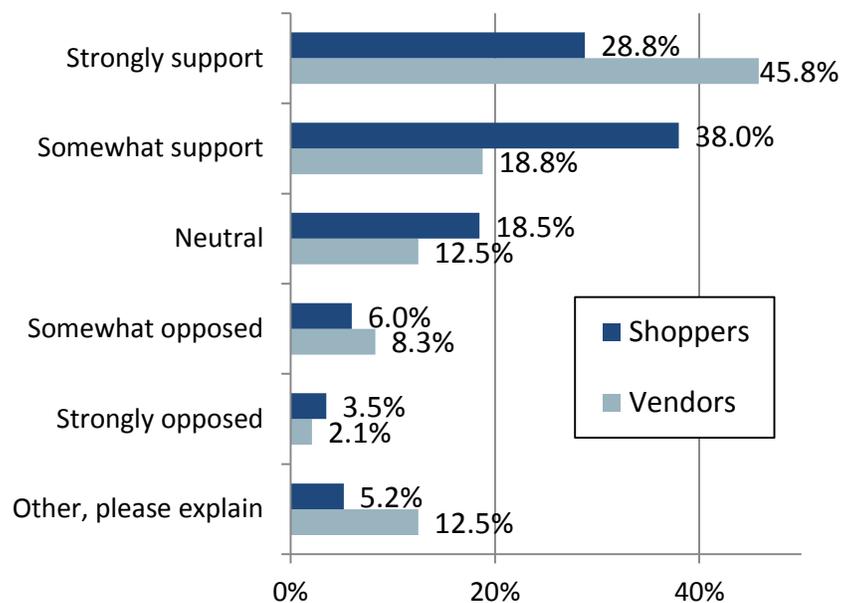
Vendors and shoppers were also asked to rate their support or opposition to the addition of more covered spaces at the market. Chart 9 summarizes the responses.

A majority of both vendors and shoppers favor providing an additional overhead structure at the current site of the Farmers Market. 66.8% of shoppers and 64.6% of vendors support adding this structure while less than 10% of vendors and shoppers are opposed.

Those vendors who wrote “Other” in response to this question generally support the idea of the structure if it is well-designed, does not eliminate parking and does not add to the cost that vendors pay.

Chart 9– Covered Spaces

Some have suggested that an additional overhead structure be built in the parking lot where the Farmers Market is held. This pavilion would provide additional covered space for vendors on market days. During business hours, cars would still be able to park underneath this pavilion. At other times of the day, this structure might be available for events and community activities. What’s your opinion about adding an additional overhead structure in the parking lot?

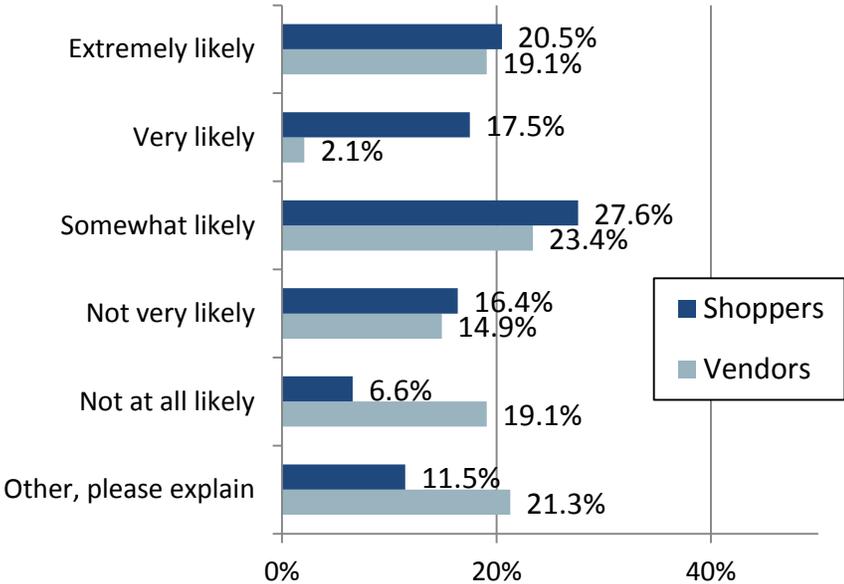


Finally, vendors and shoppers were asked about their likelihood of participating in a year round Downtown Farmers Market. Chart 10 shows that a significant minority (38%) of shoppers indicate it is Extremely or Very likely they would participate in a year round market. There is less interest among vendors, with 21.2% of vendors indicating it is Extremely or Very likely they will participate.

Many of the vendors and shoppers who wrote “Other” for this question indicated that they already participate in the Winter market at the Grand Traverse Commons and do not feel it is necessary to add an additional market during this season.

Chart 10- Year Round Market

Finally, some have suggested that the Farmers Market should become a year round market. Products available during late Fall and Winter would include eggs, meats, milk, cheese, homemade breads, maple syrup, honey and various preserved, dried and frozen produce. How likely is it you would shop at the Farmers Market November through April?



Finally, several vendors wrote in comments about tents and displays spilling over assigned areas. They would like better guidelines, spacing and/or monitoring to ensure that vendors do not crowd each other’s spaces.

Downtown Business Owner Survey Results

Overview

Avenue ISR designed and implemented an online survey using a third-party online survey tool. Participation was triggered by an email invitation sent to 181 business owners. 77 unique responses were collected for a response rate of 42.5%. Participants were promised that individual responses would be anonymous.

Results

Most respondents have owned businesses in downtown Traverse City for more than 5 years.

How many years have you owned a business in downtown Traverse City?

Response	%
2 years or less	18.2%
3-5 years	11.7%
More than 5 years	62.3%
Other	7.8%

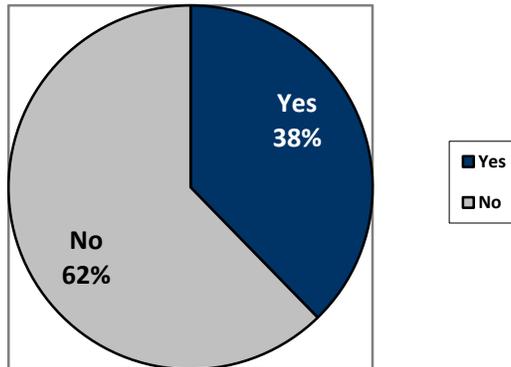
Most respondents are at least occasional shoppers at the Downtown Farmers Market.

How often, if at all, do you personally visit the Downtown Farmers Markets on market days?

Response	%
Once or twice a week	35.1%
Every few weeks	19.5%
A few times during the summer	36.4%
Not at all	9.1%

Only about 38 percent of respondents see a direct increase in sales for their businesses as a result of the Farmers Market.

*Does your business experience increased sales because of the Downtown Farmers Market?
If yes, please explain.*



(for those who said Yes to the previous question) Please explain how your business experiences increased sales because of the Downtown Farmers Market? What type of patrons? At what time? What do they purchase?

Patrons/Shoppers use the downtown for goods that will complement their Market purchases.

- “People visit our store to buy ingredients to use with items they purchased at the Farmers Market”
- “Right at opening (9 am), we have a crowd come over straight from the market looking for ways to supplement their market purchases”
- “We frequently see customers with fresh flowers, and produce, stopping in for a bite to eat or add to their next meal”

The Market draws foot traffic generally.

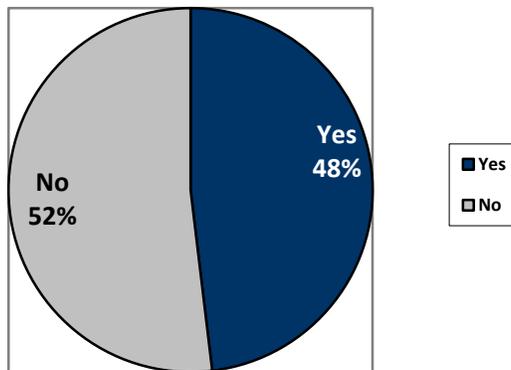
- “The market draws customers downtown that might not be there otherwise. For that reason, some will shop downtown since they are at the market.”
- “It provides increased exposure as people walking past our business to and from the Farmers Market will come in.”
- “Increased traffic means more sales, plus we are right across the bridge from the Market”
- “It brings many of my regular customers downtown early Wednesday and Saturday mornings.”

Those selling food and beverages benefit.

- “Early morning breakfast traffic increases once the Farmers Market starts”
- “Many people choose to have breakfast or lunch after their visit to the market.”
- “Many people come in for breakfast/coffee before or after they go to the market.”

A higher percentage (48.1 percent) sees indirect benefits from the Downtown Farmers Market.

Does your business see any indirect benefits from the Downtown Farmers Market? (e.g. increased visibility for your business, overall vitality of the downtown, etc.)



(for those who said Yes to the previous question) Please explain the indirect benefits you see to your business from the Downtown Farmers Market.

Foot traffic means store traffic.

- “More quality foot traffic.”
- “More people discover us for the first time”
- “Most anything that brings people downtown is good for business.”
- “A chance to be seen by new potential customers”

The Market showcases Traverse City as a community.

- “Visitors look for towns with farmers markets (quality). It represents the type of community we have, a true measuring tool.”
- “It creates a great 'organic' image for visitors.”
- “People like to shop local. This keeps things moving for everyone.”

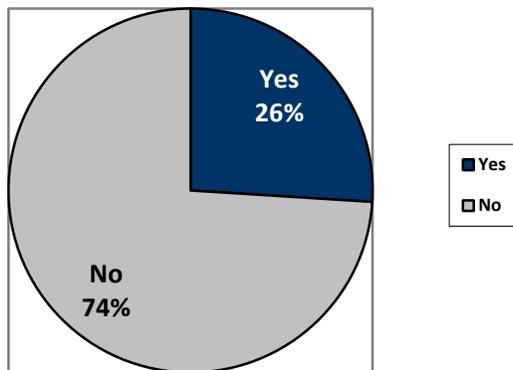
- “It's a key part of our vibrant green community. Access to fresh local food, supporting local agriculture...”

The Market rounds out and enhances the Downtown.

- “The farmers market makes downtown a great place to be on Saturday and Wednesday mornings and that contributes to a 'cool' downtown vibe.”
- “The farmers market adds to the services offered downtown and is a draw to the community to come downtown.”
- “We buy from many of the farmers/vendors and feature their products on our menus.”
- “Vitality of downtown. Recognition of locally sourced food.”

A significant minority (26 percent) experience challenges and/or drawbacks as a result of the Downtown Farmers Market.

Does your business experience any challenges or drawbacks as a result of the Downtown Farmers market?



(for those who said Yes to the previous question) Please explain the challenges or drawbacks your business experiences

The Market limits parking for patrons and employees.

- “I think parking is the biggest issue. It takes away parking from customers who want to shop downtown...”
- “Parking is problematic”
- “Less parking for my customers during market hours.”

- “Limits the parking for our guests and employees.”

The Market competes with some downtown businesses.

- “Drop in food sales, especially produce, on farmer's market days”
- “I own a flower shop downtown.”

Respondents rate the Market highly for its mix of products and vendors, as well as its proximity to the downtown. They rate the Market poorly for protection from the elements and access to restrooms.

Below are a handful of aspects of the Farmers Market. In each case, please rate the Farmers Market as Excellent, Good, Fair or Poor

	Top 2 Box	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Mix of products/vendors	94.1%	32.4%	61.8%	5.9%	0.0%
Proximity to downtown businesses	87.0%	43.5%	43.5%	10.1%	2.9%
Overall setting	73.5%	26.5%	47.1%	20.6%	5.9%
Access to parking	55.1%	23.2%	31.9%	26.1%	18.8%
Flow of shoppers/patrons	46.4%	11.6%	34.8%	31.9%	21.7%
Flow of car/vehicle traffic	33.3%	11.6%	21.7%	37.7%	29.0%
Protection from rain	27.3%	3.0%	24.2%	40.9%	31.8%
Access to restrooms	23.9%	6.0%	17.9%	25.4%	50.7%
Protection from wind	22.1%	1.5%	20.6%	47.1%	30.9%

Ultimately, the aspect of the market that downtown business owners like most is the broader sense of community it brings.

Ultimately, what do you like best about the Downtown Farmers Market?

The Market builds community and a connection with food.

- “The influx of food lovers and the presence of small farmers and local vendors. It brings a feeling of camaraderie for those of us living in the area”

- “The fact that the market does not try to compete with the downtown businesses, it compliments them.”
- “Just having a farmers market is important. We really like to purchase from local vendors and purchase a great variety of fresh produce. And it is an event to attend. Prices are mixed from good to reasonable to sometimes high. The quality of the produce is very good.”
- “It is part of the summer Downtown experience. It puts faces with our food.”

The Market is good for area farmers

- “Awareness of local businesses and farms. Can try new things that are readily available.”
- “The convenience for purchase of local foods and plants.”
- “The produce and variety of goods. Supporting the local/area farmers”
- “Venue for small farmers and artisans”

The Market brings an influx of enthusiastic people.

- “Good products and popular with locals. Good reason to come downtown.”
- “The amount of people it brings in”
- “That people are so enthusiastic and loyal to the downtown farmer's market...”

The Market has a pleasant setting.

- “Location to view the waterfront, quality of vendors, effort to bring diversity”
- “Being in walking or biking distance for downtown neighborhoods.”
- “It's close proximity to downtown and tradition”

The biggest complaints about the Market concern overall congestion and lack of parking.

Ultimately, what is the biggest problem or shortcoming with the Downtown Farmers Market?

There is overall congestion during the market.

- “Sidewalks are very crowded, and when you add strollers, etc., it is hard to maneuver”

- “So many people that enjoy the market, it makes it difficult to shop sometimes.”
- “Traffic is awful and quite dangerous to even bike or walk through the parking lot during the market. Cramped aisle when busy.”
- “Navigating the crowds. Not enough room for more vendors”

The current location is unable to support growth

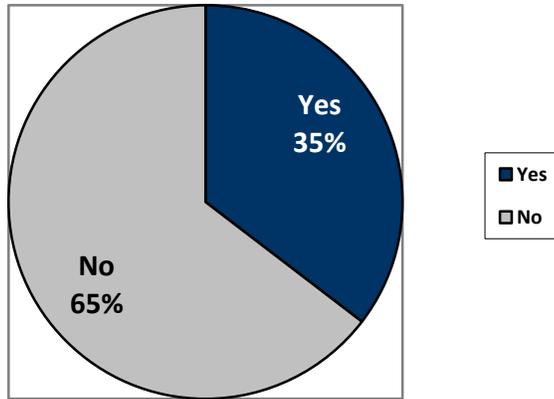
- “Lack of space for expansion and parking”
- “Crowded, tight walk ways. Some traffic flow problems. Limited space for growth.”
- “Growing faster than the parking lot will accommodate.”
- “I would like to see the market located in a better suited setting. Congestion is not desirable nor is the parking”

There is a consistent lack of parking

- “Probably accessibility/parking, shelter on rainy days, and a crowded experience for shoppers.”
- “Parking becomes an issue. Hard for people to get to during the busy summer. Find that visiting customers have no clue it is even going on.”
- “There are times that I would like to attend but I don't have much time so if there isn't an easy spot to park I just skip it.”
- “It takes away parking for downtown employees and customers”

Although the majority of downtown business owners do not want to see the Farmers Market moved, more than a third think it should be moved. Many of these do not have specific ideas about a better location in the downtown area however.

Some have suggested that the Downtown Farmers Market should move to a different location in downtown Traverse City. Keeping in mind that the Sara Hardy Farmers Market must remain in the Downtown Development District (see map above), do you think it should be moved?



Please provide a brief explanation of your previous answer. If it should not be moved, why? If it should be moved, where within the downtown district should it be moved, and why is this an improvement?

For those who think it should be moved...

It needs more space!

- “Needs a larger space and less traffic congestion”
- “It has outgrown the facilities - parking and vendor space.”
- “I think it should be moved because it has become so popular. It’s a social event as well as a shopping expedition. Additional space would allow the vendors to become more creative and the customers more time to shop.”
- “Just too small of an area for the popularity of the market, but with staying in the confines of the downtown area, not sure where else it could be.”

Suggested other locations are as follows.

- “Warehouse district, the courthouse, State street parking lot. You need more parking, more foot traffic flow, more vendor space.”
- “It should totally be at the Open Space. It would make everything for the customers easier”
- “Keep the location or move it, but build a permanent multi-level structure for year around use. Use Grand Rapids as the model. How about next to the Bata Station?”

For those who think it should not be moved...

The location is perfect!

- “I feel it is in the right spot, very picturesque, close to downtown”
- “Location is ideal. Next to Downtown, water, and parking.
- “I like that it is easily accessible from the beach and Front St. businesses. I think that it is a good central location.”
- “It is beautiful by the river, conveniently located and a big draw for our business”
- “Right now the market is a good draw for downtown businesses. If moved farther from the downtown shopping district, it would not be.”
- “Not until a realistic plan is in place with structures to protect vendors/customers from the elements. The ability to expand and handle growth while maintaining its downtown roots is important to me.”

Respondents did not state a preference for whether or not the Market should become a year round market. However, they did detail the positive and negative reactions they had.

Some have suggested that the Downtown Farmers Market should become a year round market, with the associated investments to protect shoppers and vendors from foul weather (like those shown above). What would you like about this change?

This would provide year round access to buy/sell fresh (local) produce

- “That would be great to have easy access to homegrown items all year round.”
- “We'd be able to sell our products year round”
- “It would be great to be able to purchase local products directly from farmers year round.”
- “It would support our local food base even more.”
- “It would be terrific to have better access to local produce/products year round, which would (I imagine) both support/stimulate the producers of such things and help build an even more vibrant community.”

What questions or concerns would you have with the Farmers Market becoming a year round market?

Some believe it doesn't make sense given the climate and growing region.

- “Not necessary with such a short growing season.”

- “This is not practical in our climate, unless the market would change from fresh locally grown foods/flowers/plants to packaged & preserved. What crops would be sold during the winter, when the land is frozen and unproductive? I don't feel there would be the same appeal or draw to a year-around market as there is to the current one. Packaged and preserved foods (even local) are available at local grocery stores.”
- “I think a year round market is great idea, however, considering the short growing season here, I am not sure what would be available for the farmers to sell year round.”

Some question whether the model would be sustainable.

- “Are the farmers selling only their own goods, or are they going to import produce and goods from somewhere else (Florida, California, Meijer, Sam's)?”
- “Would there be enough vendors to keep it going through the winter?”
- “Lack of abundant agriculture products in the off-season. Not enough traffic to make it worth the expense.”
- “What produce would be sold in the winter? It would become an open air indoor mall.”
- “How would it be financed? Seems like a big expense for an uncertain result.

Others wonder if existing businesses would suffer.

- “Would a venue like this then compete for other retail space and have a negative impact for Front Street Retailers? What do you do with the venue the other 5 days a week to make it viable?”
- “Are the groceries and food coop providing this already? Are the vendors interested in this concept? How does it fit w the indoor market at the GT Commons?”
- “That other kinds of vendors would go in that would compete with downtown - bakeries, coffee shops, cafe, canned goods, etc.”

Some feel the character of the market would be lost.

- “I like the essence of the market as it is, organic, open air. I have seen other markets such as you mention and they do not have the same feel. I think the current market blends with our town in the right way currently”

- “The quaintness of the open air, outdoor market would be lost. There's something very 'small town' feeling about the outdoor market.”