

WISCONSIN RAPIDS
DOWNTOWN
BUY LOCAL *Farmers Market* EAT LOCAL

**HEALTH IMPACT
ASSESSMENT**

FEBRUARY
2023

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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We would like to extend a special thank you to everyone who participated in the online survey and shared their ideas with us at the Farmers Market.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	2
<i>Assessment Part 1: Background Data</i>	4
<i>Assessment Part 2: Literature Review</i>	7
Local Food	7
Local Economy	9
Social Connectedness	13
<i>Assessment Part 3: Decision Points</i>	15
<i>Assessment Part 4: Community Engagement</i>	16
Findings, Recommendations, & Next Steps	17
Monitoring & Evaluation	20

References 21

Appendix 24

INTRODUCTION

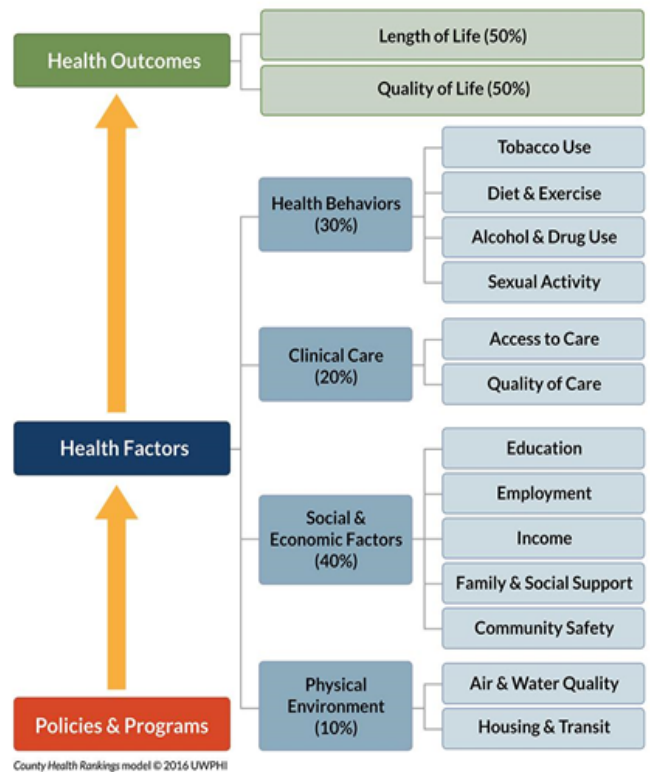
HIA OVERVIEW & COMMUNITY CONTEXT

When we think of what makes us healthy, many of us think of healthcare and individual behaviors. However, many of our health outcomes are actually shaped by the social, economic, and environmental conditions in the places where we live, learn, work, and play - *see image to the right*. In order to effectively improve health, we must routinely consider health when making decisions about policies, projects, and plans that shape our world outside the doctor’s office.

In 2017, the City of Wisconsin Rapids embarked on a five-year project through the Legacy Community Alliance for Health (LCAH), aimed at enabling local governments to work on health equity in a data-driven, evidence-based way by imbedding consideration of health and equity within the regular operation of departments and staff. The overarching goal of the project is for local governments to adopt a localized Health in All Policies (HiAP) approach. Broadly, HiAP is a collaborative and comprehensive proven framework for identifying public policy alternatives that have a positive impact on health outcomes, and avoiding the unintended impacts of public policy that can adversely impact health.

In 2017, the City of Wisconsin Rapids was chosen as a participant for the Wisconsin LCAH project through UW-Madison School of Medicine and Public Health. The goal of the project is to help local governments in Wisconsin improve health and health equity using evidence-based policies and programs through a HiAP approach. An Advisory Team was formed in 2018, which consisted of Wood County Health Department (WCHD) staff, City of Wisconsin Rapids Community Development staff, and other community stakeholders. The Advisory Team received training and embarked on a process of discovery and concept development to identify what this program could look like locally. The Team decided to develop a Health Impact Assessment Matrix, while concurrently conducting a series of Rapid Health Impact Assessments (HIA) on timely projects or developments in the community.

Unfortunately staff turnover and the COVID-19 pandemic put a pause on this work from 2019-2022. In the spring of 2022, WCHD staff and City staff discussed potential projects for a



rapid HIA. The farmers market was ultimately chosen for the next rapid HIA because the timeline of planning and development aligned so that project decisions could still be altered based on recommendations provided in the HIA. Although we had a formal HIA Advisory Team when we started this work in 2018, over fifty percent of the members are no longer in their previous positions. The HIA Advisory Team provided insight and guidance around the initial setup and decision to conduct rapid HIAs locally and develop an HIA matrix. However, for this farmers market HIA, it made more sense to use the existing farmers market groups that had a vested interest in the market rather than pull together a new HIA Advisory Team.

Based on the results from the 2020 Wood County Community Health Assessment and the interests and concerns of the community as determined by the 2020-2024 Community Health Improvement Plan, **this HIA examines the potential positive and negative health impacts of a farmers market's permanent structure, location, built environment characteristics, and accessibility as they relate to local food, local economy, and social connectedness.**

The recommendations for the farmers market development are provided in this report, and are based on predicted health impacts determined by an extensive literature review and local primary and secondary data, which includes direct data from the community input obtained at the farmers market and via an online survey.

This report should be consulted by planners, developers, decision-makers, and others engaged in future development and design proposals for the neighborhood to ensure design elements are mitigating negative health effects and bolstering positive health effects for all populations.

FARMERS MARKET PERMANENT STRUCTURE OVERVIEW

The Wisconsin Rapids Farmers Market has been a long-standing part of the community, operating since 2005. In 2018, the Wood County Health Department began providing oversight and management of the market. The market brings together local farmers and community members to make fresh, local, healthy foods more available to everyone. Over the years it has evolved from simple tables and tents in different locations throughout Wisconsin Rapids to the thriving market it is today with more than 72 vendors and hundreds to thousands of patrons each week. Recent improvements to the market have included the ability to use EBT/Credit/Debit, Food Voucher Prescriptions, Senior Vouchers, and Women, Infant Children (WIC) Vouchers to broaden the market's reach. The Wisconsin Rapids Downtown Farmers Market is an integral part of the community's goal to improve overall health in Wisconsin Rapids and the surrounding area. It fills a need for providing healthy, local foods to community members, as well as providing revenue for local farmers.

While the market has many exciting plans and developments for the upcoming and future seasons, what it doesn't have is a permanent home in the form of a physical structure. Helping the market secure a permanent home on the west side of Wisconsin Rapids will increase accessibility, reduce current parking issues, improve safety for pedestrian traffic, and bring improved access to fresh produce to an area of the community with low economic resources.

GOALS OF FARMERS MARKET HIA

- Determine the best physical location for the Downtown Wisconsin Rapids Farmers Market.

- Evaluate the potential positive and negative health impacts of a permanent farmers market, a physical structure, the farmers market location, and accessibility as they relate to local food, local economy, and social connectedness.
- Obtain community input on various aspects of the farmers market to implement in the future planning of the market.

ASSESSMENT FINDINGS PART 1: BACKGROUND DATA

The assessment phase of an HIA provides a profile of existing baseline health conditions and assesses potential impacts of the decision. Part one of the assessment phase provides an overview of demographics in Wisconsin Rapids and existing baseline data as it relates to the main focus areas of the HIA - local food, local economy, and social connectedness.

DATA SOURCES

1. County Health Rankings 2022

The County Health Rankings provide a snapshot of a county's health. Nearly every county in the nation is ranked to help communities understand what influences how healthy residents are and how long they will live. The rankings are based on a model of population health that emphasizes the many factors that deeply impact a person's ability to be healthy. The rankings are compiled using county-level measures from a variety of national and state data sources.

2. Farm2Facts Wisconsin Rapids Downtown Farmers Market 2022 Summary Economic Impact Report 2022

The mission of Farm2Facts (F2F) is to lend farmers markets a voice in delivering impactful tools for data collection, analysis, and visualization. The F2F research team focuses on empowering markets for community growth through community engagement, and the F2F tools are administered at UW-Madison. The Wisconsin Rapids Downtown Farmers Market is part of the F2F project and as a result received a 2022 summary economic impact report including data on numerous aspects of the market.

3. Incourage Community Survey 2017

In 2012, Incourage Community Foundation led the first ever Community Survey for the South Wood County area. Five years later, they conducted another survey to understand residents' current hopes and concerns and identify priorities for the community. Among all respondents, economic priorities were one of the top priorities for the future of the community. The majority of respondents said that local organizations in all sectors need to collaborate to address community priorities and concerns identified. Additionally, residents indicated a desire for a more engaged community.

4. Survey of the Health of Wisconsin (SHOW) 2016

SHOW is a comprehensive ongoing annual health survey gathering data on health and a wide range of health determinants. Surveys are complemented by physical measurements and biosample collection. Data are collected from participants living in diverse urban and rural communities, towns, and cities across the state.

5. Wisconsin Health Atlas 2015-2016

The purpose of the Wisconsin Health Atlas is to help make Wisconsin the healthiest state by connecting local change makers with data that informs and supports their health promotion efforts. It is an accessible web portal that connects community groups working to improve health to the local area data and information they need to inform and evaluate their work. It aims to provide a comprehensive picture of the multiple factors that impact health including individual behaviors, policies, systems, and environments.

6. Wisconsin Rapids Demographics Overview from US Census Bureau 2020

Census data was collected for the City of Wisconsin Rapids and compared to Wood County overall to provide an overview of demographics.

7. Wood County Community Health Assessment 2020

The most recent community health assessment (CHA) for Wood County was completed in 2020. The health priorities for Wood County were chosen after collecting and analyzing primary and secondary data from local and state sources. The primary data was collected using three different methods: key informant interviews, community conversations, and community health assessment surveys. The primary data collection resulted in the completion of 33 key informant interviews, 6 community conversations, and 874 community health assessment surveys. Through this process, the following were among the top five most important community health concerns: income and employment, healthy activity and food environments, mental health and well-being, healthy growth and development, and alcohol and other substance use.

8. US Healthiest Communities Rankings 2022

The US News and World Report developed their Healthiest Communities Rankings to provide information about the local policies and practices in place that drive health outcomes. This online interactive database includes comprehensive rankings drawn from nearly 3,000 counties and county-equivalents on 89 metrics across 10 categories.

9. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Enrollment and Participation Reports

These data reports provide information regarding student enrollment and free and reduced price eligible students. The report also provides meal participation data by free/reduced price and paid categories. The source data for the annual E&PR comes from annual October reimbursement claims submitted to the DPI by Local Education Agencies (LEAs).

COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS DATA

- (6) Wisconsin Rapids Population: 18,877
- (6) Wisconsin Rapids Unemployment Rate: 7.3%
- (6) Wisconsin Rapids Median Household Income: \$44,485
- (6) Wisconsin Rapids Poverty Rate: 14.7%
- (6) 7.7% of the population ages 5 and over speak a language other than English at home in Wisconsin Rapids

LOCAL FOOD

- (1) 7% of the population in Wood County are considered low-income and do not live close to a grocery store
- (7) There are 809 square miles in Wood County and only one grocery store per 100 square miles, which is 1.5 grocery stores per 10,000 people
- (8) Wood County Population Without Access to Large Grocery Store: 24.7%
- (1) 10% food insecurity in Wood County - percentage of population who lack adequate access to food
- (7) In Wood County, 72% of food insecure households were below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) and would likely qualify for federal nutrition assistance
- (7) In Wood County, 18% of adults and 38% percent of children participated in the FoodShare program
- (9) In 2019, 4 of 10 public schools in the Wisconsin Rapids school district have 100% of their student body who qualify for free & reduced
- (9) In 2019, 55.93% of students attending public schools in the Wisconsin Rapids school district qualify for free and reduced lunch
- (6) 16.9% of households in Wisconsin Rapids receive federal nutrition assistance through Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- (4) 33% of Wisconsin Rapids residents reported no easy access to fresh fruits and vegetables
- (4) Only 2.4% Wisconsin Rapids residents meet recommended fruit/vegetable intake
- (5) 47.6% and 47.1% obesity prevalence among all 18+ year olds in the 54495 and 54494 zip codes of Wisconsin Rapids
- (1) 36% adult obesity in Wood County
- (8) Wood County Diabetes Prevalence: 8.2%
- (2) Average distance in miles traveled from product origin to market = 21.91 miles

LOCAL ECONOMY

- (6) Wisconsin Rapids Unemployment Rate: 7.3%
- (6) Wisconsin Rapids Median Household Income: \$44,585
- (6) Wisconsin Rapids poverty rate among those under 18 years old: 20.1%
- (6) Wisconsin Rapids poverty rate among 18-64 year olds: 14.1%
- (6) Wisconsin Rapids poverty rate among those ages 65+: 10.0%
- (3) 89% of residents said good quality jobs that are accessible to all are very important to the future of the community
- (3) 78% of residents said that having a community that supports local entrepreneurs and business owners is a priority for the future of the community
- (7) Poor economy was the most commonly referred to challenge in key informants interviews
- (7) 5 out of 6 groups identified poor economy as a challenge in the community conversations
- (2) Average dollars spent per visitor per visit to Wisconsin Rapids Downtown Farmers Market (estimated) = \$24.34
- (2) Total number of individuals employed by Wisconsin Rapids Downtown Farmers Market business = 28

- (2) 10.11% of visitors whose mode of transportation included walking, bicycling, carpooling, ridesharing, or taking public transportation to the Wisconsin Rapids Downtown Farmers Market (estimated)
- (2) Average number of visitors per market day at Wisconsin Rapids Downtown Farmers Market (estimated) = 2135
- (2) 19.10% of customers who were first time visitors to the Wisconsin Rapids Downtown Farmers Market (estimated)

SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS

- (3) 85% of residents cited “many residents active in civic life” as very important to achieve in the future
- (8) Wood County voter participation rate: 73.1%
- (8) Wood County nonprofits/100K: 497.7
- (8) Wood County population within 0.5 miles of walkable destinations: 55.5%
- (8) Wood County walkability index score: 6.9

ASSESSMENT FINDINGS PART 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Part 2 of the assessment phase provides an overview of the existing research related to the research questions and offers recommendations. Extensive literature reviews were conducted for each research question to learn how various decisions related to the project could impact health. The literature reviews allow us to apply findings from other places and make predictions about how similar decisions might impact health in our local community. We then take this information combined with local community data to develop recommendations related to the development project to manage potential negative impacts and optimize anticipated positive impacts.

This section contains three subsections:

1. Local Food Literature Review
2. Local Economy Literature Review
3. Social Connectedness Literature Review

LOCAL FOOD

Poor nutrition is linked to multiple chronic diseases, can hinder growth and development, can lead to obesity or malnutrition, and impacts physical and mental health outcomes, (Community Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2022). Additionally, unhealthy food intake has economic impacts for individuals and communities. Current estimates for obesity-related health care costs in the US range from \$147 billion to nearly \$210 billion annually, and productivity losses due to obesity-related job absenteeism cost an additional \$4 billion each year (Community Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2022).

Access to healthy food has been determined a priority from Wood County Community Health Assessments for more than 15 years making it an important health impact of interest for this HIA. Efforts to address food access in Wood County have included farm to school, healthy grab and go at grocery stores, vending machine improvements, and more recently using a

community food system approach to improve access to local food through support of farmers markets.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Why is healthy, local, affordable food important for health?
 2. Why are farmers markets important for health?
 3. Who has access to fresh, local food?
-

WHY IS HEALTHY, LOCAL, AFFORDABLE FOOD IMPORTANT FOR HEALTH?

According to the County Health Rankings, seven percent of Wood County's population is both considered low-income and do not live close to a grocery store which is defined as a "food desert" (2022). This is important because evidence shows that living in a food desert is correlated with high rates of obesity and premature death. Additionally, populations who are considered low income often lack consistent access to healthy foods which is related to negative health outcomes such as weight gain, premature death, asthma, activity limitations, and increased healthcare costs (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2022). **Farmers markets increase access to and availability of healthy, affordable, local food which is important to health for multiple reasons.**

Locally sourced produce is typically more affordable than produce at a grocery store because local farmers do not have to worry about delivery costs or preservatives (Frisco Fresh Market, n.d.). This is especially beneficial for low income communities who lack access to healthy foods due to cost barriers. Farmers markets can ensure everyone in the community has access to fresh, affordable, and healthy food.

Additionally, local produce sold at farmers markets often has a higher nutritional content than produce sold at grocery stores. "Produce from local farmers has spent more time on the vine, on the tree or in the ground, so you get better taste and more nutrients. When it comes to fresh fruit and vegetables, the shorter the time and distance from farm to sale, the higher the levels of vitamins and minerals" (Johns Hopkins Medicine, n.d.). In fact, "on average, "fresh" vegetables lose up to 45% of their nutritional value between being picked and landing on the grocery shelf. Peak season, fresh picked produce gives you the best taste and maximum nutrition, making it the best value for your food dollar" (K-State Research & Extension, n.d.). The average distance in miles traveled from product origin to market was 21.91 miles for the Wisconsin Rapids Downtown Farmers Market (Ely-Ledesma, 2022).

WHY ARE FARMERS MARKETS IMPORTANT FOR HEALTH?

Farmers markets can support health in multiple ways. The most obvious way is serving as an additional outlet for healthy foods like fruits and vegetables. Increasing access to fruits and vegetables is important because a diet rich in fruits and vegetables can lower blood pressure, reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke, prevent some types of cancer, lower risk of eye and digestive problems, and have a positive effect upon blood sugar, which can help keep appetite in check and may even promote weight loss (Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, n.d.). A 2012 study in Austin, Texas found that farm stands operating in low-income neighborhoods just one day a week increased the consumption of fruits and vegetables for families within walking distance. Additionally, a study in North Carolina found that proximity to farmers markets

was associated with lower body mass index (BMI) for youth. These studies concluded that just **the presence of a farmers market in a community positively impacts the health and diet of that community**, especially in areas that lack access to fresh, healthy food (Farmers Market Coalition, n.d.). An evaluation of a farmers market program showed that farmers markets have been associated with increases in fresh produce purchases and self-reported increases in fruit and vegetable consumption, especially in low income communities. It found that individuals who shop at farmers markets two or more times per week report higher levels of consumption than individuals who shop less frequently (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2018).

WHO HAS ACCESS TO FRESH, LOCAL FOOD?

Data clearly shows a lack of access to food in Wood County. One in ten Wood County residents lack adequate access to food and 33% of Wisconsin Rapids residents reported no easy access to fresh fruits and vegetables (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2022; Bersch et al., 2016). Wood County boasts 809 square miles, but has only one grocery store per 100 square miles, which equates to 1.5 grocery stores per 10,000 people (Wood County Community Health Assessment, 2020). Additionally, 24.7% of the population in Wood County lack access to a large grocery store (Healthiest Communities Rankings, 2022).

A permanent farmers market provides the opportunity to buy fresh food that might otherwise be lacking due to the limited number of grocery stores in Wood County. It's important that all people have an opportunity to purchase fresh, local food at a farmers market. Farmers markets are increasingly accepting Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) benefits which provide increased accessibility to fresh food for low-income families (Community Science, 2013). According to the Wood County Health Department WIC Director, 62% of Wood County WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) vouchers were redeemed in 2021. The FMNP vouchers are given to Wood County WIC participants to use on locally-sourced fresh fruits and vegetables. Additionally, almost 17% of households in Wisconsin Rapids receive federal nutrition assistance through Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (United States Census Bureau, 2020). **By accepting SNAP and WIC benefits, farmers markets are increasing access to fresh, local food for low-income families.**

According to the County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, reported barriers to farmers market use include limited transportation options, lack of information about the location or hours of farmers markets, and markets not accepting SNAP benefits (2018). These barriers can be lessened by increasing safe transportation options to the farmers market, expanding market hours and locations, accepting SNAP benefits, and promoting awareness of the market.

LOCAL ECONOMY

Economic factors are typically not considered when it comes to health, yet strategies to improve economic factors can have an even greater impact on health over time than traditional strategies that focus on health behaviors (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2022). In the 2020 Wood County Community Health Assessment, poor economy was the top priority identified in key informant interviews and 5 out of 6 groups identified it as a challenge in the community conversations making it an important health impact of interest for this HIA.

Wisconsin Rapids has seen many changes in the last 15 years, including the closure and sale of large industries and the closure and sale of the local mall that provided space and management of the farmers market. The closure left many vendors and shoppers concerned about what the future may hold. After reviewing strategies, a small farmers market committee determined a need for oversight to maintain the market and to increase the types of currency available to use, including SNAP, WIC vouchers, Senior Vouchers, etc. at the market.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Why are farmers markets important for the local economy?
 2. What characteristics of the built environment are important for economic vitality?
 3. What are the secondary economic impacts of having a physical structure?
-

WHY ARE FARMERS MARKETS IMPORTANT FOR THE LOCAL ECONOMY?

Farmers markets have positive economic impacts for multiple groups of people including vendors, shoppers, and the community as a whole.

First, farmers markets have positive economic benefits for vendors. They create local jobs and provide low-cost storefronts for vendors to sell their products. Twenty-eight individuals were employed by market business during the 2022 Wisconsin Rapids Farmers Market season. Farmers markets provide a location for local entrepreneurs as a first point of entry into the market to test out their product and determine whether to invest in a larger business infrastructure (Kelly, 2021). They also provide an outlet for entrepreneurs to share ideas with each other. Farmers markets also provide a source of income for vendors whether that be a primary or secondary source of income. Being able to quickly and directly market to local consumers gives vendors important income opportunities without the added costs of shipping, storage, distribution, and inventory control (Alonzo, 2017).

Farmers markets also have economic benefits for local shoppers. They provide access to fresh, local produce and other locally sourced products. They create an opportunity to purchase fresh food in communities that might otherwise lack access to fresh, healthy food. Increased consumption of fresh, healthy food can improve overall health and quality of life which has numerous benefits. They also serve as a free place for community members to gather and share ideas.

Last, **farmers markets have economic benefits for the community as a whole by providing an opportunity for a robust local economy.** When products are produced, processed, and distributed all within the same region, more money stays in the local economy, which leads to economic development and job creation (Alonzo, 2017). Farmers markets serve as powerful engines of economic activity and growth for communities as a whole. They can be a tool for rural development, drawing people into downtown business districts where local dollars circulate in a synergistic fashion (Hilchey, 1995). During the 2022 farmers market season, the estimated average dollar amount spent per visitor per visit was \$24.34 at the Wisconsin Rapids Downtown Farmers Market (Ely-Ledesma, 2022).

WHAT CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT ARE IMPORTANT FOR ECONOMIC VITALITY?

Important built environment characteristics to consider when choosing an appropriate site for a permanent farmers market include high visibility and proximity to the business or retail district. A location with high visibility on a highly trafficked road is important so potential customers can easily see the market by vehicle, foot, and bike (Farmers Market Federation of NY, n.d.). A more secluded location requires more investment in signage and marketing to direct people to the site and get people to a location they may not otherwise pass by. **A location close to the community's business or retail district is important in both bringing people to the market and increasing sales of those surrounding businesses.** People may not have much extra time to get to the market, especially on weekdays, so having the location close to workplaces allows workers at surrounding businesses to attend the market on lunch break and before or after work without taking too much extra time out of their day (Farmers Market Federation of NY, n.d.). The current location of the Wisconsin Rapids Downtown Farmers Market is along the Wisconsin River on 1st Avenue South, which is located in the heart of the downtown retail district. Community members were asked what their preference was for the farmers market location and **75.5% (330 respondents) said they prefer the permanent location of the farmers market to remain where it is currently located along the Wisconsin River on 1st Avenue South.**

Another important characteristic for a farmers market is a physical structure to protect people and products from the elements, especially with Wisconsin's unpredictable weather. The current Wisconsin Rapids Downtown Farmers Market does not have a physical structure; however, **vendors and community members have expressed a desire for a physical structure.** The current farmers market only runs from June-October, but a permanent structure could allow for a year-round market. Based on community input between the online survey and in-person feedback, 172 respondents (40.4%) preferred a year-round structure enclosed with features such as large garage doors to open in warmer months. In 2018, vendors said they preferred a covered, open-air structure that provides some sun and rain protection and used for other events.

Multiple transportation options are necessary for people to be able to access healthy and affordable foods. When infrastructure like sidewalks and bike lanes are connected to local destinations people are more likely to choose to walk or bike (Safe Routes Partnership, n.d.). Studies show that 1.6 million people in rural areas do not own a car (Safe Routes Partnership, n.d.). **Increasing transportation options, increasing accessibility, and reducing barriers for customers to reach the market can increase the number of people who visit on market day(s)** (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2018). In 2022, 10.11% of visitors at the Wisconsin Rapids Downtown Farmers Market used a mode of transportation other than a personal vehicle such as walking, biking, carpooling, ridesharing, or taking public transportation (Ely-Ledesma, 2022). The quality and design of walkways and bicycle paths, as well as their connectivity to the surrounding area, needs to be considered when planning for a multimodal transit location ([Multimodal Transportation Centers](#)). The City of Wisconsin Rapids Community Development Department conducted a safe routes audit of the current farmers market location with a grant from 1000 Friends of Wisconsin in the fall of 2022 ([1000 Friends of Wisconsin](#)). The audit identified the following concerns and offered recommendations to improve pedestrian access and street appeal.

- The sidewalk along the river (east) side is incomplete.
- *Recommendation: Extend the sidewalk the length of the farmers market.*
- Electric utility boxes are leaning and are partially obstructive.
- *Recommendation: Stabilize utility boxes and/or move them to a less obstructive location.*
- The west sidewalk is very wide (11') with no buffer to street; parking signs could be considered obstacles, but they still allow 6' of clearance.
- *Recommendation: Consider rebuilding as a boulevard with green space as a buffer between sidewalk and street.*
- Curb cuts are steep and in need of repair.
- *Recommendation: Rebuild curb ramps and curb cuts to federal standards.*
- Crosswalks lack tactile indicators and are not striped.
- *Recommendation: Add tactile indicators to curb cuts. Repaint crosswalks with diagonal or longitudinal stripes to increase visibility, as pictured below.*
- There is no signage alerting drivers of pedestrians.
- *Recommendation: Install pedestrian crossing signs.*

In 2018, health department staff met with farmers market vendors to determine how to improve the market. Vendors said parking somewhat close to their vending booths was important in addition to ample customer parking. Other things related to parking that were important to the vendors included the ability to drive their vehicle close to their booth space to drop items off and pick-up at the end of the day and the ability to leave safely and early if they sold out before the end of the market. It can be frustrating to go somewhere and spend extra time looking for a parking spot or to park far away from your destination. Parking close to the market is especially important for disabled people, older folks, and vendors. can provide parking. However, for most able-bodied people, there are health benefits for people walking to and from a parking location to the farmers market and they may notice things by foot that they may not otherwise notice by vehicle.

Other important characteristics to consider for a successful farmers market are as follows. Sufficient space is important to accommodate vendors' vehicles, room for expansion for future market growth, storage space for market equipment such as tents, tables, etc., and room for special events to attract more customers to the market. The surface of the site should be taken into consideration; grass is difficult for people in wheelchairs to move, pavement can give off a lot of heat, gravel is dusty and hard to walk on and push strollers on, walkways should be wide enough for customers to walk in both directions, and slopes should be avoided. It is necessary to plan for essential utilities that will create a successful market such as electricity, water, lighting, and public restrooms. **In 2018, vendors said these utilities were important for the market:** (see detailed input in appendix E)

- Power supply in booth spaces that does not need long cords to run
- Spaces for their stalls, but not walled off
- Potential of lighting for a night market
- Restroom facilities
- Seating for visitors to enjoy market activities and/or ready-to-eat foods

A physical structure, seating, parking, atmosphere, and walking environment are important built environment characteristics that vendors and community members said would enhance the market.

WHAT ARE THE SECONDARY ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF HAVING A PHYSICAL STRUCTURE?

Farmers markets can have both direct and indirect economic impacts on a community. A permanent location and structure can increase the size of a market's customer base. This will increase sales for the farmers market itself, as well as local businesses. Research shows that local businesses across the United States see an average increase of \$19,900 to \$15 million in sales per year due to the presence of a farmers market (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2013). In a study led by the state of New York, 60% of surveyed farmers market customers reported that they had or would visit other stores in the area of the market. Additionally, 60% of those customers stated that they only visit those stores on market day(s) (Barbour et al., 2014). This is consistent with studies of markets in California and Oklahoma. Visitors to the Davis, California farmers market spend an average of \$21 at local businesses when they come into the city for the farmers market (Barbour et al., 2014). Another study found that each dollar spent at Oklahoma farmers markets generated \$1.78 of total local economic activity (Warsaw et al., 2021).

A farmers market with a permanent location and structure can generate increased revenue for local businesses and the market itself. In addition, there is also potential for revenue to be generated from using the structure as an event space for community members on non-market days.

SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS

Relationships between people and their communities are important for well-being (Healthy People 2030, n.d.). The strong connections between individuals, as well as the trust and reciprocity in vendor-customer relationships, are of high importance. In fact, these social interactions can contribute to increasing the social capital of a community (Carson et al., 2015). Social capital is often described as the glue that holds groups together - and research shows that when people are socially connected they are naturally happier (Farmers Market Coalition, n.d.; Carson et al., 2015). The demonstrated correlation between well-being and social connectedness make it a health impact of interest for this HIA.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What factors would support social connection and a sense of belonging?
2. What factors would impact diversity, equity, and inclusion at the farmers market?
3. How does the location of a farmers market impact quality of life for people who live and work in the area?

WHAT FACTORS SUPPORT SOCIAL CONNECTION AND A SENSE OF BELONGING AT A FARMERS MARKET?

Research shows that when people are socially connected they are naturally happier (Farmers Market Coalition, n.d.). Farmers markets create a sense of community among customers, with interactions between community members and vendors contributing to building social capital within the community. People have 10 times more conversations when shopping at farmers markets as compared to supermarkets - and research shows that people greatly appreciate the shared sense of connection that these conversations at the farmers market brings (Kelly, 2021).

In one study, 40% of respondents cited meeting people as a critical reason for visiting their local farmers market (Alonso & O'Neill, 2011). Another study found that 28% of participants believed that the greatest benefit to the community of their local farmers market is that it “brings people together” (Farmers Market Coalition, n.d.). In an additional study, **55% of surveyed farmers market customers felt that attending the market increased their connection to their community, and 99% of customers believed that the market improved the health of their community** (Farmers Market Coalition, n.d.).

The known correlation between health and social interactions indicates that the opportunities for social connection that farmers markets create can provide important public health benefits for communities.

WHAT FACTORS IMPACT DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION AT A FARMERS MARKET?

Diversity, equity and inclusion are principles that should be highlighted and prioritized at a farmers market. In order to promote these principles they should be incorporated directly into the mission statement of the market. This can be as simple as stating that making people feel welcome, regardless of their race, culture, or language, is one of the goals of the market (Pace et al., 2022; Watson, 2019). In addition, organizations should be sure that they are recruiting diverse candidates for any open market positions (volunteer or paid).

Social media channels for the market can also be used to promote inclusion at the farmers market. These pages can use their posts to highlight the diversity of the market and the community it serves (Pace et al., 2022).

Markets can also engage in educational campaigns aimed at community members on the diversity of the market. These campaigns can include information on details like the number of languages spoken at the market or which crops sold at the market are associated with various cultural traditions (Watson, 2019).

Signage at markets should be translated into multiple languages to ensure that all vendors and community members can access necessary information. This signage should aim to answer frequently asked questions about the market, being sure to highlight the process of using credit, debit, or assistance program payments at the market. Including information on the forms of payment accepted at the market is important, as a study by Colasanti et al. (2010) found that a number of participants did not visit their local market because they were unaware that the market accepts Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT). EBT is an electronic system that allows a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participant to pay for food using SNAP benefits. These market materials can be kept at a manager's booth, as well as given to vendors to hand out to customers when they complete a purchase (Watson, 2019). Having multiple access points for the information will ensure that the materials reach more community members.

HOW DOES A FARMERS MARKET IMPACT COMMUNITY TRUST IN LOCAL GOODS?

The experience of shopping at a farmers market can increase community trust in local goods. The personal ties that are cultivated in interactions between vendors and customers can actually create a predisposition to trust more in local food systems than in conventional food systems (e.g., supermarkets) (Chen et al., 2019).

When vendors are able to communicate to customers the history, origin, and preparation methods behind their products they build an unintentional mythology. This mythology can then elevate the cultural status of fruits and vegetables, making them become a staple of customers' diets (Warsaw et al., 2021). Thus, relational trust developed through interactions between customers and vendors at the farmers market can influence community members to make more healthful food choices. Learning more about the growing process can also give customers an appreciation for food seasonality. Due to global supply chains that span climate and time zones, seasonal changes in food availability is much less evident in supermarkets where most produce is available year round. Through conversation and relationship-building with vendors, customers are more likely to seasonally adjust their diets and cooking habits by using foods that can be grown locally (Warsaw et al., 2021).

The relational trust built between vendors and customers through these conversations can influence the economic outcomes of the local community. Strong ties between vendors and customers have been shown to create high levels of customer confidence in the benefits of purchasing goods through the market (Chen et al., 2019). This relational trust is then justified through discernable differences in the quality of the goods purchased when comparing locally and conventionally produced items (Alonso & O'Neill, 2011).

The social atmosphere found at a farmers market provides customers with an enjoyable shopping experience, while also encouraging conversations with vendors about the benefits that their purchases can bring to the local economy, community, and environment.

ASSESSMENT FINDINGS PART 3: DECISION POINTS

Technical assistance from the LCAH grant program staff, the investigation of similar projects in other communities, and discussions with municipal staff were all utilized to uncover the critical points in the planning and execution of this Farmers Market development where the HIA could interject recommendations and provide justification for decisions.

Obtaining community input is a critical component of an HIA. Community input was obtained via an online survey and in-person at the current Farmers Market (*see appendix for detailed input tools*). **Decision points offered to the public for feedback and recommendations include physical structure, location, and built environment characteristics including atmosphere, seating, walking environment, and parking.**

Decision points related to the broader site, surrounding and/or affiliated organizations, and general downtown vicinity are ongoing. It is recommended that local leaders, health professionals, and those who serve senior or related populations should consider the recommendations presented in this HIA in key decisions that could affect this project.



ASSESSMENT FINDINGS PART 4: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

OVERARCHING GOALS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Increase trust through transparency in decision making and meaningful engagement with residents.
- Gather input from community members regarding various aspects of the farmers market
- Develop recommendations to improve the farmers market based on community input

PROCESS DESCRIPTION

An online survey was created using Google Forms (*appendix D*). The survey was based on the in-person questions that were asked at the farmers market. The survey was originally posted on the Wisconsin Rapids Downtown Farmers Market Facebook page and then shared 16 times by others. The survey was shared again by the Wisconsin Rapids Downtown Farmers Market Facebook page with an extended deadline and shared 13 times by others. The survey was also sent to various listservs in which health department staff are involved. Results were then analyzed.

Community engagement was conducted in-person at the farmers market (*appendix A*). Vendors and customers were invited to comment on images provided on a tri-fold board at the manager’s booth. Individuals were also invited to provide any additional comments they might have that were not covered by the prepared questions. This engagement was conducted on both Thursday and Saturday market days to ensure that as many vendors and customers as possible had the opportunity to provide feedback.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT RESULTS

The table below shows results from both the in-person engagement conducted at the farmers market and online survey.

Seating	In person (total: 28)	Survey (total: 402)	COMBINED TOTAL: 430
Benches with attached table	3	68	71 (16.5%)
Moveable chairs + umbrella	10	83	93 (21.6%)
Picnic table	5	47	52 (12.1%)
Picnic table + umbrella	10	194	204 (47.4%)
Other	--	10	10 (2.3%)
Walking Environment	In person (total: 27)	Survey (total: 402)	COMBINED TOTAL: 429
Option 1	12	298	310 (72.2%)
Option 2	9	47	56 (13.1%)
Option 3	6	50	56 (13.1%)

Other	--	7	7 (1.6%)
Physical Structure	In person (total: 24)	Survey (total: 402)	COMBINED TOTAL: 426
<i>Year round</i>	5	167	172 (40.4%)
Permanent open air	14	116	130 (30.5%)
Semi-permanent	5	112	117 (27.5%)
Other	--	7	7 (1.6%)
Atmosphere	In person (total: 27)	Survey (total: 402)	COMBINED TOTAL: 429
Modern	3	58	61 (14.2%)
<i>Rustic</i>	13	168	181 (42.2%)
Open + airy	11	160	171 (39.9%)
Other	--	16	16 (3.7%)
Location	In person (total: 35)	Survey (total: 402)	COMBINED TOTAL: 437
<i>Current</i>	31	299	330 (75.5%)
1st St N	2	42	44 (10.1%)
Robinson Park	2	51	53 (12.1%)
Other	--	10	10 (2.3%)
Parking	In person (total: 18)	Survey - N/A	COMBINED TOTAL: 18
Reverse angle	2	--	2 (11.1%)
<i>Parking next to stall for vendors</i>	12	--	12 (66.7%)
Bike racks	4	--	4 (22.2%)

FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, & NEXT STEPS

The predicted health impacts for the three decision points of the project are summarized in the table below. Findings are based on the literature review, primary data, and secondary data.

	Health Impact	Likelihood of Impact	Scale of Impact
PERMANENT FARMERS MARKET			
Local food	Positive	Likely	High
Local economy	Positive	Likely	High
Social connectedness	Positive	Likely	High
PHYSICAL STRUCTURE			
Local food	Uncertain	Uncertain	High
Local economy	Positive	Likely	High
Social connectedness	Uncertain	Uncertain	High
DOWNTOWN LOCATION			
Local food	Uncertain	Uncertain	High
Local economy	Positive	Likely	High
Social connectedness	Positive	Likely	High
ACCESSIBILITY			
Local food	Positive	Likely	High
Local economy	Positive	Possible	High
Social connectedness	Uncertain	Likely	High

Health Impact

- Positive - Evidence shows a positive health impact
- Negative - Evidence shows a negative health impact
- Mixed - Evidence shows both positive and negative impacts
- Uncertain - Evidence does not determine if a health impact will occur

Likelihood of Impact

- Unlikely - Little evidence effects will occur
- Possible - Evidence suggests effects may occur
- Likely - Evidence suggests effects will occur
- Uncertain - Evidence does not determine if any impacts will occur

Scale of Impact

- Low - Less than 100 people will be impacted
- Medium - 100-1000 people will be impacted
- High - More than 1000 people will be impacted

RECOMMENDATIONS

Physical

1. Maintain current farmers market location in the downtown retail area along the Wisconsin River on 1st Avenue South.
2. Build a physical year-round structure that is enclosed with features such as large garage doors to open in warmer months.
3. Purchase picnic tables with umbrellas for seating which may enhance social connectedness at the market.
4. Create a rustic atmosphere (e.g. wooden, natural) at the market through infrastructure, signage, and marketing materials. *(see picture in appendix C for a description of "rustic")*
5. Explore the possibility of vendors parking next to their booth.
6. Incorporate green space planning and amenities, including trees, open space, and parks, into neighborhood planning and design in the location.
7. Include a communal area / gathering space for customers.
8. Purchase a multi-seat golf cart to transport people with accessibility issues due to lack of parking.
9. Implement more robust public transportation systems to connect customers to the market.
10. Include pedestrian connectivity features like crosswalks to ensure safety and increase likelihood of socialization opportunities in the surrounding neighborhood.

Operational

11. Hire a market manager to manage operations and coordinate staffing of the farmers market.
12. Ensure all vendors accept various payment forms including cash, SNAP/EBT, credit and debit cards, WIC vouchers, etc.
13. Continue to provide WIC vouchers to use at the farmers market.
14. Promote the addition and recruitment of additional businesses and diverse destinations downtown.
15. Recruit younger vendors for sustainability and longevity of the market.
16. Explore having evening hours for the market to increase accessibility for the community.
17. Start the market earlier in the year to increase availability of seasonal products.

Marketing

18. Promote the farmers market widely through various media channels to reach a diverse audience.
19. All signs and marketing materials should be in multiple languages and available at both the market manager's booth and with vendors.
20. Include signs explaining the payment options and processes available at the market (e.g., cash, EBT, credit and debit cards, WIC vouchers, etc.)
21. Develop a communication strategy to increase awareness about the various payment options available at the market (e.g., cash, EBT, credit and debit cards, WIC vouchers, etc.)

22. Introduce social media campaigns to share stories and perspectives of vendors.
23. Create educational campaigns and/or demonstrations to teach customers about the goods sold at the market and how they can be prepared.

NEXT STEPS FOR THE FARMERS MARKET PLANNING TEAM

- Identify funding opportunities to build a permanent farmers market structure and amenities.
- Work with the City of Wisconsin Rapids to designate 1st Avenue South as the permanent location for the Farmers Market.
- Continue to revisit monitoring and evaluation questions related to the process and impact of the HIA.
- Develop an action plan to implement the recommendations from this HIA.
- Develop a communication plan to share this HIA with local decision makers and partners.

NEXT STEPS FOR WOOD COUNTY HEALTH IN ALL POLICIES WORK

- Finalize the draft of the Health Impact Assessment Matrix and create a plan to operationalize its use.
- Determine the next development/project/program in the local landscape to serve as the focus of the next rapid HIA.
- Work with the county planner to incorporate a health chapter in the Wood County Comprehensive Plan and/or include health language within existing chapters of the next comprehensive plan update.
- Work with City of Wisconsin Rapids Community Development Department to develop a standalone health chapter and/or include health language within existing chapters of the next city comprehensive plan update.
- Work with municipalities in Wood County to implement Health in All Policies tools to systematically incorporate a health lens into all aspects of government.

MONITORING & EVALUATION

Evaluating whether the HIA has influenced the decision making process and the development is an important component of an HIA and is the final step in the HIA process. The goal of monitoring and evaluation is to monitor the changes in health and health determinants, and to evaluate the efficacy of HIA recommendations and the HIA process as a whole (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2014). Monitoring the implementation of the project is critical to ensure that any recommendations that decision makers agreed to actually occur. Longer term monitoring of the health of populations is sometimes a component of larger proposals, but will not be a focus of this Rapid HIA (World Health Organization, 2019).

Monitoring tracks indicators that can be used to inform process, impact, and outcome evaluations. The table below describes the two types of evaluation and lists questions that will be used to monitor and evaluate this HIA.

Evaluation Type	Description	Evaluation Questions
Process	Assesses the HIA's quality according to established standards and the original plan for the HIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Did the HIA follow practice standards? ● Were decision-makers and community members engaged? ● Were HIA goals achieved? ● How was the HIA disseminated?
Impact	Assesses the HIA's impact on decision-making and its success according to the objectives established during scoping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How were HIA recommendations incorporated into project decisions? ● How was input from the community used to inform changes to the farmers market? ● Were any processes implemented to institutionalize the incorporation of health into community development projects?
Outcome	Continually reviews the changes in health status and health determinants and how they relate to the conclusions and recommendations in the HIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What changes to health determinants (local food, local economy, social connectedness) have occurred since the project was completed? ● How has the health status of people that live and work near the farmers market changed since pre-development?



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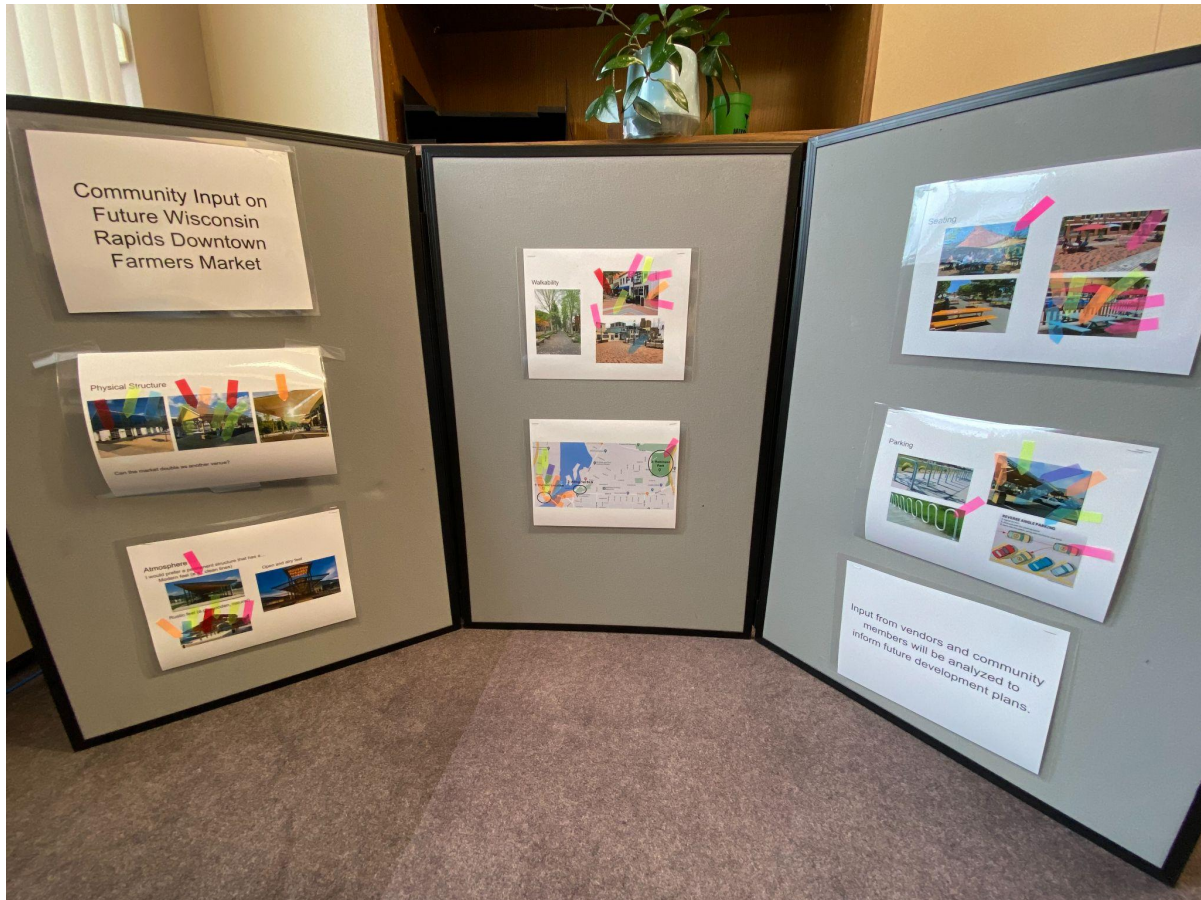
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APPENDIX

A: In-person community engagement board



B: Additional comments from community engagement

The text below reflects the comments gathered in person and from the online survey. Additional comments from customers and vendors were recorded during in-person engagement work. Those who took the online survey were also welcomed to submit long-form responses to any question they desired. Some text is in purple to highlight the comments that were frequently received or that related to the information gathered during completion of our literature review for this report.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS FROM IN-PERSON ENGAGEMENT

- Place for vendors to pull up to (un)load vehicle
 - Vendor-specific parking near vending space → some currently walk very far
- Built structure → vendors don't like having to pack/put up tents every time they vend
 - concerns with weighting down tent due to windy conditions
- Convenient for vendors #1, customers #2
- indoor/winter market run on days other than saturday
- Trailer accessible space for vendors
- Eau Claire farmers market permanent structure is perfect
- Permanent structure height of streetlights (if permanent structure put in place in current location along river)
- Year round structure → can accommodate market for more than just summer months
- Permanent bathrooms → handicap accessibility
- Better signage for local history/landmarks in current location
- Excess food at end of market days purchased by local food vendors
 - Given to food pantries, jail, local restaurants, other local organizations
- Having a night market
- Extend market
- Vending on days market isn't open
- Public education from county services during market
- More access for seniors

“OTHER” RESPONSES FROM ONLINE SURVEY

Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Either current location or a place with parking and away from busy traffic (lot style like it used to be)● Elm and chestnut st● I'm not familiar with all locations● NA● No preference● Old Shopko parking lot. Would get more traffic for the vendors● Robinson Park has better parking - I would prefer someplace that isn't so congested for parking which leaves out the 2 spots on either side of the river.● Shopko parking lot where garden center was● Somewhere with better parking● Where the old labor temple was. The corner of Jackson St. and 1st St.
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Atmosphere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● This is not required, spend the money somewhere else ● Any are fine ● Most practical and affordable ● I'm not concerned with the "feel" of the structure as long as there is a place for the farmers market ● The rustic feel but with a full cover roof incase of spontaneous rain etc. good for people who need a break too. Maybe we could add a wooden picnic table or two also ● None ● Current method ● I don't feel a permanent structure is necessary. Having a permanent structure limits the number of vendors and creates closer quarters. I prefer an outdoors farmers market. If a structure is necessary – an open and airy design that offers accessibility for all ● The way it is now is fine ● Would prefer semi-permanent ● What's wrong with what they have? ● Leave it alone ● No permanent structures ● No preference ● Don't need it ● No permanent structure
Physical Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Whatever would get the most use and be the most cost effective ● River bank benches along the bike path. Small tables. Love the new park seating next to the current market ● What's wrong with what they have ● Tribune building ● Leave it alone ● None
Seating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Any seating would be great ● Wheelchair accessible tables/benches. Sometimes tables are too high to roll up comfortably ● Heavy, permanent-like tables and chairs that can allow for seating configurations other than picnic tables; with umbrellas :) ● Open to any seating ● Something with covering more stable than umbrellas so can be used for any events ● Like the seating in Mead Park next to the current market ● A combination of movable chairs, benches with tables ● Benches with an attached table that has an umbrella ● No preference ● Not concerned about seating

Walking Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Anything flat and level● Blacktop is fine● Depends on location● Open to any, but I'd like to see Tuesday/Saturday time frames instead of Thursday/Saturday.● street● Street is fine● Using vacant space
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C: Atmosphere - Rustic feel

Picture and phrase used to describe a “rustic feel” for the desired atmosphere at the farmers market: Rustic feel (e.g. wooden, natural)

