



fieldnotes [fēld nōts] -noun

1. Raw data and early evaluations from and for the field of public markets
2. Initial findings which may lead to a marketumbrella.org publication such as a share or greenpaper
3. Discussion starters for our field, we invite feedback and recommendations for other ideas

Farmers markets deliver what communities NEED

Neighborhood Exchange Evaluation Device measures farmers markets' impact on social capital

Executive Summary

Part of the presumed appeal of farmers markets is that they deliver a triple bottom line: one that benefits farmers, consumers, and the larger community. In particular, farmers markets increase community cohesion, or social capital, a quality especially valuable to communities in transition, which may be lacking in more established social institutions. However, despite the anecdotal evidence of farmers markets' human and social benefits, very little field research has been done to test this assumption. Conducting this research and producing this evidence is the purpose of trans•act, a program of marketumbrella.org, a New Orleans-based public market nonprofit.

In 2007, marketumbrella.org developed and piloted its social capital measurement tool, called Neighborhood Exchange Evaluation Device, or NEED, at public markets in New Orleans and Santarém, Brazil. In the summer of 2008, marketumbrella.org utilized a refined NEED to measure the impact of eight Los Angeles farmers markets on the neighborhoods they serve. Both years, the markets studied were selected in partnership with the Ford Foundation, the funding entity for the trans•act project.

The Los Angeles research confirmed that the city's farmers markets do indeed strengthen social cohesion. The results for shoppers show that:

- 75% come to market to do more than just shop
- 55% believe that the market increases their connection to the community
- 99% feel the market helps improve the health of the community
- 53% believe the market improves perceptions of the neighborhood.

Results were similarly positive for nearby residents and market vendors, some of whom indicated that the strong sense of community they felt was one of the factors that influenced them to participate in these—albeit newer—markets over some others that were more established.

By understanding what qualities of public markets contribute to social capital, city planners, market organizers, economic development corporations, and others can design highly functional markets for delivering a triple bottom line that benefits the health of communities, as well as farmers and consumers.

Methodology

The trans•act team of seven paid surveyors, led by J. Robin Moon and assisted by the 2008 trans•act Fellow Michael Rosenkrantz, collected data over a period of 21 market days from June 11 to July 20, 2008. Seven of the farmers markets surveyed are managed and operated by Sustainable Economic Enterprises of Los Angeles (SEE-LA) and one market is hosted by Kaiser Permanente Woodland Hills and managed by Southland Farmers Market Association. All told, the research included 1,687 interviews of shoppers, residents and vendors, and 222 market observations of shoppers and vendors.

The NEED methodology includes:

- Observing selected shoppers to tabulate the quantity of transactions, both economic and social
- Directly surveying shoppers & directly surveying vendors
- Tabulating quantity and length of shopper-vendor interactions
- Door-to-door interviews of neighbors surrounding each market
- Gathering demographic information at each market (“market snapshot”) every hour and comparing overall numbers to U.S. Census Bureau information.

This methodology was designed in 2007 by the trans•act team, who met in New York and New Orleans to review the goals for the NEED tool. The team included public health scientists, national farmers market leaders, grassroots community

organizers, national social program leaders, civic leaders, international activists and board and staff from marketumbrella.org.

The communities served

SEE-LA

The neighborhoods served by SEE-LA markets have a high percentage of low-income, ethnic or minority residents, or are communities in transition. They include Hollywood, Lemon Grove, Central Avenue, Watts, Echo Park, Leimert Park, and Atwater Village. **See chart below*

The vendor base is primarily a long-distance community that drives more than an hour on average to get to the LA markets. As California has a state certification process for farmers to follow to be able to sell food directly to consumers, the farming base is easily managed as a “producer-only” market. Approximately 56% of the SEE-LA vendor respondents were male, 48.3% Hispanic and 53% in the 20-39 age group. The percentage of Hispanic respondents for the vendor interviews almost matched the percentage of Hispanic respondents for the resident interviews, though it was higher than that of the shopper interviews.

Kaiser-Permanente

At the Kaiser-Permanente Woodland Hills Farmers Market, whites constitute 47% of shoppers, Hispanics and Asians each make up 10%-13%, and African-Americans constitute 7%. Vendor ethnic percentages were: 44% Hispanic, 44% white and 10% Asian. The neighborhood demographics included 53% of

An overview of SEE-LA’s market shopper population by race and ethnicity

| HISPANICS | AFRICAN-AMERICANS | WHITES |
|---|--|---|
| 90% of the shopper population for the Central Avenue Farmers Market | | 73% of the shopper population at the Atwater Village Farmers Market |
| 85% or more of the Lemon Grove Farmers Market | 53% of the shopper population at the Leimert Park Farmers Market | 52% Echo Park Farmers Market |
| 85% or more of the Hollywood-Sears Farmers Market | 41% at the Watts Healthy Farmers Market | 70% Hollywood Farmers Market |
| 51% at the Watts Healthy Farmers Market | | |

the total respondents being women, 47% Hispanic and 54% in the 20-39 age group. The 47% Hispanic proportion is higher than the 27% Hispanic percentage for shoppers across all markets. This is due in part to the fact that the majority of markets are located in census tracts where Hispanic “minority” populations actually constitute the majority. This is also due to the large number of surveys conducted at the Hollywood Farmers market whose clientele population, although diverse, is predominantly white.

The results

The results confirmed that Los Angeles farmers markets are helping to create a sense of community and counter big city anonymity in the neighborhoods they serve. Among shoppers surveyed:

- 75% came to market to do more than shop
- 55% felt the market increased their connection to the community
- 99% felt the market improved the health of the community
- 53% believed the market improved perceptions of the neighborhood

Reasons shoppers came to the market other than to shop include, not surprisingly, “to eat,” “the market atmosphere,” convenience, the desire to support local growers, the appeal of low-cost organic produce, and as a social place to meet and be with others. Shoppers made comments such as:

- *“I wouldn’t come to the area without it”*
- *“I feel more comfortable, less intimidated at the market”*
- *“My children are healthier”*
- *“I see people I didn’t know existed”*
- *“The market helps reduce gang activity”*
- *“All we need is a Ferris wheel”*
- *“My blood pressure went from 220 to 140!”*

The majority of market neighbors were also favorable in their assessment of the market’s impact on their community. Neighbors believed their markets:

- Brought access to low-cost fresh fruits and vegetables
- Brought more people (traffic) to the community
- Brought and connected different people
- Supported local produce and farmers

Vendors, too, reported favorably on the market’s management and 72% said they feel a strong sense of community when they come to the markets. They appropriately identified market management as the party they trust with conflict resolution and even expressed that they came to sell at these smaller markets in spite of the availability of other (sometimes larger, more established) markets. (An interesting organizational strategy at SEE-LA is to ask newer vendors to sell at their smaller markets before being accepted as a vendor at their flagship market, the Hollywood Farmers Market.) Their comments included appreciation for the things they learn at these markets, including, “other languages,” “nutritional information,” “how to grow certain foods,” “better marketing skills,” and “how to be more community oriented.”

Richard McCarthy, executive director of marketumbrella.org, summarizes: “The research shows that LA’s farmers markets are improving a triple bottom line—one of nutritional health, a positive sense of community, and of course economic support of local farmers, thereby assuring their sustainability.”

McCarthy adds that in the next year more studies will be conducted at different markets throughout the country and the results added to the overall findings. Already the research has led to a new program at marketumbrella.org called marketshare. The program has staff working to build a website of simple measurement tools, free downloadable information pages, and a place to share ideas between markets. The organization has already spent hundreds of hours assisting local markets, holding workshops, and working with its peers on the strategy of building more artfully engineered local food markets, adept at building social capital, as well as human and financial capital.

Partners

SEE-LA is a nonprofit community development corporation, whose mission is “to promote and engage in self-sustaining community and economic development activities within the city of Los Angeles, including sustainable food systems, social and cultural programs, and economic revitalization projects.” (www.see-la.org/) SEE-LA operates seven markets in the Los Angeles area, including the 150-vendor Hollywood Farmers Market. Most

SEE-LA markets are located in lower income, high “minority” residential areas as noted by demographic data. In fact, marketumbrella.org chose to conduct research in Los Angeles using SEE-LA as a partner, because of its work in “shifting sand” communities—which, in LA’s case, are communities in demographic flux because of immigration.

Kaiser-Permanente (KP) was selected as a partner because of its influence in the healthcare industry. As the largest non-profit health plan in the United States, serving 8.6 million members in nine states and the District of Columbia, KP sponsors 23 farmers markets on hospital campuses throughout California and has five other farmers markets in Hawai’i, Georgia and Oregon. (See: www.members.kaiserpermanente.org/redirects/farmersmarkets). Its purpose in supporting farmers markets is to encourage healthy eating among employees, physicians, patients and their families. The Southland Farmers’ Market Association, a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting growers, operates KP’s Woodland Hills Farmer’s Market.

Farmers Market Coalition (FMC) is emerging as the national center for the exploration of the “triple bottom line” for markets. FMC also manages a listserv that allows markets to compare information

on best practices and works to gather resources on a single site for markets to use as needed (www.farmersmarketcoalition.org). FMC managed the Los Angeles Fellow during the 2008 trans•act research period, with staffer Stacy Miller offering practical evaluation on the emerging NEED tool, as well.



200 Broadway | Suite 107
New Orleans, LA 70118 USA
tel: 504-861-4485
fax: 504-861-4489
admin@marketumbrella.org
www.marketumbrella.org

learning, sharing, growing

Dedicated to cultivating the field of public markets for public good, we define public markets as “recurring assemblies of vendors marketing goods directly to consumers in a public setting.” Learning, sharing and growing, marketumbrella.org cultivates community markets that utilize local resources to bolster authentic local traditions. We believe that ambitious social, health, environmental and financial goals are achieved if trust and respect are present. We envision communities of market umbrellas, like flowers in the field, opening all over the world for the public good.

Founded in 1995 as the Economics Institute and operated under the auspices of Loyola University’s Twomey Center for Peace Through Justice until 2008, marketumbrella.org is an independent nonprofit 501(c)3.