

# FARMERS MARKET IMPACT STUDY DOWNTOWN FOND DU LAC MARKET PROFILE

The Saturday Farmers Market attracted an average of 1,750 visitors each weekend to downtown, with 9% traveling more than 10 miles to visit the market. Average market spending by these visitors increased slightly to \$17.49 per visitor. Of these visitors, one-third took the time to shop at downtown businesses during their trip to the market. The 13 percent of visitors that were new to the market spent more at downtown businesses than other visitors, regardless of their home address, while the 27 percent of weekly visitors are both more likely to shop downtown (41 percent do) and also to spend more at the market on each visit. Overall, the market generated \$2.3 million in economic activity and 15 jobs in the Fond du Lac Metropolitan area. Of that, \$1.1 million in additional economic activity and 6 jobs were specifically within downtown.

The first Fond du Lac farmers market was run by the Association of Commerce and held on Wednesday, September 15, 1971 on Main Street from 9 a.m. till 5 p.m. running all the way from Merrill Avenue to Fifth Street. It continued as an annual event, with the addition of a second market date in 1973. Based on current information, the market shifted to a full season in 1975 in a parking lot near what is now 30 S. Main St. As downtown grew and changed over the years, the market shifted locations with it. It moved to the parking lot near Sebastian's for a year or two before settling in the library parking lot at the Fond du Lac Public Library where it stayed for nearly 25 years, before it shifted to the City/County Parking Lot at the intersection of Western and Linden in 2003. During those years, the market held three to four Main Street market days when the market moved from the lot onto Main Street. In 2015, the Saturday market officially moved to Main Street for the full season. Wednesday markets have also taken place for many years changing locations, times and dates for many years until finally settling on 11-3 on Main Street Plaza in 2015.

The Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership took on the administration of the market in 2000, but the Association of Commerce and the Central Business Council had been involved with the market on and off and in different ways since its inception.

## ECONOMIC IMPACT

Vendors and customers attracted to downtown for the farmers market contribute significant energy and economic vitality to both the downtown and the region. Including retail sales at the market and adjacent businesses, employment earnings and taxes, plus relevant multipliers, the economic impact of the event in 2017 is estimated to represent:

- \$1.1 million in additional economic activity and 6 jobs in downtown.
- \$2.3 million in additional economic activity and 15 jobs in the Fond du Lac Metropolitan area.

The market also contributes to the community in non-monetary ways, including the 1,300 pounds of donated food, nearly \$4,000 worth of volunteer time and more than 20,000 individuals who participated in various health, fitness and educational events and demonstrations taking place at the market over the course of the season.

## VISITOR & VENDOR PROFILE

Economic impact and success of market depend on the makeup of vendors and visitors that attend the market. This section explores the characteristics of vendors and visitors present at the Fond du Lac market.

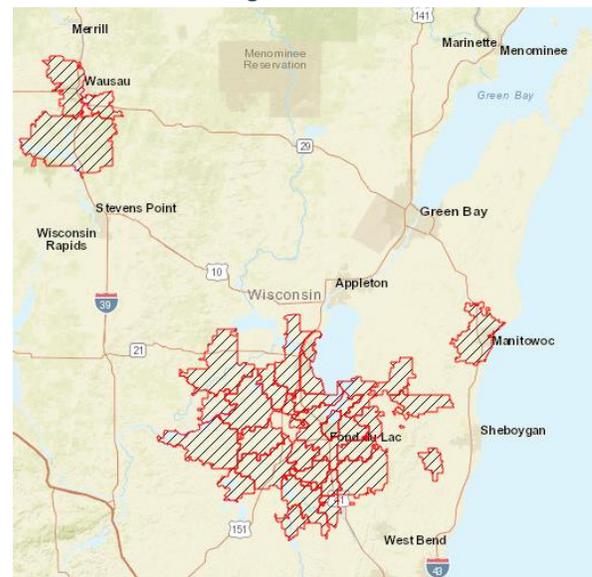
### Vendor profile

In 2017, Fond du Lac's Saturday market included goods and produce from 105 total vendors, including 23 vendors that were new to the market this year. Because of the seasonality of produce and products, the market featured an average of 41 vendors per week ranging from a low of 26 vendors at the final market to a high of 61 vendors in early July. Each vendor appeared at the market an average of 10 times, 21 percent attended at least three-quarters of market dates, and thirty-seven attended five or fewer markets. There was no pattern in the type of vendors which appeared multiple times versus those appearing sporadically, with a similar mix of goods available at most markets.

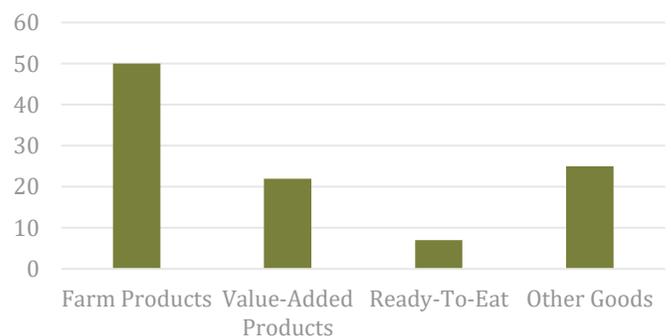
Vendors at the Fond du Lac market come from a broad geographic area, as shown on the map above. Products travel an average of 29 miles to get to market, or 23 for farmed produce.

Of course, the quantity of vendors offering various types of goods for sale influences overall sale patterns, which vary by week. The chart below illustrates the seasonal breakdown

Vendor Location of Origin



Goods Offered by # of Vendors



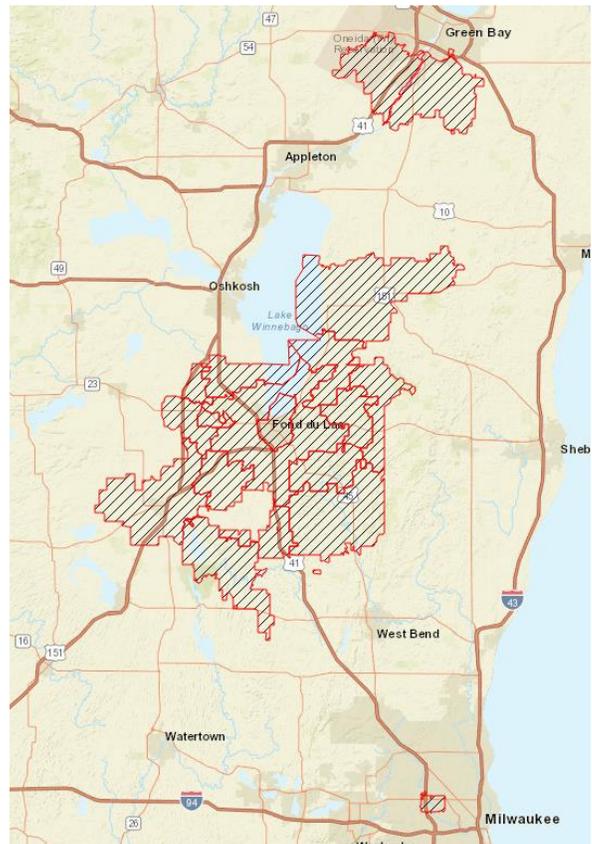
of Saturday vendors by the type of products sold. Vendors offering more than one type of product (i.e. farm goods plus value-added products) are included in both categories, so totals will add up to more than the 82 total vendors. In this study, farm products include fresh foods planted, grown and harvested with no or minimal processing. Value-added projects are those that are made from raw ingredients that they produce and process through baking, cooking, canning or other preserving or processing. Prepared or Ready-To-Eat food includes products that are made from goods primarily purchased and intended for immediate consumption. The other category includes artisan crafts or other handmade goods, typically non-food related.

### Visitor profile

In contrast to the vendor slips, which were recorded weekly, visitor counts were taken four times and surveys were conducted only three times during the season. These counts occurred at various points in the season, once each in May, June, August and September. Surveys were conducted by interviewing every 24th visitor entering the market with a goal of achieving a pre-determined and standardized minimum threshold of surveys based on market size.

Over the season, the Saturday market attracted approximately 57,000 visitors to downtown. Attendance fluctuated based on the weather and time of year, with the average Saturday market in Fond du Lac attracting approximately 2,200 visitors, with peak traffic counts between 9 and 11 am. and then declining for the final hour of the market – more than half of visitors are at the market during this window. As with vendors, visitors to the market traveled from a large geographic area, as shown in the map at right. In total, 80 percent of visitors to the market were from the City of Fond du Lac or immediately adjacent towns, 15 percent traveled from the surrounding area (10-20 miles distant) and an additional 5 percent from communities much further away, including out of state visitors.

Visitor Location of Origin



Approximately 18 percent of visitors to the market were first-time visitors, while 40 percent attend the market weekly, and the remainder attend periodically over the course of the season. There was no seasonal pattern for first time visitors -they were equally likely to attend during any month of the market. They were also not significantly more likely to be from out of town, as many first-time visitors to the market were from Fond du Lac. Although visitors were not asked specifically if the market was the main purpose of their visit, the fact that 68 percent of visitors did not anticipate any additional spending outside the market indicates that this is likely the case. Overall, 15 percent of visitors reported walking or biking to the market, while the remaining 85 percent drove alone.

A certain percentage of non-spending visitors could have also been attracted to market programming. Over the course of the season, more than 80 different activities were held,

including a mix of cooking demonstrations, educational sessions, kids events and other activities. Excluding the popular Monster March, the average event attracted 45 participants, with recurring events such as yoga attracting fewer participants per session.

## CUSTOMER SPENDING

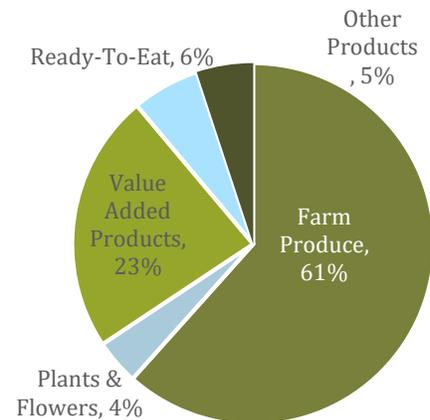
Customers at the market spend dollars both at the market and at other downtown establishments as part of their trip. Both types of spending are important factors when evaluating the success of the market from a downtown development perspective.

### *Market Spending*

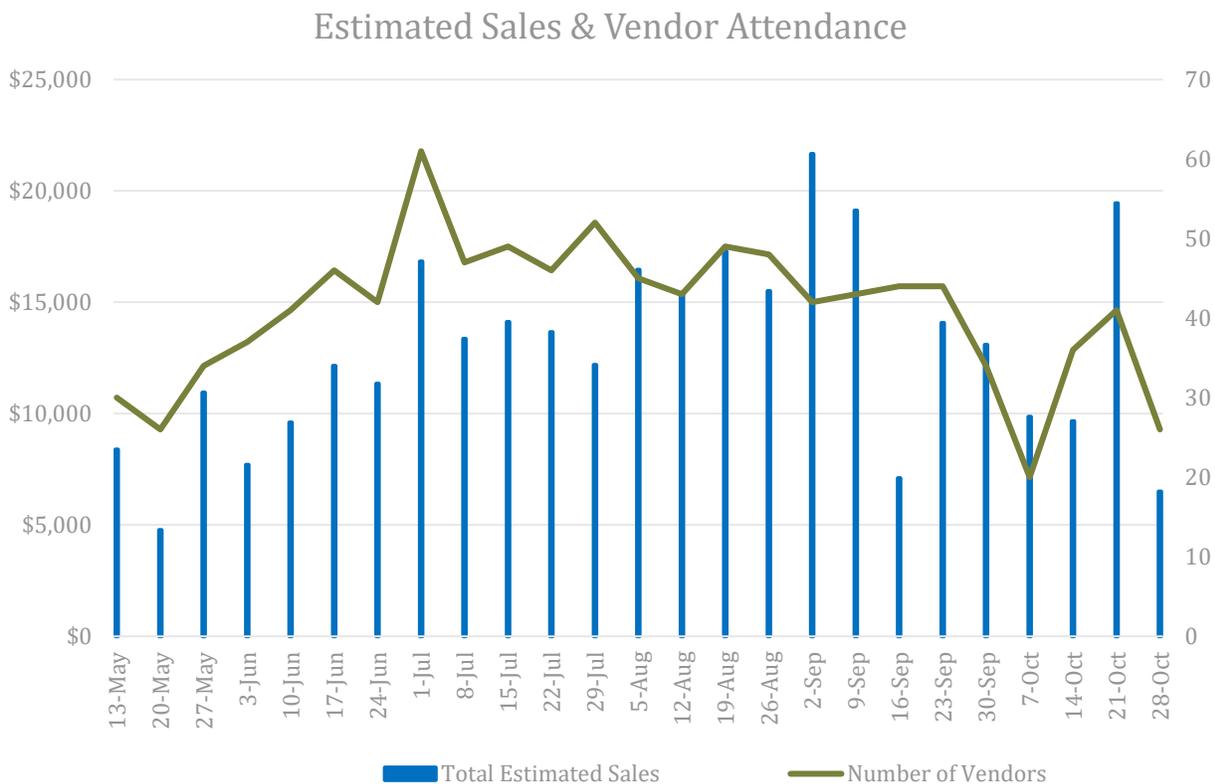
Over the course of the season, the market generated \$320,000 in total estimated sales, a 26 percent increase over 2016, for a continued positive trend. Sales were highest during weeks with more visitors, although visitors during poor-weather weeks were more dedicated to the market, resulting in higher per-visitor spending during these weeks. In contrast, high attendance weeks seemed to include a greater share of attendees who purchased limited or no goods (whether because they were there for ambiance, or because high traffic made purchases more difficult), resulting in lower total sales than would otherwise be expected based on per visitor spending averages for the entire season.

Over the entire season, the most consumer dollars were spent on farm products, followed by value added and prepared food vendors, as shown in the chart at right. Not surprisingly, the percentage of sales going toward farm products increased steadily over the course of the season as more produce was in season. Examining individual vendor sales records, individual vendors earned an average of \$242 per week (similar to 2016), although revenues ranged from an average low of \$33 to an average high of \$917. Vendors selling non-farm and non-food items (other) represented the lowest-grossing vendors. Farm product and ready-to-eat vendors represented the highest grossing vendors.

Total Sales by Category



The average market Saturday generated \$12,800 in sales for all vendors, although sales varied widely across the season, as shown in the chart below. Variation in sales was impacted by many factors, although temperature and the number of vendors/products available had a significant influence. Note that the market on September 9<sup>th</sup> coincided with Fondue Fest, which draws tens of thousands of additional visitors to downtown, also boosting market sales.



### Low Income Outreach

Virtually all market spending was conducted in cash, although \$3,849 in EBT, \$4,046 in SNAP dollars and \$4,116 in credit/debit sales were collected at the market. These purchases were made possible through a token system. Customers could visit a central location to purchase market tokens via credit card or EBT card, shown in the image at right.

The average EBT transaction was just shy of \$18, while the average market spending for all visitors surveyed was \$17.49 per visit, or \$17.97 per visit excluding those who made no purchases on the day surveyed. It is also possible that patrons using EBT or credit made additional cash purchases while at the market, further increasing their spending. This is especially likely given that one-fourth to one-third of vendors do not accept EBT spending on any given week.



Marketing efforts have been primarily targeting customers for the Saturday markets. When comparing Saturday totals year over year, the transactional goal was met. \$4,501 versus \$3,573 = 26% increase in transaction value. However, the goal to increase transactions was not met,

with only a 12 percent increase in transactions. A total of 77 individuals made EBT purchases at the market, and just over 60 percent of these users made purchases at only one market, while 38 percent visited on multiple dates, averaging once per month visits. Approximately half (47%) of all EBT spending occurred at the first market date of each month. A similar percentage of transactions utilized a SNAP incentive program (43%), and 58 percent of incentive program usage was from repeat visitors over the course of the season, while 18 percent went to first time market visitors. The remaining users either did not respond to the question, or used the incentive program only once this year, but were familiar from past years.

New this year, the Downtown Fond du Lac Farmers Market rolled out "FDL Fresh 5," a food donation program for vendors to share their leftovers with local food pantries. No obligation, just an opportunity to give any produce they didn't want to take home with them to someone else. In three short months, vendors donated 1,300 pounds of food; providing an additional access point to fruits and vegetables for low-income families in the community.

### ***Downtown Spending***

In addition to dollars spent at the market, many visitors also visited merchants elsewhere in downtown, whether for dining, shopping or services. Just less than one-third (32%) of visitors surveyed reported spending additional dollars downtown as part of their visit to the farmers market. Of those spending additional money downtown, the average per person expenditure outside the market was \$36.57, or \$11.28 per visitor including those who made no additional purchases. Despite this outside spending, visitors making outside purchases had similar spending habits at the market, although visitors who spent nothing at the market were also most likely to make no additional purchases. Additionally, first time visitors to the market were no more or less likely to make additional purchases than regular market goers, and actually spent more on ancillary purchases than weekly market shoppers (\$16.18 in additional downtown spending for first timers versus \$6.64 for regular visitors). In total, Saturday market visitor spending generated an additional \$204,314 in downtown retail sales over the season.

## METHODOLOGY

This study was completed as part of a national pilot study conducted by the University of Wisconsin-Madison titled Indicators for Impact: Farmers Markets as Leaders in Collaborative Food System Data Collection and Analysis. Data included in this report was collected through a combination of vendor applications, information collected from vendors weekly on sales, data from EBT, WIC and credit processing offered at a central location in the market, and also through attendee counts and visitor surveys conducted by market volunteers. Vendor sales slips were collected weekly, while visitor counts and surveys were conducted at three separate markets over the course of the seasons that were representative of various aspects of market seasonality and attendance.

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