

Survey of Vendors who attended our markets in 2008

Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance

Survey summary: 37 vendors turned in surveys (out of 148 vendors total who sold at the markets in 2008)

What went well for you, what didn't in 2008:

The majority of responses (30 comments) stated that the markets went well: good sales, increased customer base. What didn't for some (12 comments) was the short/difficult growing season in 2008, and issues with certain markets (for eg, for some vendors the new Lake City location was great and sales went up; for others, sales went down). There were some complaints also about vendors being moved to different stall locations during the market season.

What do you think the NFMA's greatest strengths and greatest weaknesses are right now:

27 comments noted the NFMA's good organization, management, good staff and markets, and commitment to food-only markets and to high-quality standards. 15 comments included opinions on weaknesses such as: not enough parking near the markets, markets too crowded for vendors &/or shoppers, market sites not permanent, and NFMA not being consistent with standards and policies regarding who is allowed to sell.

What are the 1, 2 or 3 top things the NFMA could do to improve the markets?

Responses focused on: increasing outreach and marketing efforts, more parking (although most realize this is impossible), keeping vendors in the same stall locations, better lighting at evening markets, more careful vendor mix planning, improved market facilities and structures, more events to attract kids and families, group insurance for farmers, more room for new growers, small farms only, no early selling, more farm visits, permanent locations for markets.

What are the 1, 2 or 3 top things the NFMA could do to increase the number of shoppers at the markets?

Many ideas for more outreach and marketing, with many responses noting that the NFMA is already doing a lot in this regard: partner with people or organizations that could do education and outreach about health benefits of markets, etc; more demos; make sure all vendors and products are up to quality standards, educate children in schools & field trips; provide coupons or other incentives to shoppers both potential and returning regulars.

Any other thoughts you have about 2008, or ideas for the 2009 season?

Majority of responses said 'keep up the good work.' A few had suggestions regarding length of a market, or wanting wider stall spaces, or less prepared foods at some markets.

Below is the full detail of responses to the survey (most comments copied in full below, except for extremely lengthy ones which were edited for brevity):

What went well for you, what didn't in 2008:

Well:

Expanded hours and markets; Increased local demand.

Everything, including the weather. Appreciated Karen making room for us..

Broadway fared well, and the best was having the same location at UD, this really helps..

Everything.

Building customer relations, sales, general PR.

Sales went well! We weren't sure what to expect with the economy, but it seemed to be good.

Selling quality fruit at great markets, Yakima, Kittitas, Ballard, Madrona.

Great year, no complaints.

Ease of setting up & smooth coordination at West Seattle.

Our first season as business people was tough, we learned a lot, our set up was too much, next season will be more simple and streamlined. New Lake City location rocks!

Besides having such a late start with our berries, we had a very good season overall.

A good season - nice growth at B'way, good to join the Mag. Market.

Pleased that UD stayed open during street fair; and WS decided to go year-round.

Everything went well, especially increased Japanese customers.

UD very fun & well attended, I made consult connections beyond the market

Enjoyed being at UD this year; summer was slower than we thought, but fall has been rockin' - works great for us to have a 20' wide space instead of 20' deep, we really love our current location.

The markets are great for us. We appreciated the staff and management's work and effort to make it a rewarding season for our farm.

2008 is OK.

We had a good season, smooth, reasonably profitable, and we bought almost all of our produce locally.

We were well received by staff, vendors and patrons. We got to see that we could sell our product in a food-only market - that was nice.

Short [crop] season hurt, markets attended went well.

All went well.

Markets were good, staff was great. Our biggest problem was Mother Nature this year.

Things generally went well.

Showing up every week, being allowed to change to different markets early in the season.

The markets went well, some expansion over 2007.

Sales are way up, more people are buying local.

Most markets went well, LC great, Phinney not so good.

We have our same loyal customers that buy from us on a weekly basis & enjoy visiting.

Everything was good!

Didn't:

Weather and diesel prices

Magnolia was a disaster, sorry we had to drop out!

I was unhappy that no space was available for me after May (WS).

Bigger farmers undercut my sales/prices.

New location at LC: drop in my sales, lack of regular customers from previous location.

WS winter had hardly any shoppers.

Lake City was way down, we understand the new location will take time but it seems there are a lot of 'bad' spots in the market

Sun shining on my product isn't good (toffee)

Bad growing season for tomatoes!

Getting moved each week to another location in the market.

We had a very bad market year because of unusual weather, and because we then had product at a time that there was not space for us.

We couldn't find more employees to do more markets.

What do you think the NFMA's greatest strengths and greatest weaknesses are right now:

Strengths:

Attracting consistent & reliable customer base; good reputation for high quality markets

Great advertising, organization, people skills, banners & signs on main routes to markets. Can't think of any weaknesses right now.

We think the NFMA is a well run organization (and the outside image is that it is well run!). A strength is that there seems to be a sort of 'power to each market manager' in the sense that they have their rules and guidelines yet bring their individualism to each market - this is awesome as they are the ones that know us & their customers best.

Great show.

Building community and farm awareness (networking).

Well organized, but not real open minded.

Current interest in local products, organic products.

Good people, pretty good promotion, good organization.

Locations, ability to advertise well to draw in a great crowd, and having a great staff/volunteers to help vendors and customers. I also think compared to other markets NFMA does a good job of not putting too much of one thing at one market. The tokens seem to be very helpful as well.

Straight-forward and now reaping the rewards from good organization and 'sticking to it.'

Customer base - conscious, educated.

NFMA provides a farmers market environment that stands up to its standards....I fee that you can see, feel and taste the difference between a NFMA farmers market and many of the other markets in the area...I personally don't see any great weaknesses to the NFMA...

UD has strong history and good location

Advertising and organization and number of customers; NFMA works well with the community and you do a great job of including people in the market, through your activities, such as chef demos.

Diversity of vendors & products; market is well-managed, flows great.

Great outreach and publicity.

Good organization/promotion.

Loyal customer base, good management.

Concentrated shoppers.

Great markets.

Working with communities to support markets; only allowing products farmers actually produce at markets.

Focus on food, supporting farmers at the markets with everything from loaning us supplies we have forgotten to helping us deal with the health dept.

You are doing a great job all around.

Food only, no crafts.

Quality of markets (no junk or trinkets). Quality/support from staff.

Market development.

Well organized, from employees to the music to the chef demos.

Only farmers and food, no crafts.

Weaknesses:

Over-staffed at markets - seasonal people sitting around. Not effective when needed.

Too anal.

UD needs better parking, but don't know what could be done...

Selling space available in the city.

Many vendors would like to be in UD more, but as in any market, space is limited. Maybe next time a new location is found, it could be bigger, but other than that NFMA does great.

Allowing large commercial growers in the market.

Parking for shoppers at UD

Too cramped - some vendors can't get the 20' wide space of things - not much extra room!

Some mixed messages about what's allowed and not allowed.

Parking - as with any market in the city. Also, so many people don't know the UD market is open year-round, how to educate people?

Poor parking.

Not enough room for more vendors.

Difficulty getting in to market.

No permanent market sites.

Too many markets, dilutes attendance.

What are the 1, 2 or 3 top things the NFMA could do to improve the markets?

Reduce costs to farmers; Build toward permanent locations; Group insurance for farmers & farm employees
Get the community Center (U-Heights) to clean the parking lot before each Saturday now that we're paying them extra, make sure storm drains are cleared out too

Overall we think the markets are well run. It is a logistical nightmare having both UD and Mag end at 2 - improvement would be to stagger the end times.

You've got a great formula, don't change.

Continue educating people about the economic and nutritional values of local food systems.

Make sure your growers sell only the highest quality products, be open to new growers who sell unique varieties.

I don't know of any, except maybe tents or heaters to help keep winter customers happy; free coffee or hot cider??

Continue educational information programs on sustainability, health & nutrition, healthy communities.

Better waste management especially sorting compost/recycling.

Our challenge is to spread awareness of the markets.

Reduced price sales by large commercial growers...my objective here has always been to see a profitable return to the workers who actually grow the produce...when I have to increase production (more supply = lower prices) by buying larger equipment, profits shift from producers to bankers!

Provide morning coffee to vendors at UD & WS during winter..

Portable toilet for vendors before 8 am (UD); lot accessible to vendors to set up 6:30 am (UD), random inspection of organic products by NFMA.

More marketing to widen the audience; more music and prepared foods so folks stay around the market longer; include some artist booths too.

Farmers should be more clearly informed on how the booth locations are given out...as a farmer with more seniority, how do we use this to obtain better spots?

Better lighting at evening markets later in the season.

Just allow vendors sell when they are ready to sell.

The markets that slow down in the fall should end earlier; work on positioning fresh, local foods as economical - rather than gourmet - it's not just about prices - perceptions are so important.

Permanent stalls with roofs.

Some growers are still selling early - this needs to stop.

Permanent structures to protect vendors and shoppers from the elements.

More portable umbrellas for shade for vendors who have full sun the entire market.

Permanent locations; keep vendor that show up at their markets each time in a permanent location.

Continue with good music at the markets.

More farm visits.

Manage farmers involved at markets: 6 to 8 vegetable producers at Phinney???

Have more knowledge to customers about parking & more parking; indoor market during winter months.

What are the 1, 2 or 3 top things the NFMA could do to increase the number of shoppers at the markets?

Sponsor well-known people to discuss food issues; price comparisons for showing not too expensive; reach out to immigrant/new farmers; contest for best in market

Better parking (realize the impossibility of this!)

It seems like the markets get SO crowded - this is great! However, it could also be a deterrent to people...more market space for shoppers.

You're doing it.

Marketing/PR; More 'events' during market days to promote farms, food, cooking.

Continue to demonstrate that markets are good value.

High quality products, having farmers who actually grow their own products, customers are interested in knowing how and where their products come from.

It's already happening.

Possibly partner with organizations that educate on nutrition, health (colleges, local schools, county health dept)

- places in a position to distribute information without costs of advertising.

Markets like UD obviously aren't hurting for customers but maybe in some of the newer markets coupons in local papers would help, or more tokens.

More convenient parking, and ownership of a permanent site with both cover and parking. Does Metro have parking lots that might be sites that are not intensely used on Saturdays?

...encouragement for current shoppers and vendors to directly promote the markets to friends and family...many non-shoppers have preconceived notions of the markets, and no amount of publicity or ads is going to truly convince them otherwise...let's really encourage shoppers to share their good thoughts with others this year!

More parking; endless effort by each and every vendor to provide the best possible products to shoppers. More farmers market signs on poles around the city; small flyers in neighborhoods, & Seattle PI and papers. You advertise well, but I guess nobody could ever do quite enough; appeal more directly to kids, more activities or events throughout the summer that have kids wanting to be there; it's near impossible to make the parking situation easier for customers...

More cooking demos, maybe more outreach to libraries, clubs, etc; maybe a way to get kids at schools talking about markets (Field trips?) & then kids go home & educate parents!

Just make customer or shoppers happy. Some time they need to buy some things, but we can't sell to customer. So, they are not happy. So, that customer are not return again.

Offer incentives for vendors to stay until the end of the season (when vendors drop out, shoppers stop coming). I think the most important factor in how many shoppers a market attracts is how long it's been around, so I think the best way to increase the number of shoppers is to just keep on doing what we're doing.

Educate throughout Snohomish, King counties.

Better parking.

Give coupons for returning shoppers; provide personal shoppers for the handicapped; work with city to provide free or near-free transportation to market.

Continue your great advertising work!

I think you're doing a great job, but advertising always helps! I know are already doing that!

Just keep doing what you have in the past. The people are becoming more educated about farmers markets, that is the key.

Special events are great, music and cooking demos, hopefully these are listed in free community listings in newspapers, both paper and email formats.

More media coverage, more radio coverage, adding more different themed events for families.

Close some.

Any other thoughts you have about 2008, or ideas for the 2009 season?

We pay a very high fee for space used as much as \$500 (\$100/hour), although we have a high...(sentence not finished)

Keep up the great work and the cheerful attitudes!

Not really, we think you guys are awesome!

Keep up the great job.

We appreciate all of your help and support with our farm - we feel your staff goes out of their way to support us!

I am at the point where I need more space than my 10x10 stall.

We would like to be given a chance to sell at more of your markets.

Please just keep us where we are.

Having Magnolia go through Oct would help a lot, please consider extending it in 2009.

We can't wait for 2009 season and appreciate/enjoy being a part of all of your markets and enjoy getting to work with such nice staff/volunteers.

Encourage small, local production, not undercutting of profits by inappropriate competition...I've made consistent efforts not to compete with "west-side" production strengths...I see increased efforts by west side growers to compete with tomatoes, soft tree fruit, sweet corn, etc....

Translators for Chinese senior shoppers.

We're hoping 2009 at UD will be busier - hope the 20' wide space is available - we are really willing to help promote the market in any way possible, keep us in the loop if we can help; we are also willing to donate product for market fundraisers, etc; thanks for all you do, we really appreciate it!

At Phinney, prepared food vendors and music were a distraction. Didn't seem like a farmers market shopper crowd - more about pizza & music, not meat and potatoes. I firmly believe farmers are the strength and draw of the farmers markets and don't want to see it diluted with non-farmers and food vendors.

I think it would be useful to brainstorm ideas and put together some flyers & recipes on how to feed a family on a budget using market ingredients. It can be done.

Did the sales go up with the increase of one hour longer in winter?

You all have done a great job...

Keep the quality of vendors up, the people have to trust that they are buying.

Due to economy, offer coupons or other savings?