

## DOUGLAS COUNTY FARMERS MARKET PROFILE

### COTTIN'S HARDWARE FARMERS MARKET

**B**egun in 2010 as an outgrowth of a CSA pickup point, the Cottin's Hardware Farmers Market is unique in Douglas County as the only one offering beer for sale and consumption on site. There is also a tent-covered area where chess is played by local youth. Along with live music and a food truck each week, these amenities create a festive atmosphere that brings people in to socialize, at least as much as to shop. The market is supported by Linda Cottin, co-owner of the hardware store, whose employees also help set up and break down the market. Weekly music, market-day signs and promotion of the market are also provided by Linda and her staff. The vendors who sell at this market pay no fees. Two meat vendors, several produce farmers, baked goods and value added items, including some specialty grains and pasta all are available at this market.



**Opportunities** – Both vendors and customers seem to enjoy the feel of this market. Compared with other farmers markets in the county, more than twice the proportion of shoppers at Cottin's ranked 'non-product' features – entertainment, beer and the social aspect – as important to what brings them to this market (29% for Cottin's; 12% for the county overall). Cottin's also had the highest number of shoppers for a mid-week market, though only slightly more than Clinton Parkway. Still, there is potential for Cottin's to start building a much stronger customer base. Two of the larger vendors with diverse, high quality products are seeing relatively strong sales, and a gradual increase in those sales, providing hope that more and better products could increase commerce significantly.

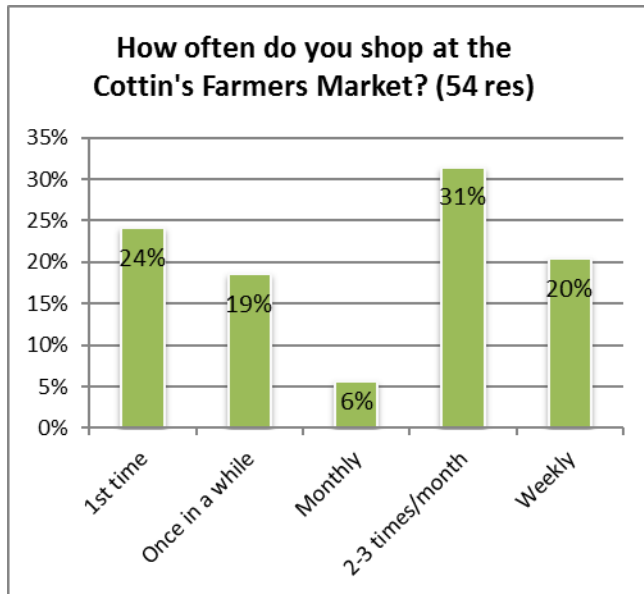
#### MARKET QUICK FACTS

- **Market season:** May – October
- **Market day/hours:** Thursdays, 4 – 6:30pm
- **Location:** 1837 Massachusetts Ave.
- **Current number of vendors:** 18 – 22
- **Estimated number of shoppers:** 200 / market
- **Market manager:** supported by Linda Cottin, who volunteers, but no manager
- **SNAP:** Accepts SNAP, provides tokens for shopping

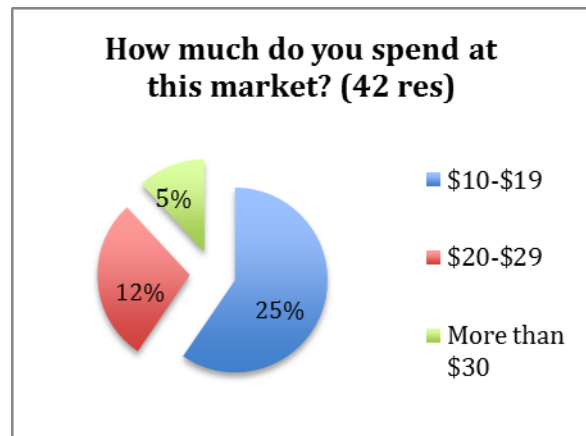
**Challenges** – The unique atmosphere of the Cottin's market masks the reality that for all but a few of the participating vendors, sales are generally low. A couple of vendors who said they enjoy the market nevertheless stated that their sales were very low and not increasing. The proportion of regular shoppers – two to three times per month or weekly – is about the same as the county average overall, as is the

percentage of 'strong shoppers' averaging \$20 or more per market day (about 40% of all). Overall, however, shoppers at Cottin's are eager for more product diversity and more consistent availability of products, with 76% citing one or these as key factors that would get them to shop more at this market, the highest proportion of any of the six markets surveyed. Our own visual observations confirm this need: A relatively small number of vendors have a robust display with attractive and high quality products for sale. Most vendor stalls would benefit from more product, higher overall quality and improved, more visually appealing displays.

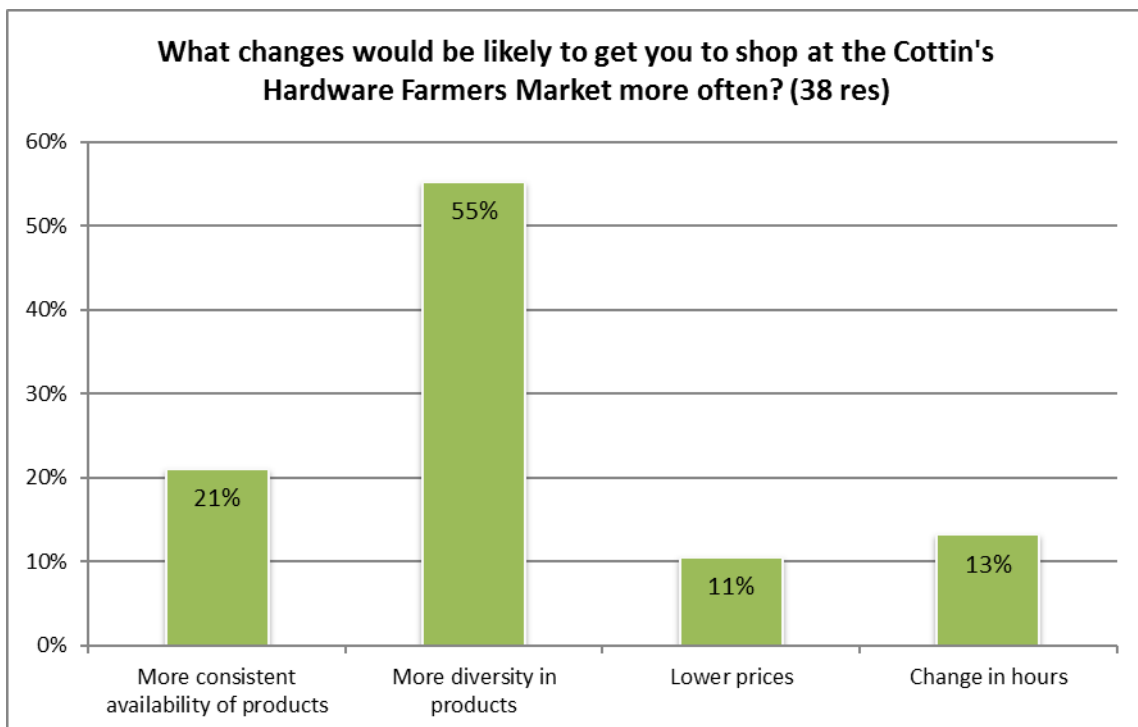
## THE MARKET IN THE CUSTOMERS' EYES



While non-product factors clearly carry more weight for shoppers at this market, produce was still by far the single most important thing drawing people to the Cottin's Farmers Market, as with every other market surveyed.



## MARKET RECOMMENDATIONS



1. Although more customers are clearly needed, focus attention on how to increase sales at this market and increase the proportion of market attendees who also view it as good place to buy groceries. This should be undertaken as part of a county-wide campaign to persuade more people to do more grocery shopping at farmers markets. It will also need special attention at Cottin's, where a fair number of people now come mostly to hang out and enjoy the spirit of the market, not to buy groceries.
2. To enable the above, vendors should be encouraged and assisted to increase the quantity, quality and diversity of the products they offer at this market. Several vendors at this – and other – markets might benefit from workshops on improved marketing, presentation, etc.
3. Led by Linda Cottin, this market promotes and markets itself better than any of the other mid-week markets. Nevertheless, a comprehensive marketing strategy should be developed and implemented, with vendors helping in all phases. Vendors need to take more ownership of outreach to the community and improved weekly marketing.
4. The indoor market during the winter, though very small, offers opportunities to reach new potential customers and to build anticipation for the coming season with specials and special events. A strong produce vendor, selling root crops, hard squash and hoop house greens and salad/lettuce would help maintain the customer base and recruit new shoppers in the off season.
5. A market promotion working group, comprised of vendors, Cottin's staff and one or two customer reps, would help generate new and creative ways to promote the market and improve the product offerings. Outreach to the nearby community during the off-season should be a priority.