

# DOUGLAS COUNTY FARMERS MARKET PROFILE

## TUESDAY DOWNTOWN LAWRENCE FARMERS MARKET

The Tuesday Downtown Lawrence Farmers Market takes place in a corner of the Lawrence Public Library parking garage, with one or two vendors also setting up in the adjacent open space. The market is managed by Olivia Taylor-Puckett and governed by the same board that oversees the Saturday market. This location was new in 2016 and has struggled to build a customer base, or to fully meet the needs of the small group of vendors. The location offers a covered space and plenty of parking, but is also perceived by some shoppers as an odd, if not unpleasant location, with concerns that traffic in the structure presents some safety risks as well.



**Opportunities** – Mid-week markets almost never approach Saturday or weekend markets, either in terms of vendor numbers and diversity or the base of shoppers. Nevertheless, the difference in numbers between Saturday and Tuesday's downtown LFM are higher than most: Customer estimates at the Saturday market totaled 1850, fifteen times greater than the 120 people estimated at the Tuesday market. Vendor numbers on Tuesday are roughly 20% of

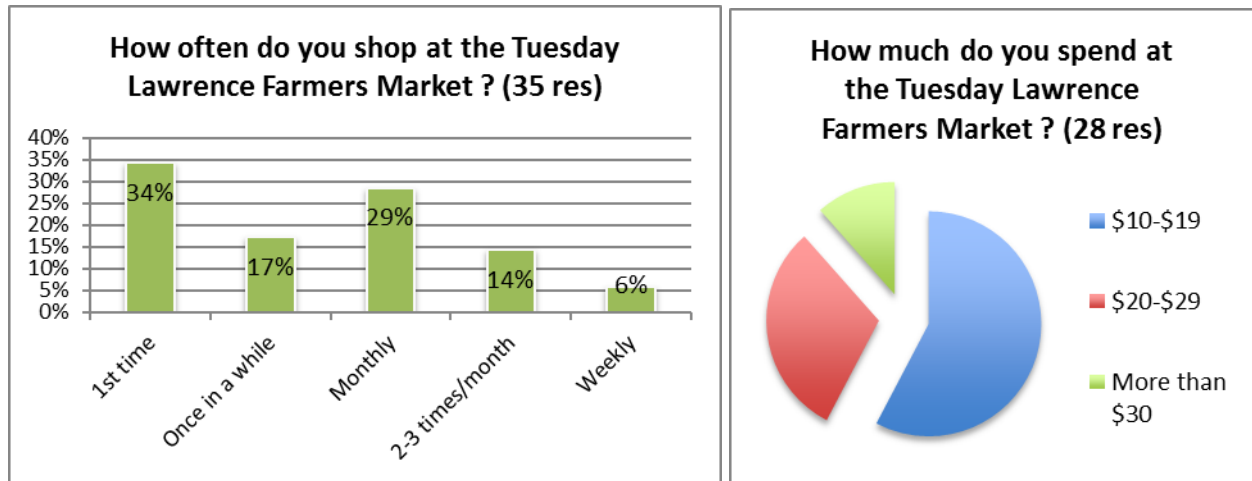
those on Saturday. For markets in other communities, this proportion ranged from a low of 10% in Bloomington, Indiana to 45% and 60% in Iowa City, Iowa and Abingdon, Virginia respectively. We believe that these numbers, along with the enormous difference in customer counts indicate room for dramatic growth in the Tuesday market, assuming that other issues are addressed.

**Challenges** – The Tuesday Downtown Lawrence market faces three basic challenges: First, the current location is not conducive to significant growth in vendors or customers, for both practical and aesthetic reasons. Secondly, the vast majority of people who consider themselves to be 'farmers market shoppers' in fact rarely shop at any of the mid-week markets in Lawrence, or even consider doing so. Third, it is likely that there are now simply too many mid-week markets in Lawrence, especially given the lack of a substantial overall base of mid-week farmers market shoppers. The proliferation of mid-week markets also means that the pool of vendors is diluted, as they must choose among three options rather than together building one or two strong mid-week markets.

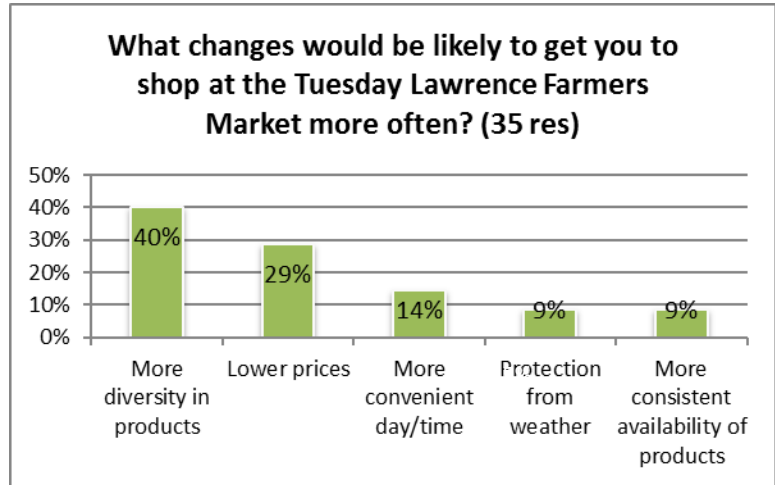
### MARKET QUICK FACTS

- **Market season:** Mid-May – Mid-October
- **Market day/hours:** Tuesday, 4 – 6:30pm
- **Location:** Lawrence Public Library parking garage and adjacent green space
- **Current number of vendors:** 7–10
- **Estimated number of shoppers:** 120
- **Market manager:** Olivia Taylor-Puckett, part-time employee

## THE MARKET IN THE CUSTOMERS' EYES



The Tuesday market had the lowest proportion of 'regular' shoppers (shopping 2 – 3x/month or weekly), with only 20% of these compared to a county average of 53%; The proportion of 'infrequent shoppers' (monthly or occasionally) was also much higher, at 46% versus 30% for all markets. Average spending was comparable to county wide figures, with 58% buying \$19 or less on average. In terms of changes shoppers believe would increase their shopping, 29% cited 'lower prices' at this market, nearly double the 15% total for all markets.



## MARKET RECOMMENDATIONS

1. With the Downtown LFM Board and key partners in Lawrence, the Tuesday market should begin a search for a better, permanent – or at least, long-term – location. While location issues for the Saturday market are unresolved at this point, we strongly recommend that the mid-week and Saturday markets utilize the same space and thus grapple with this question jointly.
2. Over the next 1 – 2 years, as location issues are being examined, the Tuesday market can and should work to build the customer base to at least double to triple the current number. This will require collaboration with the Saturday market on community outreach, promotion and marketing, and with the town and county on educating the public on the timing, location and benefits of all of the markets.
3. All three of the mid-week markets should begin a frank and open dialog about how to build a much stronger customer base and strengthen the diversity, consistency and quality of vendors and products at mid-week markets. While this will include creative and coordinated ideas related to recruiting new farmers/vendors, and reaching out to the community, it should also consider the benefits and costs of merging the three mid-week Lawrence markets into one or two strong markets.