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Published November 11th, 2009

## Farmers' Market Survey Says....

By Cathy Tyson

After September's pilot program of three Farmer's Market shopping days, the plan was to see how it went, complete a survey and report on the results. The Market days were well attended, and at the time the general feeling among shoppers was positive.

Prior to the pilot program approval, concerns swirled around the Market regarding parking, traffic, competition with existing merchants, and access to surrounding merchants' businesses on Market days.

Two separate groups evaluated the pilot program. Lafayette resident Regine Lee, a consultant with Deloitte and Touche, volunteered to conduct an assessment with Sustainable Lafayette and the Contra Costa Certified Farmers' Markets (CCCFM). The Lafayette Chamber of Commerce also conducted a survey.

The Chamber's thirteen-question electronic survey garnered generally very positive results. For example, to the question, "Are you in favor of Lafayette having its own seasonal Farmers' Market?" just over 72% said yes. The strongest positive response was to the question, "Do you think a Lafayette Farmers' Market will bring incremental sales and sales tax to our community?" 80% said yes. A close second was, "Do you shop at a local farmers' market?" with 76.9% affirmative.

Survey respondents were mixed about parking issues, but not concerned about negative impacts on local stores. "Do you think parking will be an issue near Plaza Park when a market is operating on a Thursday night?" 43% said yes and 52% said no. Respondents felt that the Market will not have a negative impact on local stores that sell similar products by a two to one margin.

Comments about traffic and circulation ran the gamut from "the problem was so small it was insignificant" to, "Yes, Yes, Yes - Horrible location!" to, "I parked at Bruzzone property and returned for yogurt (presumably Yogurt Shack) and coffee at Peets" and finally, "no problems noted, parking was plentiful even with well-attended market."

Sustainable Lafayette member Rebecca Calahan Klein and Jesse Neu, Executive Director of CCCFM, wrote a letter encouraging the City Council to establish a permanent Farmers' Market on Thursday evenings from May until September in Plaza Park due to the positive feedback from their assessment.

"During the past six weeks, Sustainable Lafayette members and CCCFM staff have reviewed information from the surveys as well as gathered feedback from the Lafayette Parks and Recreation and Public Works departments," noted the letter from Klein and Neu.

Highlights of their findings included:

- More than 500 people attended the Farmer's Market on each night of the pilot.
- 98% of the customers surveyed were satisfied or very satisfied with the Market and 100% said they would return if the Market became permanent.
- 86% of customers surveyed said they would be more likely to shop in Lafayette while visiting the Farmers' Market.
- While many of the customers surveyed shopped in Lafayette, more than 65% bought their produce at farmers' markets in other areas and 38% shopped for produce outside of Lafayette

Both survey results were presented at the November 9, 2009 City Council meeting, after press time. The Council may make a decision on the Market that night. See [www.lamorindaweekly.com](http://www.lamorindaweekly.com) for an update on the outcome.

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